MELANESIAN MAINSTREAM

STRINGBAND MUSIC AND IDENTITY IN VANUATU

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Contents

List of Figures iii

Abbreviations v

Prelude 1

Acknowledgements 3

1 Introduction 5

1.1 Questions, Theses and Objectives 8

1.2 The Research Background 29

1.3 Methods, Field Techniques and Data 39

1.4 The Setting 44

2 A History of *Stringban Miusik* in Vanuatu 61

2.1 Musical Genres in Vanuatu 61

2.2 Stringband Music Across the Decades 71

3 The Genre *stringban miusik* and Its Musical Characteristics .. 128

3.1 Music Education and Preservation 129

3.2 Styles 136

3.3 Instrumentation 139

3.4 Pitch, Tuning and Key 155

3.5 Form and Arrangement 157

3.6 Rhythm, Tempo and Duration 161

3.7 Harmony, Melodics and Singing 164

3.8 Composing 168

4 Performance and Reception 175

4.1 Musical Preferences 175

4.2 Music Discourse 180

4.3 Dancing and Nightlife 182

4.4 Rehearsing 188

4.5 Live Performance and Public Response 190

5 Music Industry, Marketing and Representation in the Media 212

5.1 Sound Carriers 213

5.2 Image 245

5.3 The Media 257

6 Music and Language 266

6.1 Language Choice and Language Ideology 268

6.2 Lyrics 273

6.3 Lyrics in *pop miusik* 302

7 Stringbands as Social Groups 307

7.1 Motivations for Starting up a Stringband 307

7.2 Musicians' Names 310

7.3 The Composition of the Groups 316

7.4 Music Associations 324

7.5 Economical Aspects 326

7.6 The Role of Sponsors and Politicians 333

7.7 Reasons to End a Stringband 337

8 Summary and Conclusions 341

8.1 Vanuatu Stringband Music and Other Musics in Oceania 342

8.2 Stringbands as an Integral Part of Vanuatu's Communities 344

8.3 Levels of Identity 349

References 356

Figures 371

Appendices 383

Appendix 1: Tables 383

Appendix 2: Biographical notes on Paul Gardissat 388

Appendix 3: Notation Examples 1 – 5 390

List of Figures

Figure 1: Vanuatu; stringbands according to the island of origin. 371
Figure 2: *tamtam* ensemble performing during a pig killing ceremony. 372
Figure 3: *tamtam* ensemble from Walarano, northeast Malekula 372
Figure 4: Directions of musical transfer of music genres in Vanuatu 372
Figure 5: Efate and its offshore islands 373
Figure 6: Stringband from Futuna performing at Fest'Napuan 373
Figure 7: John Peter performs, 373
Figure 8: The Owen Hall was taken down at the beginning of 2004 374
Figure 9: Paul Gardissat in his office at Sun Productions in 2004 374
Figure 10: NANA STRING BAN from Ambrym 374
Figure 11: SINESIP STRING BAN from Malekula 375
Figure 12: the busbes of the group VATDORO 375
Figure 13: *yukalele* of good quality, carved from 375
Figure 14: young musician with a *yuka* carved from the wood of the coconut palm 376
Figure 15: two sharp extensions at the lower end of the *yukalele* 376
Figure 16: The parts of the *yukalele* 376
Figure 17: *yukalele* with eight strings, from different perspectives 377
Figure 18: Detailed views of the sound hole 377
Figure 19: guitar with self-made capo 377
Figure 20: simple *seka* 377
Figure 21: *seka* 378
Figure 22: *seka*, built from the machine head of a guitar 378
Figure 23: bamboo cane used as a *bongo* 378
Figure 24: musician with a *rasras* and a *yuka* 378
Figure 25: Foxy mo reggae 379
Figure 26: rural *disko*. 379
Figure 27: Typical stringband cassette 379
Figure 28: Cassette duplicator of the VKS 379
Figure 29: Jean-Marc Wong at his studio 380
Figure 30: Benson Nako at his studio 380
Figure 31: Joel Malesi with musicians at Sina Studio. 380
Figure 32: Louis 'Fanny' Philip, Macka Silona and others 380
Figure 33: At the VKS Studio… 380

Figure 34: While recording the *yukalele* player of (YANG) SOUWIA 380

Figure 35: TOKORUA is getting ready to enter Saralana stage at the Fest'Nalega...................381

Figure 36: VUSI BOYS in kastom outfit 381

Figure 37: Cassette cover of TOKOTAKIA, "Round taon long bus". 381

Figure 38: Cassette cover of FATUANA MAHTUA, "Pacific Paradise". 381

Figure 39: Cassette cover of DAUSAKE, "Grassroot Laef". 382

Figure 40: Cassette cover of SARA POKASI, "Close Your Eyes". 382

Figure 41: Cassette cover of Saratokowia, "Operation Lagoon". 382

Figure 42: Cassette cover of "Vanuatu String Band Vol. 1" 382

Figure 43: Cassette cover of "Best Of The Best" 382

Figure 44: CD cover of SHAKURA, "Wind Of Change" 382

Abbreviations

ANHC	Australasian New Hebrides Company
AOG	Assemblies of God
BP	Burns Philp Co. Ltd
CCNH	Compagnie Calédonienne des Nouvelles Hébrides
CD	compact disc
CHM	Chin Hoi Meen
CMC	Christian Mission Center
CRP	Comprehensive Reform Programme
DAAD	Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (German Academic Exchange Service)
DAT	Digital Audio Tape
ESfO	European Society for Oceanists
Ex-FOL	see FOL
FMP	Fren Melanesian Party
FOL	hall used for community activities and concerts in Port Vila, now called Ex-FOL
IPV	Imprimerie de Port Vila
LMS	London Missionary Society
MC	music cassette
MPP	Melanesian Progressive Party
NAS	National Art School (Papua New Guinea)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NP	New Hebrides National Party
NTM	Neil Thomas Ministry
NTO	National Tourism Office
NUP	National United Party
OMP	Organisasi Papua Merdeka (West Papuan independence movement)
PDP	People's Democratic Party
PNG	Papua New Guinea
RFO	Radio France Overseas
SDA	Seventh Day Adventists
SPR	*sperem pablik rod*, to hit the public road; term applied to unemployed school dropouts
TBV	Television Blong Vanuatu
TV	television
TVL	Telecom Vanuatu Limited
UMP	Union of Moderate Parties
USP	University of the South Pacific
VCRP	Vanuatu Cultural Research Policy
VKS	Vanuatu Kaljoral Senta (Vanuatu Cultural Centre, Vanuatu Centre Culturel)
VMF	Vanuatu Mobile Force
VBTC	Vanuatu Broadcasting and Television Corporation
VP	Vanua'aku Pati
VPF	Vanuatu Police Force
vt	vatu (Vanuatu's currency)

Prelude

More than fourteen flight hours from Frankfurt to Taipei, over twelve hours in the air-conditioned transit lounge, again more than nine flight hours to Sydney, a day of strolling around the city and another three hours and forty minutes flight to Vanuatu. Finally, close to midnight, the tropical warm and humid air of Bauerfield Airport envelops me. Apart from the ground staff and the immigration officer, the first Melanesian faces I see are those of a bunch of lads, all dressed in blue aloha shirts and adorned with flowers. One of them perches on the corner of a tea chest, plucking a thick string and thus contributing a bassline to the chords played on guitars and a ukulele. The tiny arrivals hall is filled with the sound of their vocal polyphony. Just like on my previous trips to Vanuatu, this scene seems surreal to me – given the unpleasant lighting, the late hour and my exhaustion. This form of welcome to international tourists is of course meant to promote the image of Vanuatu as a 'paradise destination', and indeed the performance provides the agreeable and familiar auditory supplement to the tropical aura that salutes me.

At the end of the first day in Port Vila, I take a walk through the Anambrou quarter. While the heat of the day is still reflected from the ground under my flip-flops, the sun finally disappears and darkness falls, until only the red lightbulbs of the kava bars are seen glowing along the road. I follow the sound of a tambourine at a distance and it leads me to a stringband which performs, this time without a uniform dress code, at a *nakamal*.[1] The place is dark and crowded; men queue up at a shack of corrugated iron, the only illuminated spot, to get a bowl of kava. When one of them receives his portion, he stands apart, pauses for a moment, empties the coconut bowl in one gulp, spits on the ground and then sits down on a wooden bench to join his friends. The guests smoke cigarettes and chat with subdued voices. The strong taste of kava tops off my arrival in Melanesia. The musicians, focused and undisturbed from their surroundings, play in one corner of the compound. Their music blends with the muttering around me and collaborates with the blissful effect of the kava.

A few months later, it is the week between Christmas and New Year, I take part in the celebrations of the hamlet Lovusikamaliveu, Ambae Island. Everyone – children, older people, women and men – are on their feet and in a merry mood. Some attack the revellers with baby powder which is then dispersed over their heads, necks and shoulders. The affected persons

[1] Here: kava bar in town.

scream but cannot get rid of the powder, providing a sharp contrast to their dark skin and hair. A young man who had overindulged in the homebrew made of dry yeast and the juice of fresh fruits dances with closed eyes by himself, his knees bent and his upper body stretched backwards at the same time, always on the brink of falling down. Then, unappreciated by the villagers, the VUSI BOYS position themselves on the ground next to the big *nakamal*.[2] The musicians tune their instruments and the ukulele player eventually begins to play a sequence of chords into the general confusion. The other musicians join in, building a close circle with their backs directed to the outside, as if they were playing for themselves. The singers sing at each other at the top of their voices. The stringband now becomes the centre of attention. People, young and old, start dancing in a big circle around the group and cheer.

I could add many more such snapshots of different performance contexts, as stringbands are engaged in a diversity of occasions. Several years have elapsed since my fieldwork. However, "[w]hile the popularity of string band music elsewhere in Melanesia has waned in the new century, the genre remains vital in Vanuatu" (Diettrich, Moulin & Webb 2011: 103). The considerable increase of clips, uploaded on YouTube in recent years, often embellished with much commentary, shows that stringband culture has found new ways of asserting its identity in the media alongside (Western) popular culture. This thesis attends to the evolution of stringband music in Vanuatu up to the time of my fieldwork which ended in April 2004. While I was able to follow some developments since then from a distance, it is evident that important changes in technology and communication have taken place, i.e. an increase in the availability of mobile phones and internet access which enables people in town to stay in touch with their peers and relatives on the islands. Contemporary music genres experience development and accordingly the interrelation between music and identities is subject to transition. Because of this constant change, it has become all the more important to present the findings of my field research and to document Vanuatu's music scene at a point in time when mobile phones and the internet were scarcely available and when the reception of international popular music in Vanuatu was different when compared to the present day.

[2] Here: traditional gathering place in the form of a building beneath a large tree.

Acknowledgements

Before leaving for the field, I invited some friends to a farewell party. I asked them to compile CDs for me with music that they thought I should know. Unfortunately, they were stolen from my house within the first week. Looking back, I am grateful to the thief who left me no other choice than to listen only to the local music I soon became fond of. Now the time has finally come to tie up the threads of this long-cherished PhD project and I do not wish to do so without expressing my thanks.

First, I wish to express my gratitude to all of the musicians and others in Vanuatu who generously shared their expertise and music with me. I refrain from naming each of them here, as the most important for my work are mentioned throughout the text anyway (albeit in a more impersonal form). With regret, I have to admit that many of the pop musicians I interviewed only occur marginally, although they helped shaping my understanding of Vanuatu's music scene. The members of XX SQUAD stand out as my main leisure companions during my time in Vila.

On one of my stays I was lucky enough to rent a house of Ralph Regenvanu at the Erakor Lagoon and thus lived in great proximity to his family, the Cultural Centre and Ronnie's Nakamal. I am generally grateful to him and the staff of the Vanuatu Kaljoral Senta (Sam Obed, Ambong Thompson, Jakob Kapere, Stanley, Jimmy and others) who supported my work in various ways. I would furthermore like to mention a few others with whom I lived for a while. I owe many thanks to Janet and Reynold Garae who were wonderful hosts on Ambae Island. For hosting me in their island homes, I am also indebted to the families of Vital Soksok (Malekula), John Brown Sigeri (Pentecost) and Ramel Bong (Ambrym). Thanks also go to the peace corps volunteer Adam Jones who kindly let me stay at his flat while I was stranded in Luganville during a cyclone. My thanks are also due to Henry Toka who invited me to his home in Troyes, France, for long talks and many glasses of red wine. Henry and Julie were very hospitable and made me feel like stepping into a small piece of the Pacific when I came to their home. A special thank you goes to my friend Linda Gibson whom I met while staying at the women's guest house in Anambrou. Linda, as well as Serafina, Tiana and Blandine helped a lot in teaching me Bislama and contributed a self-confident, youthful and funny female perspective on Vila, Vanuatu, myself and my topic (which was otherwise so much characterised by a male bias).

Of course, many thanks are due to Michael Bollig who served as supervisor for my PhD. He

not only supported the project when it was already well underway but also gave the initial impetus to consider music as a research topic many years ago. He gave valuable advice where needed and otherwise gave me the freedom to get on with my project. In the beginning of the research project, I received practical support from Martin Rössler, who also provided useful feedback on early drafts of the manuscript. The same applies to the late Rüdiger Schumacher. I received insightful comments and critique from Federico Spinetti, for which I am very grateful, as well as for the relaxed atmosphere he provides at the chair of ethnomusicology, Institute of Musicology of the University of Cologne where I have been engaged as a lecturer for a number of years. Thorgeir Kolshus has been instrumental in the last stages of writing up. For one thing, he has provided insightful input from an Oceanist perspective and, knowing the region, offered expertise I could not expect from others. For another, I am grateful for his encouragement and good humour.

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Any attempt to thank my family for their support in a few lines is doomed to failure. I would still like to name them here: Lou and Mina, my daughters; as well as my parents Roland and Erika, my sister Ruth and my brother Moritz.

I would also like to extend my thanks to my friends, the band members of my own group, Fasfowod Stringband. I have certainly learned a lot through having founded a stringband in Germany, playing gigs and recording albums with Thorsten, Andy, Tim, Nobrock and Fredo. Some of my colleagues have provided inspiring and amusing conversations while in the field: Gaïa Fisher, Craig Lind and Stephen Zagala. A recording by Stephen of the VUSI BOYS made me go to Ambae which was certainly one of the better decisions during my fieldwork. I am grateful to Janine Jaquemod for visiting me twice in Vanuatu. At home, I always enjoy exchanges with my friend Andreas Dahmen. Finally, I'd like to mention three people who unfortunately could not see this project finished before passing away: Stanley Bani, a member of the VUSI BOYS, Paul Gardissat, whose crucial role for Vanuatu's stringband music is given full expression in the following pages, and Macka 'Splaff' Silona, who left us much too early.

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1 Introduction

The focus of my dissertation is on a music genre from the Melanesian Republic of Vanuatu, generally referred to as 'stringband music'. In particular, the PhD-project addresses musical hybridity, authenticity in stringband music and the construction and representation of social and cultural identity.

Identity[3] in the Pacific region in general and in Melanesia in particular is subject to current popular debates and scholarly research. These debates often relate to representations of the past, as becomes evident in the titles of publications or the topics of international conferences.[4] Anthropologists are familiar with those constructions of history which declare 'traditional' cultural elements as identity markers – and then reveal that they are 'inventions of tradition'. This project reflects upon the relations of identity and musics[5] from the 20th and 21th centuries in Melanesia, which up until now has been investigated only marginally in scientific discourses. In the case of these musics, the 'inventedness' of the syncretic music traditions is out of question – these genres are hybrids, mixtures of many influences, but nevertheless authentic and suitable for identification.

Music is one of the important cultural expressions of societies serving identity development and identity representation. The relationship between music and identity is particularly close in Vanuatu. People in Vanuatu oppose traditional musics to Western (popular) music and emphasize them as identity markers, while local pop groups try to develop their 'own' (national) style, thus defining themselves and their music as different to music from abroad. The modern music styles of Vanuatu are characterized by the interplay of innovations, acquisitions from foreign musics, modifications of these, and – in varied degrees – combinations with indigenous music traditions. Thus, new music styles evolved and are still evolving. They are part of active constructions of identities on different levels. I concentrate on stringband music because there are clear differences between stringband music and other

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[3] See 1.2.3 for a discussion of the concept of identity applied in this study.

[4] See for example Roger Keesing's essay *Creating the Past: Custom and Identity in the Contemporary Pacific* (2000) and Margaret Jolly's *Custom and the Way of the Land: Past and Present in Vanuatu and Fiji* (1992). The overall theme of the conference of the European Society for Oceanists (ESfO), which was held in Vienna in 2002 was: 'Recovering the Past. Resources, Representations, and Ethics of Research in Oceania'.

[5] Using the plural is common practice in ethnomusicology.

musics from Vanuatu in the way they construct and represent identities.[6]

Stringband music is played on acoustic instruments and, as a uniform genre, shows distinctive characteristics which distinguish it from other types of music in Vanuatu and make it easy even for laypersons to identify the genre after listening to a few songs. This type of music is very popular throughout the country and one can thus find stringbands in most of the bigger villages. Despite musical similarities to ensembles of string instruments from other parts of the Pacific, Vanuatu stringband music is unique and most ni-Vanuatu[7] perceive it as a national identity marker: their own, genuine *kalja*[8] (culture), *stael* (style) or *miusik* (music).[9]

My objective is to identify different levels or layers of identity in Vanuatu (for example local, national, pan-Melanesian), which are constructed and represented through this kind of music. In addition, my aim is to show how these constructions and representations of identity are composed and which factors play a crucial role in their creation.

At a local level of identity construction, the genre is connected to the realms of kinship, social relationships, local histories and particular localities. On a regional level, stringband music broaches the issue of the mobility of young people between rural and urban settings and promotes the concerns of Vanuatu's provinces. The genre, however, also addresses events of national significance and beyond, like the manifestation of Christian values. Stringband music combines, corresponds with, and counterbalances all these aspects and is simple as well as ambiguous enough to express many things. Stringbands in Vanuatu are a phenomenon from the midst of society, often deeply rooted in the social structure of the village and in daily village life. Its aesthetics reflect the mainstream taste of the ni-Vanuatu population. In its history and in its course of change, stringband music was subject to both the dynamics of homogenization as well as to differentiation. Some common features and stereotypes have evolved over the last decades – these concern musical aspects, the lyrics, behaviour in relation to performance, the groups' image and the structures of organisation.

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[6] This observation correlates to the status quo at the time of fieldwork which was conducted between November 2001 and April 2004.

[7] Citizens of Vanuatu, especially of Melanesian or half-Melanesian descent, call themselves 'ni-Vanuatu' (also spelled 'Ni-Vanuatu' and sometimes shortened to 'ni-Van'). Following the practice of other authors on the subject I refer to the archipelago as Vanuatu and to its people as ni-Vanuatu even when writing about the period before independence.

[8] Bislama terms (see 1.4.2) are italicised throughout this work.

[9] In comparison to guitar and ukulele music from Fiji, for example, Vanuatu stringband music is clearly defined as a genre and has much more significance in everyday life. Fiji's acoustic guitar and ukulele music, which lacks some of the characteristic musical instruments of a stringband, is less popular amongst young people than stringband music is in Vanuatu. Stringband music is likewise more present in the public through stringband competitions, advertised releases and airplay.

The starting point of this enquiry is an account of the evolution and development of stringband music from colonial times until the present (Chapter 2). Hereafter, the details of ni-Vanuatu musical practice are examined more closely; next follows a characterisation of the music itself (Chapter 3) which has neither ever appeared in the realm of 'global' popular music nor has it done so in the arena of what is called 'world music'. While the focus in Chapter 4 lies on the different contexts of performance and reception, Chapter 5 focuses on the production of sound carriers, marketing, media representation and the image of the groups. The production of the studio recordings and local music clips, the distribution of cassettes and CDs, as well as copyright and media coverage issues (press, broadcasting via radio and TV) are examined in relation to their significance regarding the practices of ni-Vanuatu musicians. In Chapter 6, I first turn my attention to the different factors involved in language choice and then to the means of language in lyrics and to the lyrics' contents. Chapter 7 concentrates on the organisational structures of the stringbands. Some important relations to people outside the field of music, such as politicians, are also described. It is necessary to take all these aspects into account in order to evaluate the importance and meaning of stringband music in the ni-Vanutu society. The implications of stringband music for ni-Vanuatu identity are compared to those of different popular music forms in Vanuatu wherever relevant.

Our identities result from a web of various social and personal identities which are further based on individual characteristics and group affiliations such as gender, age and identities that are motivated by political orientation or religion. While considering these and commenting on them, this work's focus is on the relations between music and cultural identity, language identity and local identity, all of which are entangled and congeneric in the case of Vanuatu. In the conclusion (Chapter 8), my findings are summarized and compared to other musics in the Pacific region.

This study is based on empirical data which was collected in the two urban centres of the country as well as in various village contexts during three field trips to Vanuatu. The research project was proposed to the Vanuatu Cultural Centre (Vanuatu Kaljoral Senta, VKS) and approved in April 2002. The approval of the research project automatically led to the institutional connection with this local cultural institution (as outlined in the Vanuatu Cultural Research Policy, VCRP) which coordinates all national and international research in the Humanities in Vanuatu. I first visited Vanuatu in November 2001 for the purpose of orientation and language acquisition (Bislama). The actual fieldwork and gathering of data

took place in the phase between November 2002 and April 2003, as well as between November 2003 and April 2004. Data was collected in the capital Port Vila, where I spent most of the time, due to the presence of most popular stringbands and also because of most pop groups' dependency on electrical equipment, which is available there. Shorter trips were undertaken to rural areas on other islands (west Ambrym, north Pentecost, south east Ambae, and north east Malekula), and to the second 'urban centre' of Vanuatu, Luganville (Espiritu Santo). Financial support for the second trip (2002/2003) was granted by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD, Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst) and by the Dean of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Cologne.

This work depicts the points in time and periods of time when referring to certain events or processes as best as possible. Whenever I use the present tense I refer to the current state at the time of fieldwork. I am aware that both stringband and popular music in Vanuatu has changed in some respects since I left the field. My aim is to provide a description and an analysis of the situation as I witnessed it.

I begin with my objectives for this study (1.1), after which I address the research background regarding music and identity (1.2). A portrayal of the setting is provided (1.3), before depicting the research methods applied (1.4).

1.1 Questions, Theses and Objectives

> "Yes it's true: in this world, you cannot live without music. Even if you hate music, if you don't listen to music tapes, you still whistle. You still whistle when walking around" (George 'Gero' Iaviniau from the group NAIO).[10]

In order to define my subject and to formulate the questions, theses and objectives of this study, some crucial juxtapositions are made in this subchapter: general concepts of pop music are contrasted with the stringband music genre (1.1.1), and the conceptualisation and articulation of 'the global' and 'the local' in syncretic musics (1.1.2), as well as the concepts of place in Melanesian societies are addressed (1.1.3). The implications of acquisitions and innovations in the field of music for the processes of identification and identity construction

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[10] "*Yes i tru, long wol ya yu no save liv* without *miusik. Sapos yu hetem miusik, yu no wantem lisin long ol tep, be yu stil wisil yet. Yu wokbaot yu stil wisil yet*".

are discussed in 1.1.4. In 1.1.5 the quest for a national musical identity is addressed, while stringband music as a tradition is the subject of 1.1.6.

1. 1. 1 Popular Music Versus Stringband Music

Most of my interlocutors differentiated between four main categories of music: *kastom miusik* (the various 'traditional' musics of Vanuatu), *stringban miusik* (stringband music), ecclesiastical music[11] (of the different Christian denominations) and *pop miusik*. These broad categories are shared among a wider Melanesian audience.[12] *Pop miusik* is a term which includes a wide spectrum of international popular musics, as well as popular musics from the region (Melanesia and other parts of Oceania) and local popular music styles from Vanuatu (see 2.1). Popular music genres that use electrical amplified instruments and a drumset primarily include a local variety of reggae (*rege*), which connects with the global reggae-community, mainly referring to Jamaica, South- and West Africa. At the same time, *rege* is a distinctive style located in Vanuatu and Melanesia, clearly differing from African or Caribbean reggae. People in Vanuatu make a sharp distinction between stringband music on the one hand and various forms of popular music on the other. Since the dichotomy of these realms of music is so central to this work I adopt the emic categories of stringband music (*stringban miusik*) and *pop miusik*.

For the purpose of understanding what constitutes stringband music as opposed to *pop miusik* (and many popular music genres in general) it makes sense to comment on some aspects which are often the subject of studies on popular music and which are even used as criteria for the definition of popular music by some.[13] Many writers on popular music consider music in relation to (1) media, (2) urbanity, (3) the market, (4) professionalism, (5) modernity (as an antithesis to traditional ways), (6) a star system, (7) a high turnover of repertoire, (8) counter-cultures and (9) a way of escaping the everyday.

Although the media in Vanuatu do play a part in the distribution of stringband music and

[11] There is no consistent umbrella term, however most ni-Vanuatu refer to this music as *singsing blong jos* or else call it *gospel miusik* or *kwaea* (thus pronouncing the importance of singing in this music).

[12] After detecting these during my fieldwork in Vanuatu, I found that Webb had identitfied corresponding song categories in Papua New Guinea (PNG). These are *singsing tumbuna* (ancestral songs which "denote both precontact song forms and those more recently composed in precontact styles", Webb 1993: 95), *kwaia* (choral), stringband, and power band (playing with electrical equipment).

[13] See for example Manuel 1988 among many others. Some of these criteria indeed cannot claim validity for the definition of popular musics in their entirety and many studies have overcome or accommodated the views presented here. However, I find it easiest to contrast stringband music with these as a tool with which to describe the particularities of this genre.

popular music, in the former it is the live performance that is particularly important, this being especially true in the rural areas. In Island Melanesia, most people live in villages, scattered throughout many rural islands, yet they nevertheless use and produce (popular) music. It can be said that the role of the mass media – and with this – of urbanity, is far less important to the genre of stringband music than it is to many popular musics, including *rege* or *pop miusik* in general. For this reason, the power and the influence of the media on and with respect to stringband music is also limited. The market for MCs and CDs in Vanuatu is very small. Thus, an overriding focus on consumption which is emphasized in many studies is not of great help in researching the music scene in Vanuatu, as becomes evident in Chapter 5. Although there are some musicians who earn a living by playing live music at hotels for tourists, even the most successful and influential musicians are not normally professionals in the sense that they exclusively make music over a long period of time to support themselves and their families.

According to Manuel "[…] popular musics tend to be secular entertainment musics whose production and consumption are not intrinsically associated with special traditional life-cycle functions or rituals" (1988: 3). However, there are indeed forms of popular music which play an important part in the context of traditional rituals.[14] *Kastom*, which refers to the knowledge and practices concerning tradition and custom in Vanuatu, is a crucial concept in many respects. It is meaningful in terms of politics, religion, language, housing, the arts and economical aspects. Keesing remarks that: "*Kastom* does not correspond neatly to English 'custom' or to anthropological usages of 'culture'. *Kastom* canonically denotes ancestrally enjoined rules for life […]" (Keesing 1982: 360). And MacClancy writes: "Left vague and undefined, *kastom* was exploited by people to mean different things at different times" (MacClancy 2002: 137; see also Maas 1994: 14). Although I found no example of stringband music actually used in *kastom* rituals, e.g. grade-taking ceremonies[15], it can be said that more often than not, playing in a stringband is restricted to a phase in the life of a man, that is before marriage (see Chapter 7). This could be understood as a life-cycle 'function'.

Even if the media in Vanuatu (especially the print media) use wording that resembles that of boulevard magazines in Western countries in order to describe a group or a musician, there is no such thing as a 'star system' in Vanuatu (see Manuel 1988: 3). Even the most popular

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[14] An example is the project NEMINAMEL in Malekula where not only rhythms, tunes and instruments from *kastom miusik* are used and mixed with modern technology but where the song itself does not lose its significance and meaning that it has in its original 'traditional version'. The pop-version produces additional layers of meaning.

[15] It is used, however, in parts of the country during the festivities surrounding circumcision.

musicians can be met in a schoolyard, a *nakamal* or in the market place and are quite accessible.

According to Manuel (1988: 3), a "high turnover of repertoire is a characteristic feature of popular music, where the media strive to promote continued interest in the most recent releases of an artist". As far as the criterion of the rapid turnover of repertoire is concerned, it should be noted that many stringband songs are passed from one generation to the next and thus become 'tradition'. The repertoires can be related to special kin groups because the stringband members are normally connected through family ties. Stringband music as a genre itself even takes the place and character of *kastom* in some communities (see 1.1.6).

Subversion and symbolic gestures of opposition are often considered to be an important part of popular culture (Behrends 2003: 176 f.). This is not at all the case for stringband music; nor does popular culture always serve the interests of the oppressed, but "may in fact uphold hegemonic ideological patterns" (Waterman 1990: 9, see also Manuel 1988: 13 f.). Vanuatu stringband music is an example of a rather conservative music culture that also includes characteristics of traditional musics from Vanuatu, thus following in its footsteps.[16]

Song lyrics often belong to the field of fantasy. The songwriter usually has the possibility to slip into a role and thus sing, act and say things that would not make sense or be appropriate in his or her everyday life.[17] In the lyrics of stringband songs, however, there are changes of perspective (e.g. a boy singing from the perspective of a girl) but the songs' plots are never made up, rather being taken from real life. When a love story is told, for example, it is a true story that has happened to people from the same social environment of the one who wrote the lyrics.[18] At least in this sense, stringband music is not used as "a way of escaping the everyday", as Shepherd puts it (1992: 129).

It is important to stress those aspects of syncretic musics that do not match with the mainstream sounds and habits of the 'North Atlantic axis'.[19] Thus the relation of peripheral

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[16] For example this can be seen from the reaction of the audience and its interaction with the group which at times takes on the character of a communal performance rather than that of passive consumption – another 'essential' aspect ascribed to popular music (Manuel 1988: 15).

[17] Although fans and listeners might sometimes not realize this, mistaking imagined plots for real ones, as well as identifying the singer with the protagonist.

[18] The far-reaching consequences of this characteristic with regard to the artistic design of the lyrics might become clear when comparing a song like 'Yellow Submarine' or 'Octopus's Garden' from THE BEATLES with stringband song texts (see 6.2 for a detailed description of lyrics in stringband music).

[19] "Popular Music Studies has primarily applied itself to what might be termed a North Atlantic axis – seeing the music cultures of the USA and United Kingdom (and, to a lesser extent, those of Canada and western Europe) as constituting its essential culture and focus" (Hayward 1998: 2). Weiss uses the term "European-North American

musics to the global mainstream becomes evident. I hope that this study can contribute to the recognition of peripheral music scenes that have developed their own unique characteristics.

1.1.2 The Global and the Local

“Globalization begins at home”
(Turino 2000: 3).

As in most debates on syncretic musics two polarising aspects are especially important for this study – ‘the global’ and ‘the local’. As Giddens sets out, globalisation is one of the fundamental consequences of modernity which, in turn, is characterised through the development of national states and systematic capitalist production – phenomena that originated in 17th century Europe and which have spread since around the world (1990: 64). However, it is important to keep in mind “that Western modernity is not the only one of its kind” (Brumann 1998: 501). Philip Hayward remarks: “This picture looks quite different from particular non-Western locations, especially when the focus is on the character and agency of the local rather than on local vulnerability to Western influences” (Hayward 2012: 52). Colin Sparks hints at the fact that “there is no such thing as a global public sphere at the moment” among other things because “[the media’s] audiences are too small, too rich, and too English-speaking to be considered inclusive” (Sparks 2004: 145). Even though access to the internet has increased in places like Vanuatu in recent years, his concerns must not be disregarded.

As Sparks comments, in Giddens’ view of “globalization as a generalization of modernity” it is “that characteristic feature of western modernity, the nation state, that is globalized. ‘Local,’ here, means ‘state’” (2004: 141). In this text, I usually refer to ‘the local level’ when talking about village contexts or communities within an island or neighbourhoods in Luganville or Port Vila, that is, an indeed very circumscribed locality. According to the context, ‘regional’ relates either to regions (for example provinces) within Vanuatu or to the wider Melanesian context. Any statements in this text referring to the ‘national level’ are of relevance for the whole of Vanuatu. ‘The global’ refers, as outlined by Sparks, “to some level of social, economic, political and cultural organization that is more extensive than that provided by the states that divide the world” (2004: 143).

Popular and syncretic music can be regarded as a global phenomenon insofar as some stylistic elements of different origin (Western or else), which spread all over the world especially by

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arc” (Weiss 2014: 509). Besides, Manuel hints at the fact that popular culture studies often “restrict their scope to the capitalist world”, leaving aside socialist societies (Manuel 1987: 161 & 1988: 15).

way of the mass media, contribute to an international 'toolbox' of stylistic idioms. This 'toolbox' has some homogenising effects in the sense that it results in a worldwide distribution of some musics or at least some of their elements which are often simplified and standardised in the process of transculturation (Guilbault 1993: xvii f., Manuel 1988: 21). Theodor W. Adorno states that popular music as such is standardised: because the music follows similar structures all the time, single patterns can easily be exchanged.[20] If a musical or lyrical pattern proves to be successful, it is exploited commercially over and over.

Though in fact the usage of single reproduced musical motives and hackneyed phrases in lyrics reach a peak with the sampling technology and have never been as easy as today, the view of global (popular) music as a toolbox containing tools of musical motives and standardised lyrics that always fit to each other is rather simplistic.[21] This view not only underestimates the musicians' creativity and potential to develop special, localised forms of music but implies, in a way, that all music has the properties of a 'universal language' or a 'universal expression of emotion'; views which have long been rejected in ethnomusicology (e.g. Morey 1940, Seeger 1941 quoted in Merriam 1964: 10; Herzog 1946, quoted in Merriam 1964: 10, and Farnsworth 1958: 106-108).[22] This view might result from the fact that "[t]hose sonic features of popular music that might be regarded as complex are not those well represented in traditional Western musical notation, and so receive little recognition" (Horner 1999: 20).

Popular music writers often portrayed the Anglo-American dominance in the international popular music industry as a form of cultural imperialism that seeks to incorporate local forms of popular music for Anglo- and Eurocentric markets (Mitchell 1996: 1). Many authors quote Alan Lomax, who voiced the fear of a "cultural grey-out" (2009 [1968]: 4).[23]

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[20] See his essay "On Popular Music" (1941) and "Einleitung in die Musiksoziologie" ("Introduction to the Sociology of Music") (1975).

[21] Here I refer to music in general. Many genres – and stringband music is a good example – are very standardised *in themselves*.

[22] However, this does not mean that different musics cannot be combined in some way: "There can be no valid musical reason why any music cannot in principle be part of a transculturation process involving any other music. All musics can be said to be similar and compatible in some respect or other" (Kartomi 1981: 240). See also Adorno (1975: 186) and the discussion of compatibility by Nettl (1985: 44-46).

[23] For example Manuel (1988: v). Hannerz refers to the notion of global cultural homogenisation as 'alarmism' (Hannerz 2002 [1989]: 42). George Ritzer uses the concept of "McDonaldization of society" as a metaphor for trends of rationalisation, standardisation and homogenisation of culture (1983). Resembling this, some linguists fear the so-called "Global (or World) English phenomenon" (Berger 2003: xix) with English becoming a worldwide lingua franca.

Fredrik Barth criticises geographical and social isolation being regarded as “the critical factors in sustaining cultural diversity” (1969: 9). Many case examples of syncretic music genres prove that the contrary is the case: although geographical and social isolation are weakened by various processes of globalisation, a great diversity of musical styles exists, and new local styles emerge.

Music is not bound to physical place, and is thus “the cultural form best able […] to cross borders” (Frith 1996: 125). People from different parts of the world can have access to transnational spaces, that is, music cultures that are constructed as ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson 1983, Klenke 2000: 114 f.). Although the different musics are related to the place where they evolve (and thus differ from each other according to different factors in play at these places), they can, at least in principle, be picked up everywhere. The only precondition seems to be that the music must be available.[24] Often though, the use of (popular) culture and music in the places where it originated differs quite considerably from where it is eventually received. Aesthetic boundaries of even important global genres with strong ideological content like hip-hop or reggae are blurred considerably as connotations and meanings of musics change when they flow from one place (and its people) to another place (and to other people). Thus, music referred to as ‘reggae’ in one place might sound considerably different from what is received as being ‘reggae’ in another place.

In the course of globalisation, the pressure for local autonomy and regional cultural identity becomes stronger (Giddens 1990: 65), quite apart from nationalism, which is “[a]n important force working against homogenization …” (Brumann 1998: 496). So, in the overall picture, we can by no means observe mere processes that lead to a homogenisation in the realm of popular culture, because at the same time the contrary is true. The following chapters contain multiple examples which illustrate this point.

In fact, from the spectrum offered (and listened to), only a small section is put to its own musical practice or interwoven with its own innovations concerning styles etc. The subject of discussion is the connotations that come with (or often rather do *not* come with) received popular musics from elsewhere. It is interesting to consider why some ‘styles’, ‘moves’, ‘rhymes’ and ‘beats’ from the USA, the Caribbean or France are quickly absorbed by ni-

[24] The availability of international music is certainly a crucial point in remote places. In Vanuatu, the free availability and exchangeability of elements and styles of music was not given at the time of fieldwork. A highly selective range of international popular music was available in a handful of places in the capital of Vanuatu and CDs were very expensive. There was only one TV channel occasionally showing video clips from overseas with a transmitter of very limited range. This situation has changed in recent years due to increased access to mobile phones and the internet.

Vanuatu musicians and dancers (such as the genres reggae and zouk), while others are not (such as heavy metal and Western art music); or why some subjects for song lyrics which are popular with Western musicians are avoided altogether (such as explicit references to sexuality), while there are lyrics about 'strange' subjects (from the perspective of the 'not initiated').

One of my objectives is to show how global, international, regional and local affinities are constructed in stringband music. In the course of the following chapters, I will consider some cases of adaptation and rejection in order to locate Vanuatu's syncretic music in 'the local' and 'the global' and thus show how musical practices in Vanuatu can create senses of locality and identity.

1.1.3 The Rootedness in *Ples*

There are numerous 'ethnographies of place', which address the concepts of landscape, space and place in Melanesian communities. As Joël Bonnemaison notes, "primary to the definition of Melanesian identity is … rootedness at the heart of a living space full of meaning and powers" (1985: 32):

> The sovereignty of groups within their own spaces is based on a territorial ideology that goes hand in hand with a will to egalitarianism, even anarchy. This tendency continues today and favours political subdivision and cultural diversity. Everyone is master of his own place, as long as he is what is called in Bislama a 'man ples'; that is, a man who derives down the whole chain of his ancestors from the place where he lives (Bonnemaison 1985: 40).

Authors describe the notions of landscapes in Melanesia as dynamic and changeable; space is described as a 'floating value' (Bonnemaison 1994: 321) and "imbued with temporality" (Telban 2019: 487). The ideology of territory and the identity of places bring the principle of the inalienability of land in its wake (Bonnemaison 1985: 51). Land cannot belong to a single person and thus "it is inherently dividual" (Hess 2009: 116).[25] Carlos Mondragón hints to the fact that, in the Torres Islands, "patterns of territorial identity and controlled flow are never stable" because the nucleated kin groups involved "are the outcome of ongoing

[25] Ever since Marilyn Strathern's influential book *The gender of the gift* (1988), studies on Melanesian personhood show particular interest in 'dividuality' and the relational aspects of persons. Sabine Hess (2009) describes the situational character of the 'Melanesian person's' relationality, partibility and permeability across a wide spectrum with regard to a case example from Vanuatu. According to Bonnemaison, notions of dividual personhood are also connected to traditional alliances in Vanuatu: "The Shepherd islander, in receiving a customary title that associates him with other territories, is placed at the center of a knot of interlinked relationships. He will have a dual, sometimes multiple, identity" (1985: 47).

social relations" (2008: 122); for example, access to land can change through marriage or death of relatives.

In Melanesia, there is a strong connection between landscapes and cosmology, myths of origin and dwelling places of invisible beings, as "many significant landforms are the result of the passages and actions of ancient wandering heroes" (Telban 2019: 489).[26] In many places in Vanuatu, concepts of identity are connected to 'root-places' or 'founding places' (*stamba* in Bislama) where founding ancestors first appeared (Bonnemaison 1985 & 1994, Taylor 2008, Mondragòn 2008). James J. Fox introduces the notion of 'topogeny', an ordered succession of place names: "Generally these topogenies assume the form of a journey: that of an ancestor, an origin group or an object" (Fox 2006: 89). Often these are commemorated in songs and 'mythical cycles' (for Vanuatu see Ammann 2012: 41 ff. and Bonnemaison 1994: 114). In some cases, such myths and their remembrance are of great importance because territorial rights are derived from them:

> In the negotiations, the man who can sing the … song related to the piece of land in question has the final argument. For this reason songs are kept secret and are only performed as a final trumpcard. … The song's content speaks about the early migration of the ancestors and the names of the places through which they travelled (Ammann 2012: 44; see also Bonnemaison 1985: 32 for the case example Tanna).

While "place names function as mnemonic devices that help people to recall stories, specific events or emotions" (Hess 2009: 122), some songs are linked to particular places (e.g. Jolly 2003: 192) and stringband songs in particular are used to remember people, incidents and places.

Undomesticated space "is possessed, named and converted into an inhabited place" (Eves 2006: 181), processes which involve movement, the means by which people "mark out the boundaries of the space they own and inhabit" (ibid.: 184). In traditional Melanesian society, a 'circular mobility' (Bonnemaison 1985) within networks of alliances with populations on other islands involved journeys along established and customary 'routes', 'roads' or 'paths' (see also Bonnemaison 1994 & Bolton 1999a: 49 f.). For centuries, extensive exchange cycles comprised various islands in the Solomons and in Vanuatu and perhaps extended into the south as far as the Loyalty group and New Caledonia. Despite these connections and travels, there are "islands in Vanuatu that did not traditionally have names as a whole" (Mondragón

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[26] There are accounts of the creation of various islands of Vanuatu: for the island of Tanna see Bonnemaison (1985: 32 ff. and 1994), for Ambrym see Patterson (2002: 205), for Vanua Lava see Hess (2009: 15 f.), for Ambae see Bolton (1999a: 45) and for Pentecost see Jolly (2003).

2008: 118, relating to Van Trease 1987, see also Patterson 2002: 206).[27] As in other parts of Melanesia, people in Vanuatu do not intrude into the areas of other kin groups. As a result, it may occur “that no single person ever comes to possess first-hand knowledge of every inch of their home island, no matter how small its surface area may be” (Mondragón 2008: 122; see also Bonnemaison 1985: 39).

Thus, Melanesian identity is determined by both rootedness around primordial places and mobility along roads of alliance. As Bonnemaison writes, “[b]eyond the territory proper, these roads form part of the space of identity” (1985: 46). He notes: “mobility … has widened horizons and multiplied roads. New solidarities have emerged – regional, economic, religious, national – so that island societies are far less grounded on clans articulated around microterritories, but are increasingly village based, penetrated by the international monetary economy, and organized over larger areas of space” (1985: 60).

It is certainly true that mobility widens the horizons of musicians, and many examples of musicians’ travels are provided throughout this book. As Daniela Kraemer shows, the roads themselves can become places: in contrast to most ni-Vanuatu for whom their home island is an important marker of their identity, young men in Freswota, Port Vila, create a new identity. For some who were born in town, “not having access to the land of a home island place involves an ontological shift” (Kraemer 2013: 37) which involves “place making activities” (ibid.) to transform “the area in which they live from a place with no shared and relevant social meaning into a place imbued with greater collective significance” (ibid.: 40), as well as to transform “themselves from unplaced persons into emplaced ‘Freswota men’” (ibid.).

While Kraemer depicts the situation of people born in town, many of those persons who come to town from other islands and villages do settle in the same neighborhoods and thus rebuild their communities based on ‘territorial solidarity’ (Bonnemaison’s term; 1985: 58):

> The longest established have often jointly bought urban land, where little societies reconstitute themselves on miniterritories, with their own space and new hierarchies. … Young bachelors, who find in being mobile a means of temporary escape from the constraints of rural society without completely severing their ties, are particularly well represented in these group structures (ibid.).

This also applies to many stringband musicians. They engage in practices of place-making by creating and recording stories of the place, thus developing the (oral) history of the urban

[27] An example being the island of Loh “with a surface area that encompasses less than twelve square kilometres” (Mondragón 2008: 118). Many islands have been known by several names. See also Taylor (2003: 2) and Rodman & Rodman (1985).

setting they live in. Bolton notes that "*kastom* mediates and expresses place-based identity" (1999a: 43). I argue that stringband music likewise constitutes a cultural formula which helps to emplace people in their *ples* – whether in town or in the village. The song's plots are usually specifically located and in this way, bands demonstrate their affiliation to particular places.

1.1.4 Identification Through Acquisition, Identity Through Innovation

Our identity is dependent on our affiliations to diverse groups. Some of those groups are defined, we are born into them and it is very difficult or even impossible to change our belonging to them. Other affiliations we construct on our own, as a result of our decision to stand out against or to join others. Some group affiliations we can give up quite easily while others might leave their mark on us for the rest of our lives. This is one way in which we acquire, form, and change our identity during the course of time. In normal circumstances, every one of us participates in many of these groups.

Cultural practices, such as music, play a crucial role in the formation of some of these groups; they create social networks and they have the power to determine which social and cultural elements and which places are the points of reference for identification and group affiliation. This goes not only for the musicians but also, on an ad hoc basis, for the listeners.[28] Group affiliations can also be imagined – just like imagined localisations of music: for example, we feel spiritually akin to faraway musicians and their audiences which we read about in fanzines. Because of some of its features, music is crucial for processes of identity construction and identity representation. Music often has catchy tunes, creates various atmospheres and there are not many people who can really resist music (see the aphorism to 1.1). Though bound to certain material preconditions (instruments, audio devices etc.) music is an immaterial cultural product which, as such, lends itself perfectly to acquisition. Copyright legislation (not existent in Vanuatu at the time of fieldwork) cannot keep musicians from copying, modifying or 'acquiring' other styles in all different shades. Most music is created for the consumption of others. It changes with fashion and it is not uncommon to see young people having other preferences than their parents. There is, in other words, free choice – of course "within the limitations of world view and material circumstance" (Waterman 1990: 7). Some questions for this study are: which (imagined) group affiliations do musicians in Vanuatu create (for

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[28] One might feel a kind of unity with other fans during a concert, or one might remember one's affiliation while listening to music when somewhere away from home and feeling lonely.

themselves and others)? How do they construct these affiliations? How is identity constructed through music on different levels?

Musical influences from other places change local listening habits and musicians' practices. If people start to integrate foreign musics into their lives, they begin to identify with them in one way or another. It is important to note that "a 'disjuncture' (Appardurai 1990, 1996) between technical, economic, and symbolic forces which may all travel their separate paths allows for very selective adaptions" (Brumann 1998: 496).[29]

I argue that identification requires processes of acquisition which make the exploitation and use of those musics possible, that is to say the construction of identities in local contexts. There is a need for modification, because a music that emerged in a quite different context and under possibly completely different circumstances has to become meaningful in the new context. The creative processes of acquisition, combination, modification and innovation are means in the processes of identity construction. Acquisition – other authors refer to this process as 'indigenisation' (Waterman 1990, Goldsworthy 1998, Appardurai 2002, Gillespie 2010), 'hybridization' (Mitchell 1996), 'creolisation' (Hannerz 1987) 'localization' (Diettrich, Moulin & Webb 2011), 'domestification' (Tobin 1992), 'incorporation', '(reverse) appropriation'[30] (Mitchell 1996), '(musical) transculturation' (Kartomi 1981), and 'recontextualization'[31] etc. – is creative in the sense that it, as already mentioned above, entails changes and adjustments in performance and meaning.[32] The range of musical synthesis happening within the process of acquisition is quite wide: it starts from "transfers of discrete musical traits" (Kartomi 1981: 236), "scenarios in which a musician 'borrows' (or copies, or steals) a phrase or style or sound or inflection from another musician" (Mitchell 1996: 8), but can also incorporate further processes as well as extra-musical aspects of the cultural text of 'popular music' like dance and subjects of lyrics. Kartomi points out that:

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[29] Arjun Appadurai regards the global cultural economy as "a complex, overlapping disjunctive order" (Appadurai 2002: 50) which is characterized through the growing disjunctures among what he calls "five dimensions of global cultural flows": ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes and ideoscapes (ibid.). These are the components of "imagined worlds" (Appadurai 2002: 51).

[30] While "[appropriation is] often associated with an assumed exploitation of weaker or subservient social or ethnic groups by more dominant and powerful groups […] and seen as a process akin to colonization" Mitchell applies the term 'reverse appropriation' for "a process of adoption of socially dominant forms of music by economically weaker and less developed minority societies […]" (Mitchell 1996: 8).

[31] Androutsopoulos & Scholz (2002) apply the notion of 'recontextualization' for their research on hip-hop in continental Europe. They take over this concept from John Clarke (1993).

[32] I choose the term 'acquisition' instead of one of the aforementioned to avoid including potential shades of meaning coming with them which are not necessary here or which might even lead the reader astray.

> "The process of intercultural musical synthesis […] is not a matter of the addition of single elements of one culture to another. It is a matter of setting into motion an essentially creative process, that is, the transformation of complexes of interacting musical and extramusical ideas" (Kartomi 1981: 232 f.).

There are many different possible responses to 'musical culture contact'. Drawing on a categorization by Nettl, Kartomi discusses the instances of rejection, the transfer of discrete traits, pluralistic coexistence, compartmentalization, nativistic revival, abandonment and impoverishment.[33] Acquisition of foreign musical ideas might take place for "purely musical reasons" (Kartomi 1981: 240), but more significant are the extramusical reasons, one of them being the establishment of identities (ibid.).

Without the processes of utilisation of foreign musical and extra-musical elements and aspects in the course of acquisition there can be no identification. The processes of acquisition and exploitation are accompanied by creative innovation. Both processes – acquisition and innovation – can and do result in the development of various musical genres.

The potential for identification with a given genre grows with the degree of its acquisition. When 'acquisition' is at its very beginning, identification is rather superficial, as is the case with mere copying. But 'acquisition' is more than copying or borrowing of globally available musical ideas. Local structures strongly determine the perception and use of foreign musics. International music is incorporated only selectively and according to the social and cultural background. And to select is, to have the choice. Although 'copied' music can involve musicians as well as its listeners equally emotionally, the music concerned is not perceived as someone's *own*.[34] Musicians have an active and creative part in these processes.

There are differences between stringband music and popular musics in Vanuatu, most notably concerning sound and the instruments used. As I argue in Chapter 2, special modifications and innovations of instruments during the processes of acquisition and the development of the stringband genre has led to this situation. However, there are also different implications of meaning within the different musical genres.[35] How distinguished stringband music actually is from *rege* and other popular musics in Vanuatu becomes manifest on the basis of its musical structure, the language and the topics of the lyrics, the performance contexts, the role and

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[33] Instead of 'impoverishment' we might more neutrally use 'reduction of a musical culture' (Klenke 2000: 76).

[34] This goes not only for such emotionally significant musical categories as laments: "Some of the motivations for differentiating a local or an individual practice seem clear enough: if a lament is 'not one's own, then it doesn't touch one emotionally'" (Blum 1994: 257).

[35] "[T]he borrowing of single discrete elements (such as a musical instrument)" (Kartomi 1981: 232) is not always isolated from other processes taking place at the same time. For example the usage of a certain musical instrument in a new context can induce other changes in the music that go deeper than on a mere technical level.

behaviour of the audience, as well as the organisation aspects of the groups.

While *rege* is a quite recent phenomenon – it arrived in the aftermath of the advent of the widely known West-Papuan group BLACK BROTHERS in Vanuatu in 1986 – the initial processes of acquisition and innovation that led to the evolution of the *stringban*-genre took place several decades before. For a long time, stringband music has been an established, though dynamic genre that has continually developed since its beginnings, which I suspect were in the 1940s. Although further development persists in the present, the genre is subject to relatively static (musical and extra-musical) structures. Sujets, stylistic means in lyrics, musical, and organisational structures have been standardised. Influences are picked up, but they are consistently incorporated without changing the core of the structures.[36] Stringband music is remarkable for its autonomous and self-confident standing; it never mixes with forms of popular music despite the fact that the music of stringbands as well as that of *pop miusik* groups is influenced by ecclesiastical music, and both occasionally fall back upon musical elements or patterns from traditional musics. When considering the musical characteristics of stringband music in detail, one realises that it is not easily exchangeable or fusable with other styles (see 2.1.1 and Chapter 3). When amplifiers, electric guitars, bass guitars and finally keyboards became available, stringband music was not diffused within *pop miusik* but asserted itself as an independent genre. Stringband music is still seldom played by older musicians; it is precisely the young men who are the bearers of the culture.

I argue that apart from these aspects, there is another main difference in meaning between stringband music and popular musics from Vanuatu. To ni-Vanuatu, stringband music is not merely an alternative to any popular music genre, whether local (e.g. *rege*), from the region (e.g. *kaneka* from New Caledonia) or international (e.g. hip-hop), but – at least in many places – rather a part of life, like hymns from one's church or *kastom miusik* from one's island. Hence, for many people, the question of whether one likes stringband music simply does not arise. Occasionally I even saw exactly those islanders enjoying a stringband performance who had stated earlier that they were not very interested in this kind of music. There is no question about the genre as such, and stringband music and popular musics from Vanuatu are never in a relationship of competition.[37] While the "adoption of particular styles as emblematic

[36] This is exemplified through cover versions. The musicians do not aim to copy the original version as well as possible but rather interpret it in a way that is concurrent with the aesthetic standards of the stringband genre.

[37] The coexistence of stringband music and popular musics in Vanuatu might fall into the category of musical 'compartmentalization' (see Merriam 1964: 315 & Kartomi 1981: 237).

expressions of identity" (Waterman 1990: 7) might take place when ni-Vanuatu make use of international popular music styles, stringband music refers predominantly to the local sphere.
Most *pop miusik* musicians in Vanuatu have also played stringband music in the past (or are still doing so) and there is no polarisation of listeners to either side (that is, listeners do not confine themselves solely to stringband music or to popular music). Despite the obvious differences mentioned above, this seems less confusing when one takes into consideration the status of stringband music in Vanuatu as well as the plurality of identity in general. Sometimes songs are transferred from one genre to another. Mixtures between musics (for example *kastom miusik* and *pop miusik*) and renderings or 'translations' from one genre to another are part of the acquisition processes leading to identification and thus, in the end, to identity construction. It is surely worthwhile to take a closer look at the principles underlying these renderings in the future.
While the assessment of the global media's impact on traditional musics in Vanuatu is beyond my scope in this work, I do wish to show that there can be no question of a reduction of popular music or of an inevitable convergence to the Western nations' commercial music. For much of the population, Vanuatu's popular music styles are less successful for the identification as 'ni-Vanuatu' than is stringband music. For this reason, stringband music plays a special role in Vanuatu's cultural identity as compared to popular music styles.

1.1.5 The Quest for a National Musical Identity

> "Unification, the overcoming of imported divisions and the taking by *kastom* of its proper place in the new order are none of them easy goals, especially for a nation with the same number of people as live in a small English market town" (MacClancy 2002: 160).

The realm of music provides a good example of how ni-Vanuatu integrate international influences and yet hold on to (or revitalize) local ways of life and traditions at the same time, and, in doing so, are searching for their own, distinctive identity. By musical and extra-musical means, as well as by language, this takes place in different ways, depending on the genre.
The creation of a national 'musical' identity of Vanuatu, that is to say an unmistakable and typical music from Vanuatu, is in fact a more or less concrete long-term objective of many musicians of all ages. It is noticeable that many perceive this lack and strive to find a remedy.

In this respect, the music scenario in Vanuatu differs very much from the cultural landscape of a Western country like, for example Germany, where we find a multitude of music-related groups, often referred to as 'subcultures', many of which are not confined to national boundaries as is, for example hip-hop. For many Western musicians it seems to be a requirement to try to find an individual style, a niche, within a special genre. Social groups in urban Melanesia, however, crystallise not so much around 'subcultures' but more according to origin and language.

National unity and thus 'national music' are burning issues everywhere in the world but seem particularly connected to the condition of many postcolonial states. The search of a national style among ni-Vanuatu musicians is confined to the realm of *pop miusik*. There is no doubt about the status of stringband music as *wan nasonal miusik blong Vanuatu*. For decades it has been used to represent the country during Expos and tourism-related events in Australia, Europe and in the country itself. Despite this, stringband musicians usually lack the aspiration to go beyond the domestic market. As opposed to this, much of Vanuatu's *pop miusik* is produced with a clear focus on international audiences, at least within Melanesia.

Of course, one reason for a nation-wide orientation of stringbands is the prospect of selling their albums as widely as possible. Besides, music can have political relevance on a national scale if it addresses national concerns. Sometimes popular music is used as a forum for the young to express opposition and to criticise politics, society at large, or the world of the older adults. This is also the case in Vanuatu; however, at least as many ni-Vanuatu musicians approve of the status quo, their songs providing instructions for socially acceptable conduct. This is especially so in stringband music. Stringband competitions are often organised by (governmental) institutions, and songs that are composed particularly for these events carry messages that mirror the official lines. Most of the competition's themes address a special but common problem[38]; for this reason, a substantial part of stringband songs is about common concerns. This situation, as well as the fact that stringband lyrics always exhibit a strong reference to the realities of everyday life in Vanuatu, contributes to the construction of stringband music as a national musical style of Vanuatu. Stringband music seems to be a perfect tool to invoke unity and solidarity not only on the national level but also within provinces, island communities, political parties and churches – crucial in a very heterogeneous

[38] The subjects of the lyrics are meant to create awareness in the fields of education, health, agricultural produce, development, tourism, environment and so forth. The contests take place at occasions like independence celebrations and Children's Day (see 4.5.1).

situation with many languages and local cultures involved. Faced with the huge diversity of cultural practices in Vanuatu, the fairly homogeneous and standardised stringband music acts as an opposite pole. Keeping the national elections in mind, it is in the interests of politicians to reinforce ni-Vanuatu unity. I argue that stringband music plays an active role in building the nation. It has played a major part in the rallies of political parties preceding independence. In this respect, it is more present on a national level than is any form of *pop miusik*.

The search for a unique national *pop miusik* style of Vanuatu is characterised through attempts to incorporate Melanesian elements. Some musicians try to follow the example set by the Australian Yolngu rock group YOTHU YINDI, who achieved the status of cultural ambassadors (Mitchell 1996: 2), or adapt themselves to *kaneka* music from New Caledonia. These attempts constitute a balancing act to communicate traditional values in a form acceptable for young people of their own (speech) community, while producing a representational style on a national level and an international appealing piece of 'world music' at the same time.

1.1.6 *Pop Miusik* and *Stringban Miusik* as 'Tradition'

If we speak of 'traditions' within popular music, we generally refer either to the following of musicians to former musicians' styles ('in the tradition of…'), or to certain scenes/subcultures[39] in the sense of 'schools'. In Melanesia there are also other connotations of 'tradition' in the context of popular music. Many studies concerning identity in Melanesia focus on its relation to custom. There is no doubt about the importance of these strong ties and even in the realm of popular culture we come across 'customs'.

In Melanesia the topic of 'identity' started gaining considerable importance when the first nations gained political independence in the early 1970s,[40] and has remained highly relevant. In the context of postcolonial nationalism and sometimes separatism, constructions of identity are constantly taking place, often including visions, ideologies and idealised representations of the past, namely precolonial times. Although these 'traditional ways of life' "may bear little relation to those documented historically, recorded ethnographically, and reconstructed

[39] I prefer 'scenes' for reasons I set forth in 1.2.1.

[40] Fiji achieved independence in 1970, Papua New Guinea in 1975, the Solomon Islands in 1978 and Vanuatu in 1980. Until today, New Caledonia is attached to France as one of its 'Territoires d'Outre-Mer'. West Papua (which was called Irian Jaya or Irian Barat before) is still a province of Indonesia.

archaeologically", they function as political symbols for the unification or separation of population sections (Keesing 2000: 231).

As in other parts of Melanesia, where pidgin is spoken, the "ideologies of kastom" (ibid.: 232) are crucial for ni-Vanuatu society.[41] One basic problem in the construction of a national identity seems to lie in the heterogeneity of the island communities that form the nation state today. Unity is not easy to establish where no common cultural heritage exists, so the mere presence of any *kastom* in these communities represents the lowest common denominator and leads to such often quoted concepts as 'The Melanesian Way'.[42] Before, within the context of missionary efforts, *kastom* marked pagan practices and thus had a negative connotation (Tonkinson 1982: 313). But with the coming of independence, *kastom* as a general concept emerged as a resource of national ni-Vanuatu identity. Customary ways are very present in the public life of contemporary Vanuatu as well as in the form of legislation and institutions like the Vanuatu Kaljoral Senta or the Malvatumauri (National Council of Chiefs) which "was established to protect vanishing customs, culture and traditions" (Statistical Yearbook 2002: 12).

There is a fundamental ambiguity of the term *kastom*: on the one hand, it refers to a political ideology concerning the unity of the nation state, and on the other hand it serves to distinguish cultural entities on the local level (Maas 1994: 14). 'Enacted' *kastom* actually differs from island to island and sometimes even from village to village. The identification with the place of origin and thus with the local *kastom* attached to it is quite strong: "In Vanuatu, when asked where you are from, people will tell you the name of their family's *home island*, regardless of whether they have ever lived there or not" (National Statistics Office: 2001: 72, italics as in the original).[43]

The concept of *kastom* shows that tradition is not static, timeless, and unchanging but rather flexible and subject to diverse interpretations and usages. The Vanuatu Kaljoral Senta's mission is not only to preserve and protect *kastom*, but also to develop it (Regenvanu 1999: 98). *Kastom* ideology as a component in the politics of post-colonial Melanesia is creative as it

[41] In Fiji the corresponding concept is 'vakavanua,' while in New Caledonia the term 'coutume' is used.

[42] Keesing states that 'The Melanesian Way' partly emerged from the colonial encounter. Colonised islanders "have valorized elements of their own cultural traditions – decontextualized or transformed – as symbols of the contrast between those traditions and Western culture" (Keesing 2000: 240). They "also incorporate Western conceptions of Otherness, visions of primitivity, and critiques of modernity" (Keesing 2000: 241).

[43] This situation has changed in recent years, as some younger second-generation migrants in Port Vila identify themselves "not as people of an 'island place' (*man ples*) or multiple island places, as do their parents, but as 'children in town' […]. For them, growing up in town has constituted them in different ways from their rural counterparts" (Kraemer 2013: 28).

modifies and reconstructs, at times even invents cultural elements to suit ideological objectives (Tonkinson 1982: 311 f., Keesing 2000).

In Vanuatu, stringband music and popular music are both perceived as cultural fields and practices apart from *kastom*; yet they have nevertheless found their way into celebrations like arts festivals, where otherwise *kastom miusik* and traditional dances are performed, and are often not understood as strictly divided spheres. While the music genres (traditional musics, stringband music and popular music) vary significantly in terms of sound, tradition or *kastom* is linked in many ways with syncretic musics in Vanuatu:

(1) **lyrics:** many lyrics are in one of the vernacular languages of Vanuatu.[44] By using their vernacular (*lanwis* in Bislama) the performing group stresses its origin, its particular local identity which is an important part of the notion of *kastom*. There are lyrics which address both the importance of *kastom* and the appeal to take care of it.

(2) **oral tradition:** a big part of the stringband repertoire consists of songs that represent an historic record in the sense of an oral tradition of, for example, a village community; commissioned to commemorate certain persons or events.

(3) **genre transgression:** some stringbands and pop groups in Vanuatu experiment with *kastom miusik*.[45] While doing so, musicians usually only use traditional melodies, song texts or rhythms from their own community (there is a vast diversity of local traditions in Vanuatu; these are perceived as belonging to the prevailing cultural groups, mostly defined as language communities). In this regard, there is a remarkable difference between the production and the reception of the music: while all ni-Vanuatu can listen to the music, only those may produce it who have the right to perform and use the prevailing traditional musical elements (or have acquired the right from the authorities within the community, usually the *jif* or elders).[46]

(4) **new traditions:** inventions and stylistic coinage in cultural practices in Vanuatu are soon received as 'tradition' owned by its practitioners and their community – in the

[44] Vanuatu exhibits the greatest density of languages worldwide (see 1.4.2).

[45] Given the fact that there are over one hundred different cultural areas in Vanuatu, there is not much point in using the term 'the traditional music of Vanuatu', which is why I prefer the plural, 'musics'. In this work, I apply 'traditional music' interchangeably with *kastom miusik*.

[46] '*Jif*' (chief) corresponds rather to the anthropological concept of 'big man'. In the context of their indirect rule policy, the British applied the 'chief'-concept (and the term), as they were accustomed to from Polynesia and Fiji, to Melanesia's 'big man'. So nowadays *jif* in Bislama is common to refer to both bearers of status (though *big man* is used too, of course; see also Keesing 2000: 233; MacClancy 2002: 108, 137). Since the two terms (chief and *jif*) are not congruent, I use the Bislama term in this text.

same way as recognized forms of *kastom* like a dance or a folk tale (*kastom stori*). They are guarded against those not belonging to the community, yet shared within it:

> "The most surprising aspect of all traditional customs in Vanuatu is the high degree of creativity. Each island is determined to be unique, different to others, and sovereign. In the same way each group jealously guards its artistic heritage and ensures that nobody copies it without their knowledge. … The most dynamic groups constantly create new art forms …" (Statisical Yearbook 2002: 11).

Examples of such guarded practices are the creative inventions of musical instruments used only in the variation of stringband music from the southern island of Futuna, or the distinctive dance-style of the dance group VAKE which blends break dance elements with movements from traditional dances (*kastom danis*) from Tanna;

(5) **emphasis on continuity:** in Vanuatu, band members are usually related to each other. This applies to both pop groups and stringbands, with the latter often including more than one generation. Founded by their fathers and uncles, young men continue to play the compositions of the previous generation in the same stringband (without changing its name). They also learn how to play from their older relatives and proudly pronounce this continuity. This heredity of repertoire and belonging to a group is a distinguishing mark usually attributed to traditional music. Village and other communities identify with *their* stringband (the boys of their community that form a stringband);

(6) **representation:** in video clips and MC and CD covers there is extensive emblematic use of *kastom* images[47];

(7) **stringband music as a substitute for *kastom*:** stringband music and *kastom miusik* coexist in most regions of Vanuatu, while stringband music serves as a substitute for traditional musics of communities in the northern part of Efate and its offshore islands (Emao, Nguna, Pele) that were lost due to missionary zeal in the past. In this case, stringband music actually takes on the role and the meaning of *kastom miusik*;

(8) **exchange of cultural practices:** In Vanuatu, as in Melanesia in general, there is a long tradition of the incorporation of new cultural practices. These traditionally exchanged cultural practices include songs:

[47] Among the most popular are images of the *nanggol*, the land-diving practised in the southern part of Pentecost from April to June, in which boys and men jump from high wooden towers with lianas tied to their legs, and of the tall, erect slit-drums from Ambrym or Malakula, as well as of any traditional dance (*kastom danis*).

> "In the northern islands, the right to perform a certain song, dance, slit-drum rhythm, or part of a ritual, could be sold to another village. Since people often received new traditions in dreams, there was a constant, rapid change in the form of rituals as new variations were produced and other older ones sold to neighbouring villages. What was bought, however, was not always used in the same way by the purchasers as it had been by the sellers. Songs, for instance were often bought by people who did not understand the meaning of the words that they were singing. With copyright so important, people regarded anthropologists with suspicion and distrust; learning custom without providing any obvious benefit in return, they were considered thieves and to be dealt with as such" (MacClancy 2002: 28).[48]

> In a similar manner, stringband musicians occasionally take up songs that they have heard from other people – and not necessarily from other stringbands. This is not unusual for musicians in general but the stringband genre seems to have a special capacity to transform them according to its own aesthetic standards. At the same time, many ni-Vanuatu musicians do not reject impinging musics for 'purity's sake of their own music (see Kartomi 1981: 235) but are rather interested in incorporating any positive influence. As far as the ownership of songs is concerned, there are cases in which a stringband is commissioned to compose a song for someone for which they receive payment. The band is then expected to play that song whenever its owner (the client) demands it at celebrations in the village.

Applying musical components from one genre to another, for example employing local musical and linguistic idioms in syncretic musics, can be part of the processes of identity construction. I argue that musical 'borrowings' can become tradition in new contexts – sometimes quite fast indeed. The crucial point is that they become 'acquisitions' and, as such, involve modification and innovation. Popular culture is not exclusively a site in which to affirm modernity, but "a public arena for the symbolic negotiation of continuity and change" (Waterman 1990: 16). Stringband music is part of a local identity construction that tends to emphasise continuity with traditions.

[48] Bolton 1999a (3): "In a system in which knowledge, skills or songs are exchanged with finality, so that the giver loses the right to use the knowledge, skills or words given away, the researcher's taking of information in any form is unlikely to be seen as a neutral act". Other cultural practices exchanged in this way include sand drawings and even languages (as on the island of Ambae; see also Hyslop 2001: 1 f.).

1.2 The Research Background

Paul R. Farnsworth states: “Music is made of socially accepted patterns of sounds” (1958: 17). Fifty years later, Thomas Turino likewise pronounces the social character of music when stressing that music “is not a unitary art form, but rather … refers to fundamentally distinct types of activities that fulfil different needs and ways of being human” (2008: 1). Music is a field too broad to be grasped as one uniform phenomenon, whether social or tonal. It is consequently pointless to search for a universally applicable definition. Mitchell writes with reference to popular music since 1995: “Each sub-genre may still be related back to a core concept of ‘popular music’ (a term of almost infinite breadth of definition), but is probably best defined in its own terms and within its own musical and social parameters” (1996: 12). And Manuel demands: “[music] categories often can and should be employed as ‘-emic’ constructs in understanding ethnic music from the perspective of its own culture” (1988: 1). Consequently, I do not classify stringband music into a more general category but treat it, rather, as a distinct music genre, as do people in Vanuatu.

1.2.1 Studying Syncretic Musics

Our social location (gender, generation), the social practices in which we engage (dancing at clubs), and our specific histories (Horner 1999: 29) influence the ways we speak and think about music.[49] Corresponding to the diversity of social and cultural ‘settings’, as well as individual experiences, there is a multitude of constructions and practices of music which change in the course of time.[50] However, it is not only our constructions and practices of music that are susceptible to ambivalence and change. With reference to the bounds of existing conditions Horner writes: “those determinations are not uniform but diverse and conflicting. Thus, our individual experience is neither fixed nor uniform but shifting and contradictory” (Horner 1999: 29). A student of the jazz trumpet, for instance, can earn his livelihood while playing in a soul-cover-band and be a fan of the Australian rock group AC/DC at the same time.

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[49] This does not mean, however, that there is no scope for the creativity of the individual. “While it would surely be a mistake to underestimate the ‘iron hold of culture upon the average individual’ (Boas 1932: 613), it is also clear that human behaviour can never be the ‘mere execution of the model’ that guides it (Bourdieu 1977)” (Waterman 1990: 7 f.).

[50] “Every realization of musical norms in performance carries the potential for purposive or unconscious change; every enactment of tradition opens tradition to transformation […]” (Waterman 1990: 8).

> "And while for analytical purposes we can identify each of these as separate categories of music and musical meaning, in the actual process of lived practice the values and meanings and experience of them spill from one category to the next …" (ibid.).

This ambivalence in our individual experiences and the way we manage the meanings of music are the preconditions for the creative process of synthesis of different musics. Although all music is probably a product of synthesis, intercultural musical synthesis being the rule rather than the exception (Kartomi 1981: 230, Mitchell 1996: 239, see also Stross 1999: 258 & 266 and Acheraïou 2011: 1), its discursive qualities seem to be recognised especially in forms of non-Western popular music.[51] Popular musics, particularly those of 'indigenous' peoples outside the 'North Atlantic axis', are often called 'syncretic' or 'hybrid' forms of music.[52] The fundamental notion is that a 'traditional' or 'indigenous' music hybridises with imported, Western music styles. These cross-cultural musical styles are regarded as the products of contact between Western and non-Western cultures. In the absence of a better alternative, I use the term 'Western' in the customary figurative sense, although I agree with Kartomi that there is no real dichotomy between 'Western' and 'non-Western' (Kartomi 1981: 245).[53]

For a long time, ethnomusicologists confined themselves to the study of 'traditional' and 'classical' non-Western forms of music (e.g. courtly musics), neglecting syncretic musics.[54] This was partly due to the fact that the latter were not accepted as independent and elaborated

[51] By contrast, Acheraïou points to the fact that hybridity "has been a feature of all societies, from the Sumerians and Egyptians through the Greeks and Romans down to modern times" (2011: 1). There are not only syntheses of the musics of two 'cultures' (too often implicitly thought of as being static) but also "double or even triple acculturation[s]" (Kartomi quotes an unpublished thesis report by Axel Hesse from 1971; Kartomi 1981: 245) or "intermeshed transculturations" (Ortiz 1947: 98), therefore "multiple syntheses" (Kartomi 1981: 245).

[52] The first application of the term 'syncretism' in anthropology is generally ascribed to Melville Herskovits, while Richard Waterman is attributed to having introduced it in ethnomusicology. Waterman based the ideas he presented in a paper in 1943 (a publication followed in 1948) on Herskovits' field recordings of music. See Kartomi (1981) for a critical discussion of labels such as 'syncretic' and 'hybrid' which in musicology were borrowed from other disciplines such as biology (see also Stross 1999). Kartomi objects to some of them because of their pejorative implications. Although, for example, 'creole' has become customary in linguistics, it is not acceptable for musicology (Kartomi 1981: 245). Besides, she criticises: "Terms such as hybrid, creole, and the like may also be criticised as incomplete, for they draw attention to the music's parentage … rather than to the musical offspring, which is the primary object of interest and value to the people identifying with it" (Kartomi 1981: 229). Instead she proposes a term coined by Ortiz (1947): (musical) 'transculturation'. "Perhaps the most acceptable term with which to refer to the complete cycle of positive musical processes set in motion by culture contact – as opposed to the results of contact" (Kartomi 1981: 233, 234).

[53] In a place like Vanuatu one can get confused with the directions anyway, if we understand the term literally: the 'Western' influences in Vanuatu come from the West (primarily Australia, France and Britain), the South (New Zealand), and the East (USA, sometimes via Polynesia or Fiji). I imagine no one in Vanuatu would talk about 'Eastern technology' with respect to machines or vehicles from Asia. Regading technology as well as cultural items or practices, ni-Vanuatu mostly use 'European' (or *blong waetman* in Bislama) to indicate that something comes from Europe, Australia, New Zealand or from the US.

[54] In 1959, Jaap Kunst explicitly excluded popular music from the field of ethnomusicology (1959: 1).

'works of art', and also that some ethnomusicologists regarded these cross-cultural forms of Western and non-Western musical elements as a threat to the 'pure', 'traditional' and 'indigenous' music styles (Kartomi 1981: 227, 228).[55] A change occurred in the course of the 1980s due to the popularisation of the marketing category 'world music', namely "the Western marketing of musical products produced by musicians from non-Western locations" (Hayward 1998: 2).[56] Taylor observes: "Listeners to world music are now less likely to criticize music that doesn't seem authentic, and more likely to welcome it as a hybrid" (2007: 140 f.). Thus, the label 'hybrid' is exploited as a marketing strategy by the world music industry.[57]

Some scholars put a focus on hybridity as a resistant strategy. Homi Bhabha's conception of hybridity is often quoted as "challenging the implied or explicit hierarchal categorization of cultures evident in colonial discourse" (Terpenning 2016: 461), while others view "hybridity as reinforcing Western European hegemony" (ibid.: 479). Although recognising the fact that hybridity and syncretism have their "own ideological baggage" (Weiss 2014: 510), in this work, I use them to relate to processes of musical transculturation, to depict the combination of disparate musical elements and traits.[58] The assumption of mixtures implies the existence of socially constructed categories and notions of purity which can be accepted when including Brian Stross' concept of a 'cycle of hybridity', that is, a cycle that goes from relative heterogeneity to homogeneity "until finally 'pure' enough to interbreed with other purebreds (which are themselves probably former hybrids), thus beginning anew the cycle of hybrid production" (Stross 1999: 265).

Until now, different disciplines with various approaches that might be subsumed under the generic term 'popular music studies' have contributed to the study of syncretic musics: media studies, cultural studies, music journalism, gender studies and (ethno)musicology. The 'classical' studies of popular culture and the precursors of studies of popular music were carried out by sociologists who focused especially on 'subcultures'.[59] However, several aspects of subcultural theory are not consistent with the social realities in Vanuatu and the role

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[55] Note the analogy to the handling of pidgin and creole languages by linguists until comparatively recently (see Holm 1988: 1).

[56] See Feld (2000a) for a genealogy of the term 'world music'.

[57] However, Weiss gives an example of the persistence of notions of authenticity amongst her students: "[A]uthenticity was consistently valued highly while hybridity was given lesser value" (2014: 507).

[58] Appert has not "encountered substantial differences in how the two terms are generally used to describe musical genres in ethnomusicological literature" (2016: 281). She questions their loose usage which seems reasonable for her case study about Senegalese hip hop (2016).

[59] Important sociological schools for the development of popular music studies are the Chicago School of Urban Sociology (founded by Robert Ezra Park) and the 'Birmingham School' at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham (founded by Richard Hoggart).

of stringband music therein. Class struggle, youth resistance, deviant behaviour and consumer culture, as well as its specificity to a British social and academic context (Bennett & Kahn-Harris 2004: 9) have been important aspects of subcultural studies, a direction of research which is widely regarded as outdated. Besides, their applicability to the Pacific region is limited, as they relate primarily to urban, European or North-American settings. Hayward further identifies with reference to the 'world music' phenomenon:

> "… certain parts of the globe seemed more part of the 'world' projected by these (musical) definitions than others. Much remained terra incognita, areas out-of-focus, more characterized by scholarly indifference than perceptions of cultural in-difference. One such area was that of the Australia-Western/Central Pacific region" (Hayward 1998: 2).

There are meanwhile numerous studies pointing the way ahead, for example concerning syncretic musics in Africa and in the Caribbean; the Pacific region, however, still remains on the sidelines. Of course there are some exceptions – at least with regard to articles, entries in encyclopaedias and chapters within more general publications. There are comparatively many publications addressing syncretic musics in Papua New Guinea.[60] There are fewer publications concerning other regions of Melanesia.[61] The rootedness of these musics in local structures, the dynamics of rural and urban life, as well as identity issues are all among the topics discussed.

Some of these scholars have published articles in the journal *Perfect Beat*, which "was founded in 1992 by a group of Australian-based academics, specifically to address this kind of marginalization [of the Pacific region] and to develop regional music studies" (Hayward 1998: 3).[62] In the hope of receiving wider attention in America and Europe, Hayward edited some of the articles in the publication *Sound Alliances* (1998), containing chapters of some of the authors mentioned above. Some areas in Oceania were unfortunately not covered by the journal's first issues.

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[60] For instance Steven Feld (2000), Don Niles (1994, 1998), several publications of Don Niles jointly with Michael Webb (1986, 1987), Michael Webb (1993), Philip Hayward (1998), Malcom Philpott (1998), Denis Crowdy (2001, 2018), Karl Neuenfeldt (1998) and Oli Wilson (2014).

[61] These are Michael Webb's contributions in *Music in Pacific Island Cultures* (2011) and those of various authors in *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music* (1998). David Goldsworthy (1998) wrote about *kaneka*, a music style from New Caledonia, and Feld's article (2000) also covers the Solomon Islands, while Fiji is addressed by Chris Saumaiwai (1994) and more specific with a focus on one genre by Jennifer Cattermole (2011).

[62] Hayward complains that, "[d]espite this resource, the majority of English-language popular music texts that continue to be written (outside the Australia-Western/Central Pacific) generalize about a variety of forms of popular music, music radio, music video, etc., with almost total recourse to North Atlantic examples. They thereby comprise a highly selective – and consequently flawed – scholarly tradition" (Hayward 1998: 4).

There are a number of publications on traditional musics in Vanuatu, as well as some published recordings. Early mentionings of music in Vanuatu include some rudimentary notes and a figure of a pan-flute (from the island of Tanna) by Georg Forster.[63] There is some important material from Felix Speiser (1979 [1923]: 420 ff.) who travelled the area in 1910-1912, a short chapter by A. Bernard Deacon (1934) on slit-gongs of the island of Malekula and another on the same subject about the nearby offshore island of Vao by John Willoughby Layard (1942).[64] More recent publications followed the fieldwork of Peter Russell Crowe, carried out from 1971.[65] The most recent fieldwork on traditional music in Vanuatu was carried out by Monika Stern (2013) and by Raymond Ammann (2002 & 2012). In 2014, Thomas Dick published an article on water percussion (women clapping rhythmically on the water).

Recordings of traditional musics from Vanuatu include a few LPs[66] and MCs.[67] There are three selections of traditional musics from Vanuatu published on CD.[68] Raymond Ammann also produced a film which was shown at a conference of the International Association of Ethnomusicologists in 2005. Paul Gardissat made many important recordings of music and oral traditions from the 1970s onwards for the Radio in Vanuatu (see 2.2.5 and Appendix 2). More unpublished recordings on audio- and video-tape (made by fieldworkers of the Vanuatu Kaljoral Senta) are stored in the archives of the VKS.

In stark contrast to all these resources on the traditional musics of Vanuatu, there was literally no scientific material available at all on the syncretic musics of the country at the time I started fieldwork for this research project. Apart from some lines about stringbands in Tanna (Lindstrom 1998: 709) and other bits of information scattered throughout the *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music* (Vol. 9), there are a few sentences which roughly sketch some aspects of the stringband music of the 1970s by Peter Crowe (1981: 426 & 1998: 198 f.), as

[63] Forster 1983: 685, 775, 777 f., 783, 797, 809 f.; the original publication was in 1777.
[64] See also McLean 1995: 467-470 for early literature on music in Vanuatu.
[65] See Crowe 1981, 1990, 1996 and 1998. Crowe mentions recordings of Dan Garst from the mid-1990s (Crowe 1998) but I was not able to track down a corresponding publication.
[66] Two LPs produced by Maurice Bitter in the 1970s, a release of Hibiscus Records from 1974 (related sample notations and photographs appeared in Cameron 1975, quoted in Crowe 1981: 430) and another vinyl release of 1982 with a recording from Peter Crowe.
[67] A tape with recordings from 1972-1977 by Crowe and others (Musée d'ethnographie Geneve 1994, also available on CD), a recording by Vida Chenoweth (1998), and a tape produced in Vanuatu with recordings made by Kirk Huffman, Joseph Boé and James Gwero in the 1970s (Ocean Deep 1980).
[68] The first contains the already mentioned recordings of Peter Crowe (1994), the second recordings by Raymond Ammann and Monika Stern (the latter being produced and published by the Vanuatu Cultural Centre, VKS Productions 2001). The third was published by Alexandre François and Monika Stern (Inédit/Maison des Cultures du Monde, Paris 2013).

well as some newspaper articles available in Vanuatu. In their concise survey of the music of Futuna, Allan Thomas and Takaroga Kuautoga mention Futuna's stringband music in the mere space of a single page (1992: 25 f.).

Ralph Regenvanu (2001) and David Nalo (2004) wrote short print articles for the in-flight magazine *Island Spirit* of Vanuatu's national Airline 'Air Vanuatu' about a music festival and the *pop miusik* scene. Marcel Melto (2002) wrote an article for the New Caledonian culture magazin *Mwà Véé*. In his article on "Oceanic Reggae" (2012), Brent Clough provides a concise and yet illuminating outline of reggae in Oceania. Some of his general remarks on the topic are also applicable to Vanuatu, even though his statements related to Vanuatu are limited to one paragraph. Recent developments in the popular music scene in Vanuatu are reported on in the local press.[69] To keep up with those developments while outside Vanuatu, one has the possibility to read the articles of *The Independent / L'Independant* (former *Port Vila Presse*) and *Vanuatu Daily Post* (former *Trading Post*) via internet.[70] Some reporting of events from a rather personal perspective is available on the homepage of 'Further Arts'.[71]

Meanwhile, six articles on syncretic musics from Vanuatu have been published by Monika Stern (2007, 2014 & 2017) and Philip Hayward (2008 with Morrow, 2009 & 2012). Michael Webb & Camellia Webb-Gannon focus on musical Melanesianism and also provide examples from Vanuatu (2016). All of these colleagues provide information with respect to Vanuatu's popular music in the first place, while treating the topic of stringband music rather as a marginal note. Michael Webb briefly covers a case example of a stringband song from Vanuatu (2011). Thus, the work at hand is the first extensive study of the stringband music of Vanuatu.

Recordings of stringband music on sound carriers are only available in Vanuatu. Exceptions are occasionally published songs like a single track of stringband music featured on Maurice Bitter's recordings that are otherwise reserved for traditional items, two songs which were recorded by David Fanshawe,[72] as well as an excerpt of the song 'Gel Pentecost' on the enclosed CD of the publication *Music in Pacific Island Cultures* (2011).

[69] Further aspects of the media landscape in Vanuatu are described in 5.3.

[70] The articles of the *The Independent / L'Independant* can be found under www.news.vu; the articles of the *Vanuatu Daily Post* can be found under http://dailypost.vu/. Most articles about popular music of Vanuatu are written by Tony Ligo.

[71] www.furtherarts.org, last accessed on 15 May 2023.

[72] These consist of one song by FENES STRING BAND (published on the album *Music of the South Pacific*, 2002) and another song by SINGERA STRING BAND from 1985 (*Spirit of Melanesia*, 2010).

Some releases of *pop miusik* are distributed in the region (namely New Caledonia) and only occasionally beyond.[73] Since 2008, Radio Australia organises the annual 'Pacific Break Competition' for pop musicians from the Pacific region and distributes samplers featuring the winners.[74]

1.2.2 Music As Cultural Text

Music is of course not the only area or activity people use to create and express their self-image and identity – be it intended or unconscious. However, most music has an advantage that makes it susceptible for study: it is a medium of expression that is intentionally made for the reception of others.

While some scholars within the discipline of ethnomusicology favour a way of analysis that concentrates on the internal elements of the music itself[75] – the traditional musicological perspective – most current studies put strong emphasis on the context of the music concerned. This parallels the basic demand in anthropology for a holistic perspective. Music as a 'cultural text' includes not only musical aspects. It is rather the combination of musical and extramusical factors that are responsible for the appeal of music (Horner 1999: 20). John Shepherd differentiates between the 'cultural context' ("the social circumstances surrounding the creation and appreciation of music") and the 'cultural text', the latter only referring to the sounds (1992: 128). I do not make this distinction, as I regard the context as part of the phenomenon of music. After all, it is hard to tell where the context begins and the music ends. Video clips, for example, illustrate that the 'context' is part of the 'text'. Live-performance and movement, interaction between musicians and audiences, language (e.g. lyrics), image and music clips – these practices and attributes provide the make-up of modern Melanesian music as a social phenomenon. We cannot understand them without considering the circumstances in which they are enacted, namely the context of politics, media, economy, culture and of society. Music is influenced by this context and, as a cultural practice, itself influences the

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[73] For example, two tracks from ni-Vanuatu bands are featured on a sampler of Pacific reggae (Oceania Records 2001). The two songs 'Tavola' from the group HUARERE and 'Bifo' from ISLANDS were published by Studio Mangrove, resident in Nouméa, New Caledonia. The latter group consists of ni-Vanuatu living in New Caledonia.

[74] For example, one group from Vanuatu (BENNY AND THE GANG) is represented on the sampler "The Best of Pacific Break 2009". Ralph Regenvanu was kind enough to give me a copy of this sampler to me when we met at the ESfO conference in St. Andrews in 2010.

[75] John Shepherd, for example, regards the aspect of 'sound' among these elements as the most distinguishing feature of popular music in comparison with classical music. A widely-known representative of the musicological approach is the American ethnomusicologist Ki Mantle Hood.

context.

In musical transculturation processes, extramusical factors play an important role. Kartomi highlights the fact that "the initial and sustaining impulse and impetus for musical transculturation is normally extramusical" (Kartomi 1981: 245). While considering the diverse realms of music production and reception, we must take the multiple 'layers of contexts' into account: geographical, ideological, religious, and gender-related contexts for instance (see also Anhalt 1992: 280). The internal musical principals of stringband music are the subject of Chapter 3; however, I portray stringband music in society in Chapters 2 (history), 4 (performance and reception contexts), 5 (music industry, marketing and media), and 7 (social structures). My main focus is therefore anthropological and lies within the 'cultural context' – as Shepherd would call it.

1.2.3 The Construction of Social and Cultural Identity Through Music

> "Identity is not a thing but a process - an experiential process which is most vividly grasped as music" (Frith 1996: 110).

Ethnomusicologists have increasingly focused on the relationship between music and identity since the early 1980s (see Rice 2007), while addressing the belonging to and identification with social groups. Stuart Hall emphasises the fact that identities are rather "the product of the marking of difference and exclusion, than they are the sign of an identical, naturally-constituted unity" (Hall 1996: 4). We have to consider personal identities in relation to other people. A web of identities evolves in our living space and in our social environment – "one can never really express oneself 'autonomously'. Self-identity *is* cultural identity" (Frith 1996: 125).[76] Highlighting the involvement of the individual, society and music with one another, Shepherd writes: "the role of the individual in creating or appreciating the meanings of cultural styles is conceptualized overwhelmingly in terms of the individual's membership of a social group" (1992: 135 f.). With respect to music, Thomas Turino criticises the fact that several ethnographies which have studied the relationship between music and other social domains typically "do not stress individual subject positions within the depiction of specific groups, nor do they emphasize the more discrete levels of disagreement, contradiction, and

[76] See also Kevin Robins (1996), who points out that "we must think of cultural identities in the context of cultural relationships" (1996: 79), and Timothy Rice (2007: 34) for considerations on an application of Robins' proposals to ethnomusicology.

conflict" (Turino 1993: 9). However, this aspect is of particular importance, as the crucial point of identity-formation lies at the interface of the subject and society (Keupp et al. 2006: 9).

Identities are ideals, products of the imaginary. "They relate to the invention of tradition as much as to tradition itself" and are "partly constructed in fantasy" (Hall 1996: 4). They might give evidence not so much about who or what we are, but rather about who or what we want to be (Frith 1996: 123). It is us, to a certain degree, who decide how we present and represent ourselves. It is for this reason that I fall in with Holland et al. who state that:

> People tell others who they are, but even more important, they tell themselves and then try to act as though they are who they say they are. These self-understandings, especially those with strong emotional resonance for the teller, are what we refer to as identities (Holland et al. 2001: 3).

In this thesis, I use the term 'identity' to comprise the different processes, constructions and senses of 'self-identity', 'self-identification', 'self-understanding', 'self-conception' and 'self-worth', as well as 'group identity' and 'collective self-understanding'. These are interrelated and I do not consider it advisable to concentrate on only one of those aspects when relating identity to music.

Popular music is a prime example, showing that "invented cultural affinities come with every identity" (Appiah 1992: 174). It provides the possibility to "place ourselves in imaginative cultural narratives" (Frith 1996: 124) – crossing borders and social conditions. Music can bridge the limits of individual cultures "with the result that a person is no longer a member solely of one culture" (Ellis 1985: 15).

Simon Frith criticises academic approaches to popular music that assume a homology between identity and music: social identity (defined by gender, age, nationality and so on) is expected to find expression in the music made or favoured by the people in question. It is, however, difficult to establish a homology between the musical material itself (or the aesthetics in which it is embedded) and the social group (or its social values) which produces and listens to the music (Frith 1996: 120). How, in fact, should we explain the particular liking of some ni-Vanuatu youth of the BACKSTREET BOYS? Often, musicians do not belong to the same social groups or even the same time as their listeners, and often they have a minimal (or even no) experience of the everyday realities of their audience (Shepherd 1992: 138). Even if music is produced with certain intentions, it develops a life on its own, which is no longer under the

control of the producers. If popular music is seen solely to represent the social (which at the same time determines it), it is reduced to a function and not considered aesthetically – as opposed to 'serious music', which is regarded as aesthetically valuable because "it transcends social forces" (Frith 1996: 119).[77] Opposing this, Frith states that:

> What I want to suggest, in other words, is not that social groups agree on values, which are then expressed in their cultural activities … but that they only get to know themselves as groups … through cultural activity, through aesthetic judgement. Making music isn't a way of expressing ideas; it is a way of living them (Frith 1996: 110 f.).

Cultural texts, according to John Storey, "do not simply reflect history, they make history and are part of its processes and practices and should therefore, be studied for the (ideological) work that they do, rather than for the (ideological) work … that they reflect" (Storey 1996: 3).[78] Frith considers popular music to be an aesthetic practice that creates us as a people, "as a web of identities" (Frith 1996: 121).[79]

As these quotations indicate, music plays an active and creative role in constructing self-consciousness, self-understanding, identity, individuality, group relations and society. Timothy Rice (2007) emphasises the difference between music's role as symbolisation and as a reflection of pre-existing identities on the one hand, and the actual construction of identities through music on the other. I argue – mindful of the validity of his differentiation – that both processes are interrelated because the representation of identities in music can, in turn, have identity-establishing effects.

Formations of identity might most easily be spotted during periods of change. Rice regards constructed identities as connected with "situations of change or where the weak and the powerful are fighting over issues of identity" (Rice 2007: 25), whereas I claim that the construction of identity does not only occur under these circumstances. Even if a music genre cements conservative values it still can contribute to the formation of identity, as identity construction is an ongoing process. Not always is the design of a new identity at stake but conservative values need to be reaffirmed and sometimes adjusted to fit changing social environments. As our identities are complex fabrics, minor changes take place all the time. In

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[77] Frith critisises anthropological and ethnomusicological studies for reducing traditional musics to their functions in ritual etc. (1996: 120). Another 'function' of popular music mentioned by Frith is the commercial: "The appeal of the music itself, the reason why people like it, and what, more importantly, 'liking it' means, is buried under an analysis of sales strategies, demographics, the anthropology of consumption" (ibid.).

[78] Similarly, Waterman states that "patterns of popular performance may not only mirror, but also shape other social and historical processes" (Waterman 1990: 6).

[79] Frith names the ethnomusicologist Steven Feld, who conducted research among the Kaluli, to be the initiator of this approach (Feld 1982).

addition, music can be part of an identity-establishing enculturation of children and other new members of a community. Thus, many music genres (or individual music pieces) participate in identity construction all the time in one way or another and to varying degrees – some have a huge impact on people's lives, while others leave only a fleeting impression.

In general, however, the close relationship between music and identity in Melanesia and Oceania is undisputed. On the first page of their over 1 000-paged work on music in Oceania, the editors of the Garland Encyclopedia of World Music write: "Today, Oceanic music is performed in sacred spaces, on festival stages, in urban clubs, and at family gatherings. But above all, musical performances are markers of cultural and ethnic identity" (1998: 1).

1.3 Methods, Field Techniques and Data

The sources of information included a number of institutions and many individual people. The gathered data stems mainly from participant observation, interviews and conversations, recorded music (either published, unpublished or recorded by myself) and diverse texts from Vanuatu. Bislama was the most important language in all of these realms, although some English and French was used occasionally. I learnt Bislama when there; however, when carrying out fieldwork in Fiji for my MA-thesis I was lucky to get hands on Terry Crowleys' *A New Bislama Dictionary* at the Institute of Pacific Studies in Suva and thus had some knowledge of the language before I entered the field.[80] During my first stay I spent a good deal of time learning Bislama mainly by chatting with young people. On the basis of the material that I brought from Vanuatu, I consolidated my Bislama when back in Germany. In between the phases in the field, I was also occupied with the evaluation of the collected data and with determining quantitative and qualitative gaps in the material.

The sites of research were chosen for different reasons. Efate and Espiritu Santo were visited because of the urban centres on these islands, where many musicians live (among them the more successful ones) as well as others involved in the industry. Craig Cove on Ambrym was chosen arbitrarily to provide an example of a rural context without any specific attractions in terms of music (or anything else). My desire to see the place where some outstanding

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[80] Apart from this very useful source I tried to teach myself some Tok Pisin since there is some literature about the language in Germany, and I thought it would be helpful to know about the structure of any of the Melanesian pidgin languages. While at first people in Vanuatu had to correct me continuously while I was using Tok Pisin vocabulary, it later served me well in identitfying Tok Pisin usage in Bislama songs (see Chapter 6).

musicians come from brought me to the northern part of Pentecost.[81] I visited Malekula and two of its small off-shore islands (Wala and Rano) to meet members of the project NEMINAMEL and also went to Ambae in the same manner to meet a selected stringband.[82] Even if these were the initial reasons for going to those places, further relevant topics sprang up during the course of the stay. Another interview was conducted in Troyes, France, with a ni-Vanuatu musician who lived there.[83] I stayed with families within a village context on my trips to the islands, but even while I was staying in Port Vila I mostly had some looser bonds to families in whose neighbourhood I was living.

Typical situations of participant observation, the imperative method of ethnographic investigation, were those events where music is usually played and where musicians and mostly young people take part: concerts, rehearsals, festivities, church services, night clubs, studio recordings, fundraisings, youth centres, kava-bars and the like. Aside from these 'intended participations' many 'chance finds' were gained by talking to and hanging out with people in their spare time without the somewhat inhibiting atmosphere of an 'official' interview. The observations proved to be very important for the comparison to and verification of information gathered in interviews, to modify questions, to understand the differences between statements and behaviour, to detect new aspects by chance, and, above all, to experience the atmosphere of social events. The latter are particularly important for the study of music and cannot really be learnt by asking questions to interlocutors. The same goes for "tacit knowledge" (Polanyi 1966, see also Spittler 2001: 9) that lies beyond the access via language.[84]

While choosing places to go to and people to talk to, I tried to keep a balance between urban – rural, young – old, well-known – unknown and so on. My original wish to consider both sexes equally was possible in Port Vila without many hindrances. During my stay in the islands, though, I detected that it was far more difficult for me to make contact with women and especially girls. Although these difficulties were balanced a little due to the fact that my former girlfriend, an anthropologist who accompanied me temporarily on two of the trips, occasionally had some additional information concerning the perception of women,

[81] For example the two famous groups VATDORO and HUARERE, but also members of BRATAZ VIBRATION.

[82] Initially I went to Ambae to meet the VUSI BOYS, who were brought to my attention by the Australian anthropologist Stephen Zagala.

[83] The interview was conducted in June 2006 with Henry Toka, a member of the group TROPIC TEMPO.

[84] In his plea for participant observation and the use of the senses in ethnographic research, Gerd Spittler points to the popular overestimation of text and discourse and critically remarks that statements of interlocutors do not necessarily reveal information about their thoughts and actions – rather they often reflect later rationalizations (2001: 21).

information on the island situation reflect a male bias. These shortcomings are not too serious if one considers the fact that stringband music is an almost completely male domain.[85]

When I first entered the field, I was 26 years old – a fact that surely helped to establish first contacts and friendships because most of my interlocutors were young people. I believe that as a person to talk to, I was far more accessible to many as a practising musician than as an anthropologist. Playing the guitar, ukulele, percussion or singing occasionally became part of the participant observation or interviewing. Interlocutors often asked me about my own musical activity. For fun, I wrote songs and parts of songs in Bislama myself, and between the field trips I recorded and released them with my band in Germany. When I presented these to a few friends and key interlocutors in Port Vila, this further consolidated relationships. Between the field research sections, I founded my own stringband in Germany, initially to play original pieces for fun, but also as a methodical tool to try out arrangements, playing techniques and self-made instruments. This practical understanding has taught me more about stringband music than I would have thought possible at first and has proven to be a useful addition to my research. Meanwhile, we have performed throughout Germany in the context of events related to Melanesia or Oceania.

Members of stringbands, other music groups and other persons of interest to me were chosen because they are key figures in the scene or history of popular music in Vanuatu or because they hold or held special positions in the media or other institutions. Other interlocutors were chosen arbitrarily, and musicians often drew my attention to yet others. Apart from the participant observation, most data was gathered through interviews. Nearly all of the interviews were conducted in Bislama, while on a few occasions I used English and in one case German. In this text I use the term 'interlocutors' when referring to the persons who provided valuable information on the topic.[86] For reference, verification and further future research my interlocutors' names are given throughout the text wherever I quote information obtained from them. All names mentioned are those of real persons, I did not make up false

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[85] Women's participation in the music scene of Vanuatu is to be seen in connection with the issues of gender equality. For example, unequal pay is a reality in the commercial cultural sector of Vanuatu (DeBlock 2019: 139 f.). However, of course "undifferentiated reference to women as a single group is flawed" (Underhill-Sem 2011: 4) and the most successful individual musician of Vanuatu is a young woman (VANESSA QUAI). In the field of stringband music, however, gender issues seem to play a minor part for the time being, since the groups nearly invariably consist of boys and young men. See, however, 5.2.3 and Chapter 8.

[86] I have decided to use the term because the alternatives do not match with what I mean: I would not denote every youngster whose musical preferences I recorded as a 'cultural consultant'. Sometimes people who did not know much about the subject would provide useful information or give important hints. Even if I talked to these people or 'observed' them, it would give a wrong impression if I described them as being 'cultural experts'.

names to obscure interlocutors' identities. If someone told me not to quote him or her although he or she gave me valuable information, I do not mention any particular name.

Usually I conducted semistructured interviews (with question guides for myself) with a prevailing objective, yet open enough to bring new aspects to light. All interviews were recorded on MiniDisk for later transcription. As already mentioned, I found informal conversation a very productive source, as this method allows the gathering of information which cannot be done so in interviews.[87] It was particularly useful when I steered the conversation in a desired direction; "spot checking", as Merriam calls it, "to check facts already garnered and, particularly, to discover the extent to which the observer can generalize the information he already has on hand" (Merriam 1964: 51).

At times I discovered that after stopping the recording, some particularly interesting issues sprang up, although in general interlocutors were not too hesitant when faced with the microphone. Interviews and other forms of conversation were conducted with a wide range of different personalities: musicians[88], sound engineers, producers, persons responsible at the public radio- and TV-stations, producers of video clips, staff members of the Vanuatu Kaljoral Senta and of the Wan Smolbag Theatre, members of dance groups, managers, operators of night clubs, festival organisers, store keepers, a Disc Jockey, the president of the 'Vanuatu National Youth Council', young people at youth clubs or elsewhere, and other relevant persons. The interviews – whether with a single person, several persons or a full group – lasted up to three hours or more and were often continued in further meetings. Sometimes I conducted separate interviews with several members of a particular group. Structured interviews with a short standardised questionnaire were used to find out about music reception habits of adolescents and young adults. This technique did, however, have some shortcomings. The interviewees were asked to fill in the questionnaires, which proved to be very time-consuming. Some of the younger interlocutors were very shy in the face of having to write down their answers.[89]

While trying to record the stringband and popular music scene of Vanuatu in the overall picture, much insight was obtained by conducting case studies of individuals and of music

[87] I refer to what Spittler called "natural conversation" ("natürliche Gespräche") in contrast to the interview, which is in its very nature an artificial communication situation (2001: 7 f., 18).

[88] These were stringband musicians, musicians of *pop miusik* groups, members of church affiliated choirs and practitioners and teachers of *kastom miusik*. Many of those musicians were also songwriters / composers.

[89] It took me a while before detecting this in the case of a thirteen-year old girl on Ambae who was both illiterate and shy. Other conditions of data collection and the results of the structured interviews are addressed in Chapter 4.

groups, soon resulting in the identification of the networks between them. As an anthropologist, my main focus is on general tendencies with relevance for the community; I am nevertheless aware of the role of individuals in processes of cultural construction and I found that individuals can play a major role in certain developments.[90]

There were some difficulties in finding concrete data on time periods and dates. This is due to the fact that many of my interlocutors do not write down such information and remember notable events rather than years. Respondents often confined their dating to statements like: "that was before cyclone Uma" (that is, before 1987).[91] Since I had no time to establish 'historical calendars' during fieldwork for each region where I conducted interviews, some data such as release dates and the founding of groups is inevitably vague. Similarly, I had to be satisfied with age-guessing, for many interlocutors could not tell me their exact age. As they made their own guesses, however, they are likely to be more or less accurate.[92]

A small selection of photographs is used in this text to illustrate descriptions of instruments, to give an idea about performance situations and to feature musicians. Most of the music I recorded myself is taken from actual performance situations but sometimes musicians were asked to play, for example, a special rhythm or a ukulele *introdaksen* (see 3.5). Macka Silona, former sound-engineer of the VKS Productions Studio († 1st August 2007), also made recordings of single tracks or groups of tracks of a stringband recording available to me. Apart from the albums I purchased and from the archive material of the VKS (audio and video) I could listen to and copy a small selection of old tapes recorded by Paul Gardissat in the 1970s and 1980s. This was especially important to me because these now unavailable cassettes are hard to find even in the private possession of the musicians who once recorded them with him. With a considerable amount of tenacity a selection of video clips could be obtained from especially the Vanuatu Broadcasting & Television Corporation (VBTC) but also from other sources. Samples of the daily radio programme were 'transcribed' and partly recorded.

The transcriptions of lyrics, some of which were made during my stays in Germany in-between the fieldwork periods, were partly corrected by the songwriters, singers or some

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[90] Again there are parallels between popular culture and the field of linguistics: "individuals play an important role in the social process leading to language mixture" (Holm 1988: 3).

[91] Cyclone Uma (February 1987) caused major damages as did Cyclone Pam in March 2015. Cyclones are prominent markings in the memory of many ni-Vanuatu but individually many others are of course used.

[92] "Until 1979, only a small proportion of the population was familiar with chronological age, whereas birth certificates and other documentation containing date of birth or age were hardly ever available" (Statistical Yearbook 2002: 22). When asked about how many years he had spent at a particular place, one musician said: "*Mi no stap kaontem ol yia, mi stap kaontem ol defren samting!*" ("I do not count the years, I count other things!").

friends. While corrections and supplementing of song texts written in Bislama were essential in the beginning but later posed no grave problems, I relied on those people who transcribed the lyrics written in vernaculars (so requiring special knowledge concerning the prevailing language). The lyrics of new songs by unknown bands as well as the big hits already published in Vanuatu were the subject of research.
Normally the VKS assigns the foreign researcher to a fieldworker who is then meant to advise and assist the researcher (a network of ni-Vanuatu researchers, each in charge of his or her own area, extends all over the country).[93] This was not the case with me, as I conducted multi-local fieldwork. It would have taken considerable effort to meet all these people in the prevailing areas where I conducted research; people who are focused on *kastom* and who usually do not regard popular music as being part of their subject. For this reason, I looked for 'my own' experts in popular music.

1.4 The Setting

1.4.1 Geography and Climate

Vanuatu, an archipelago consisting of over 80 islands, is located in the Southwestern Pacific and measures 1 176 km in its north-south extension (see Figure 1) (Population & Housing Census 2000: 16). Neighbouring countries are the Melanesian island-nations of the Solomon Islands, Fiji and New Caledonia, as well as Australia.
The islands of Vanuatu lie on the Pacific 'Ring of Fire' and are the result of tectonic plate movements. While several islands originated from volcanoes, 20 % of the land area is formed from uplifted limestone reefs (MacClancy 2002: 15). The country has nine active volcanoes, seven on land and two in the sea (Statistical Yearbook 2002: 2). Volcanic eruptions and earthquakes are frequent and cause tidal waves, damage and evacuations.
The climate varies from tropical in the northern islands to subtropical in the south, with the south eastern trade winds prevailing throughout the year. There are two seasons, the drier and cooler season from May to October and the wet and hot season (or 'cyclone season'), which lasts from November to April. The average temperature in the capital, Port Vila, is 24.5 C°,

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[93] See Tryon 1999b on the fieldworker network of the Vanuatu Kaljoral Senta. Darrell Tryon started conducting the annual fieldworkers workshops from 1981, while Lissant Bolton conducted workshops for women fieldworkers from 1994 (Regenvanu 1999: 98 f.).

while it is warmer in the northern islands, the average temperature of Vanuatu being 25.5 C° (Kaufmann 1997: 147; National Statistics Office 2003). The heaviest rains are generally experienced in the period from January to March but there can be long periods without rain even in the wet season. Rainfall varies within the archipelago, with the higher northern islands being wetter than the lower southern ones (Statistical Yearbook 2002: 4). Vanuatu experiences about two or three cyclones a year, usually in the period from November to April.

About 75 % of the country is covered by natural vegetation including grasslands, secondary growth and tropical rainforest, although the forest is affected by damage caused by cyclones, logging and clearing for agricultural purposes (Statistical Yearbook 2002: 2, 153).[94]

1.4.2 Languages

Although quite small in terms of population – the resident population of Vanuatu as enumerated in 1999 was 186 678, increasing to 300 019 in 2020 – Vanuatu shows considerable cultural and linguistic diversity.[95] As local identity in Vanuatu is strongly linked to cultural and linguistic aspects and practices, a range of local identities exists throughout the country. With over one hundred different local languages, the country exhibits the highest density of languages world-wide. The linguist Darrell T. Tryon counted between 105 and 113 different indigenous languages.[96] Some of these languages are further subdivided into several dialects. 73.1% of the households of Vanuatu speak mainly one of those local languages at home (Population & Housing Census 2000: 28).[97]

Apart from indigenous vernaculars and the colonial languages of English and French, ni-Vanuatu use the country's most wide-spread official language, Bislama; a variety of Melanesian Pidgin/Creole.[98] This language evolved among Melanesian labourers in Australia,

[94] In order to provide a context for the reader which is close to the situation when I conducted my fieldwork, it is advisable that I quote statistics concerning the geography, climate and the living conditions from sources which collected data at around the same time. See Mackey et al. 2017 for detailed information on the various ecosystem types of Vanuatu.

[95] Bakeo 2000: 5 & 2020 Census Basic Tables Vol.1 s.a.: v.

[96] See the various publications of Darrell T. Tryon (1976, 1996, 1999a). His most recent census is at 109 Austronesian languages in Vanuatu (Tryon, personal communication in July 2005).

[97] The proportion may have risen lately: 92% of ni-Vanuatu speak an indigenous language as their first language and most of these "report strong comprehension as well as ability to speak their indigenous language" (Malvatumauri 2012: x).

[98] According to some criteria usually related to pidgin languages (see Kartomi 1981: 242 f. & Holm 1988: 4 f.), Bislama is not a pidgin language: it *has* quite an elaborated grammar and vocabulary, it *is* native to some of its speakers, it *survived* initial contact and it is *not* restricted to a very limited domain. Thus, Bislama would have to be regarded as a creole language. Some linguists classify Melanesian Pidgins as 'expanded' or 'extended' pidgins

Fiji, New Caledonia, Samoa, Tahiti and Hawaii, as well as in the New Hebrides (Vanuatu).[99] Its precursor is the jargon that emerged during the sandalwood and bêche-de-mer (also called trepang or sea cucumber) trade in the communication between ship crews and islanders. Bislama owes its name to bêche-de-mer, which was gathered in the Southwestern Pacific from the 1820s onwards. Its vocabulary is derived from English and, to a lesser extent, French, as well as indigenous languages (especially plant and animal names) and to a tiny extent from Portuguese and Polynesian languages, while its grammar and syntax follow the patterns of Melanesian languages.[100] During colonial times, the missionaries widely used Bislama, and French and British administrators often communicated in Bislama, rather than using one of their two European languages (Crowley 1990: 18, Lynch 1923: 185). Some missionaries used local languages for instruction at their schools and for preaching, for example the language of the northern island of Mota. This was oddly not only the case in the original language community; it was also used on other islands as far as the Solomons and parts of Papua New Guinea, meaning that Melanesians there had to learn the language of Mota in order to understand the missionaries (Van Trease 1995: 4). This was also the case in north Efate.[101]

Bislama, English, and French are the three official languages of the Republic of Vanuatu. Bislama makes conversation possible, no matter from which part of the country people come or what kind of school they have attended, and it is the most important of the three for this reason. The population, divided into the anglophone and francophone camps, persists to the present: 70 % are or were educated in an English-speaking school, whereas about 30 % are or were attending a French-speaking school (these often being Catholic).[102] The educational system with its two colonial languages reflects the division of the population in different denominations to a certain degree.

(Mühlhäusler 1986: 4 f. & Singler 1984 quoted in Holm 1988: 7). Catriona Hyslop, a linguist who worked in Vanuatu, chose to use the term "pidgin/creole" when referring to Bislama (2001: 2). In this work, I use the term (Melanesian) Pidgin when referring to Tok Pisin, (Solomon) Pijin and Bislama.

[99] Crowley points out that in contrast to Pijin (Solomon Islands) and Tok Pisin (PNG), where the Melanesian Pidgin that evolved in the plantation economies abroad was later introduced, Bislama has an unbroken tradition in Vanuatu itself, at least in the southern islands (Crowley 1990: 6 f.).

[100] See Crowley 1990: 108-111, 177, 392 ff. & Tryon 1999a: 3. Even when mostly derived from European languages, the meaning of many of those lexical resources in Bislama is altered.

[101] In Fiji, missionaries proceeded similarly by choosing the language of the small island of Bau as their language of instruction throughout the country. Nowadays, this dialect is used as Standard Fijian. Great differences between some of the languages of Vanuatu have made a situation like this impossible for the country.

[102] Population & Housing Census 2000: 24. See the Census of Population and Housing 2009 Basic Tables Report for detailed information on literacy in English and French (96-99).

The Bislama orthography I use in this thesis is standardised, following the *New Bislama Dictionary* by Terry Crowley (1995). Exceptions are quotations from written sources, in which I stick to the original spellings (of which there is a multitude because there is no single standard spelling system of Bislama).[103] There is also a variety of pronunciations. When quoting verbal utterances, I use the standardised orthography for the sake of consistency, except for some conspicuous expressions, to keep the personal touch of the person in question. This work comprises many Bislama words, especially from the music domain, which are not included in the otherwise thorough *New Bislama Dictionary*.

1.4.3 Pre-Colonial History

To understand the context for the development of syncretic music in Vanuatu, it is necessary to scrutinize the country's history and some of the major influences and causes for social and cultural change.

After initial contact with the first European 'discoverers' in the Pacific[104], the islands of Vanuatu were visited by whalers in the first half of the 19th century. From 1825 onwards, sandalwood traders came to Erromango and later to Efate and Aneityum in search of new sources of sandalwood to supply consumers in China. The sandalwood trade was the basis for the first regular exchange between the Europeans and the islanders, although it was marked by trickery and killings.[105] Labourers from other islands, mainly Efate, worked in Erromango already at that time, but also Polynesians from Tonga and Hawai'i were brought there.[106]

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[103] There is, for example, an album by the music group ERRO STRINGBAND called "Jaksen Rod" (translated 'road junction'). The 'n' in *ja(n)ksen* is omitted, just as in one of the song titles on the album, 'Yagfalla Kantri Vanuatu' ('young country Vanuatu'), which is often spelled *yangfala* (with 'n' before 'g'). I did no further research into this matter; it seems, however, that the preceding nasal consonant in these two words is so strongly connected to the sounds 'g' or 'k' that members of the speech community of the language concerned, namely a language from Erromango, do not write the pronounced 'n' before these letters. This phenomenon can be observed, for example, in Fijian, another Austronesian language, with the consonants 'b' ('mb') and 'd' ('nd'). This spelling is possibly just a quirk of the person who wrote the liner notes. The complex language situation in Vanuatu makes it impossible for me to decide without elaborate research, so I prefer to quote the original spellings.

[104] The first explorer to come to Vanuatu was Pedro Fernández de Quirós, a Portuguese man in the service of the Spanish crown. In 1606, he founded a settlement but his crew gave it up a few months after. The next visitor was Louis-Antoine de Bougainville who reached the eastern and northern parts of Vanuatu in May 1768, naming them 'Les Grandes Cyclades'. Details of James Cooks visit during his second voyage in the archipelago in July and August 1774 were still remembered over one hundred years later by the Erromango islanders (Robertson 1902, quoted in Speiser 1923: 9). He named the archipelago the 'New Hebrides', a name that lasted until the country's independence. Other famous early voyagers who visited the islands include La Pérouse (1788), Bligh (1789 & 1792), D'Entrecasteaux (1793) and Dumont D'Urville (1827 & 1828).

[105] For example, there was a massacre on Lelepa in 1842. In revenge, the islanders occasionally killed Europeans when they had the chance to do so.

[106] See Shineberg 1967 for details on the sandalwood trade.

The labour trade sprang up at around the same time as the sandalwood trade in the New Hebrides ceased in the 1860s, with the exploitation of the last accessible stands. Because many captains had already recruited islanders for their ship crews, the Australian entrepreneur Robert Towns (the later founder of Townsville) had the idea to employ Melanesians for other kinds of work as well.[107] The upcoming sugar plantations in Queensland, Australia (for example Maryborough, Mackay) and Fiji were in need of cheap labour, as well as the nickel mines in New Caledonia and coconut plantations in Samoa. A flourishing trade began in 1863 (Docker 1970: 10 f., 14). The labour recruiting ('blackbirding') was often an unscrupulous business and there were many clashes and kidnappings. Many recruits died on the voyage to the plantations, on the plantations, or after they were returned to the wrong islands where they were occasionally killed by the islanders.[108] In 1886 it was estimated that about 30 labour vessels went to the islands per year, each one on an average deporting eighty recruits and each one making four or five voyages annually (Inglis 1886, quoted in Speiser 1923: 13). Altogether, about 40 000 islanders went to Queensland (MacClancy 2002: 84). Contracts were made for three or five years, and sometimes islanders signed on a second or third term. In some island communities, only a few men were left over.[109] In some respects, blackbirding introduced a new form of trade not unsimilar to slave trade "while the American Civil War guns still thundered to decide whether a nation could live without slavery" (Holthouse 1969: 1).[110] Many ni-Vanuatu left their islands willingly, either because they were curious about the European way of life, interested in European goods, or wanted to escape pursuit, ill-treatment or punishment. Through the campaigns of the churches and the White Australia Policy legislation of 1901 (Pacific Islands Labourers Bill), the overseas labour recruitment was banned for Queensland (in 1904), Fiji (in 1910/11) and Western Samoa (in 1913), although recruitment for plantations within Vanuatu went on. Often working conditions were very bad, for example the mortality rate on the plantations of Mele (Efate) was at 44 % per year (Speiser

[107] As early as 1847, sixty-five ni-Vanuatu were taken to New South Wales for work (MacClancy 2002: 48).
[108] In around 1877, there were 2 500 men from Tanna alone in the sugarcane fields of Queensland (Eckhardt 1877, quoted in Speiser 1923: 13). Tanna is one of the islands of Vanuatu.
[109] Some ni-Vanuatu communities still struggle to gain compensation for their ancestor's victimisation by dishonest means and dubious circumstances. This was reported in the leading article "Historian opens dark chapter" by Kalvau Moli in the *Vanuatu Daily Post* (Issue 1090, 1/29/2004). Following this article, there was a short piece of news in the German journal *Der Spiegel* ("Später Lohn für Sklavenarbeit", Issue 18, 2004).
[110] See Docker 1970 and Holthouse 1969 for information on the labour trade. Wawn 1973 [1893] gives a first-hand report from the era and Cawsey 1998 provides a detailed portrayal of one of the recruiters, Captain Donald Macleod.

1923: 14). Until today there are song lyrics which address the blackbirding era in the various music genres of Vanuatu.

Yam, taro, sweet potato, banana, sago palm, breadfruit and sugar-cane, as well as pigs, dogs and fowls have flourished in Vanuatu ever since the early Melanesians settled there[111]. Pineapple, avocado, pawpaw, mango, manioc and cotton were all introduced by Europeans who settled on the islands from the late 1860s onwards. They also brought cattle, horses, goats, cats and rats; leaving some species of flying fox (that are eaten by ni-Vanuatu) and bats as the only native land mammals. Companies from Australia and New Caledonia founded plantations, and some settlers began to grow cotton because the crop yielded high prices following shortages in the supply from America for the English textile industry when the American Civil War broke out in 1861. When the cotton price dropped again in 1873, settlers changed to cocoa, maize, coffee, bananas and vanilla (MacClancy 2002: 70). Copra[112], though, became the most important commodity in the precolonial and colonial period.

When colonists from Tanna and Efate requested France to annex the New Hebrides in 1875/6, Presbyterian missionaries tried to prevent this by moving the British government to take possession of the islands. The Australian colonial governments, who were not able to annex the archipelago themselves, feared colonisation of the New Hebrides by released convicts from the penitentiary of French New Caledonia (MacClancy 2002: 69). However, the British Government was of the opinion that the New Hebrides as a colony would cost more than it would yield and discouraged settlement of its nationals. Because of this, the governments of Britain and France assured each other that they would not annex the islands.

Between 1882 and 1886 alone, twenty Europeans were killed by ni-Vanuatu (Speiser 1923: 16); at the same time, the islanders suffered abuse by the settlers. Thus, a Joint Naval Commission was formed in 1887, with the aim of establishing a state of law and order. It was, however, not effective, if only for the reason that the Commission did not visit the islands for half of the year during the cyclone season (MacClancy 2002: 73). The bad conditions for recruits on the plantations continued, as did the occasional killings of planters until well after the turn of the century.

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[111] MacClancy writes with respect to the coconut palmtree: “It is possible that they did not bring coconuts, but that the coconut palm tree evolved first in Vanuatu and the Solomons because the number of insect species dependent on the nut is greater in these islands than anywhere else in the world” (MacClancy 2002: 16).

[112] Coconut meat, dried in an oven, is called ‘copra’. It can be processed to make oil for the production of soap and a variety of other products.

The Compagnie Calédonienne des Nouvelles Hébrides (CCNH), founded in 1882, purchased a great deal of land to force affiliation with France in anticipation of French predominance. Eventually, there was only one English planter left and the Australian Government attempted to increase the number of British subjects (MacClancy 2002: 70). Finally, the Fiji-based Western Pacific High Commission accepted the registration of the British land claims and, in 1889, the Australasian New Hebrides Company (ANHC) was founded to compete with CCNH. Burns Philp Co. Ltd (BP) took over the ANHC in 1897[113] and in 1894 the French government took control of the CCNH and recognised its land titles (MacClancy 2002: 71 f.).

1.4.4 Demography

The British and French planters were employing 3618 Melanesians by 1911 (Speiser 1923: 14).[114] Increasing contact with Europeans on the islands, on ships and abroad not only increased people's knowledge of events outside their islands, but also had some terrible consequences. With the advent of the vessels, several factors arose which contributed to a dramatic decrease of the population in the islands. A general demoralisation of the Melanesians was caused by the diverse changes brought about by the Europeans.[115] Abortions became more frequent than before and the use of firearms led to an increase in warfare among the islanders. It was mostly the epidemics which were responsible for the deaths of large proportions of island populations. Many died from respiratory diseases, as well as measles, dysentery, diphtheria, smallpox and sexually transmitted infections. The islanders became infected by the Europeans and sometimes these diseases were brought by returning labourers. Measles was spread intentionally in 1860 in Tanna by sandalwooders and caused the deaths of a third of the population on that particular island as well as of another two thousand people on Erromango a year later (Speiser 1923: 12, 41, 47). Speiser, who discusses several factors for

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[113] Burns Philp is a company founded, among others, by Henry Burns who was already involved in the sandalwood trade (MacClancy 2002: 44). In 1902, BP transferred the land claims to the Australian Government but continued to handle these properties until the 1970s. After the transfer, BP operated a steamship and postal service throughout the New Hebrides (Van Trease 1995: 8). In the 1970s, BP was involved in the production of early stringband recordings.

[114] French planters imported Vietnamese ('Tonkinese'), Chinese and Javanese labour from 1921, while British planters were only permitted to employ indigenous labour (Bedford & Shlomowitz 1988: 69).

[115] In Vanuatu all foreigners with a light skin (expatriates, volunteers, teachers, scientists, businessmen, tourists and so on) are generally referred to as either *waetman* (Bislama) or 'European', no matter whether they are from Europe, Australia, New Zealand, USA or the Middle East. Women might be called *misis* or *waetmisis*, and men are occasionally pejoratively referred to as *dipskin*, assuming that they are not circumcised. Expatriates (foreigners, resident in Vanuatu) are shortly called 'expat(s)'. For the sake of simplicity, I use the term 'European' in the same manner, unless I wish to stress someone's specific origin and thus name him or her 'Australian' etc.

the decrease of the population, predicted in 1923 that the ni-Vanuatu population would become extinct (Speiser 1923: 41-48, 53). He estimates a drop of population by 90% between the beginning of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries (Speiser 1923: 41).[116]

The first official and reasonably likely estimate dates from 1910 and was more or less confirmed shortly after by Felix Speiser, who claims to be the European who knows best about the conditions of the interior of the islands at that time.[117] Thus the total population was around sixty-five thousand in 1910 (Speiser 1923: 39). At this time, the British Resident Commissioner listed 854 expatriates, of which 418 were living on Efate (Speiser 1923: 35). In the 1930s and '40s the population was, at any rate, smaller, just between 40 000 and 50 000, only increasing by the end of the 1950s (see Statistical Yearbook 2002: 16 on the sources of these estimates). Currently, Vanuatu has a population of three hundred thousand.[118] In 1999 only about 1% of the population was not classified as 'ni-Vanuatu'.[119] Since the 1967 census, the geographical distribution of the population has changed, as more people have come to the urban centres from rural areas (National Statistics Office 2001: 11). In 1999, about 21% of the population (about forty thousand people) were residents of the two urban areas of Port Vila (29 356 people) and Luganville (10 738 people) (National Statistics Office 2001: 16).[120] Nowadays, around sixty-seven thousand people are living in urban areas (2020 Census Basic Tables Vol.1 s.a.: v).

The crude population density in 1999 was 15 persons per km^2, changing to 19 persons by 2009.[121] Because of volcanoes and steep slopes (55% of the total land area has a steep gradient of over 20%), the population is often concentrated along the coast or at small offshore islands (Statistical Yearbook 2002: 1). Espiritu Santo, Ambae, Ambrym and Tanna have mountain

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[116] On Aneityum, or example, was a drop in population by 90 % from 1859 to 1910; only 379 people were left remaining on Aneityum by 1910 (Speiser 1923: 38 f.). Erromango was populated by more than 4500 people before the discovery of sandalwood. In 1930, there were 500 people (MacClancy 2002: 84). See also Speiser 1922 on issues relating to the depopulation of the New Hebrides.

[117] "Da ich aber wohl derjenige Weiße bin, der das Innere der meisten Inseln zur Stunde am besten kennt …" (Speiser 1923: 36).

[118] Six population censuses have been undertaken in Vanuatu by now (the resident population is given in brackets): 1967 (77 988), 1979 (111 251), 1989 (142 419), 1999 (186 678), 2009 (234 023) and 2020 (300 019). Sources: 2020 Census Basic Tables Vol.1 s.a.: v & the 2016 Post Pam Mini Census Report 2017: 1.

[119] National Statistics Office 2001: 9, 12. In 2016, 2 039 persons were classified as non-Melanesian and 1 593 classified as non-ni-Vanuatu (2016 Post Pam Mini Census Report 2017: 115, 117).

[120] By 2009 the figure had increased to 24% urban residents, that is, 57 000 people (National Census of Population & Housing 2010: 2). By 2016, 67 749 people were living in urban areas (2016 Post Pam Mini Census Report 2017: 1).

[121] National Statistics Office 2001: 6, National Census of Population & Housing 2010: 8.

peaks of over 1 000 m. It is for this reason that there is a comparatively high population density in relation to effective land use (see also National Statistics Office 2001: 17).
The population of Vanuatu is very young. At the time of fieldwork, 43% was under the age of 15 and the median age (50% of the population is younger, 50% is older) was nineteen years in 2000 and twenty years in 2020.[122]
The health status has much improved since independence and life expectancy has increased. In 1994, acute respiratory infection, influenza and malaria were still among the five most common diseases (Statistical Yearbook 2002: 58). These days, the country has five hospitals and in 2002 there were 26 doctors (National Statistics Office 2003).

1.4.5 Missions

The Christian missions had a huge influence on the population, although people merged Christianity with indigenous world views and the missions faced great difficulties in the beginning. Apart from the Roman-Catholic clergymen brought to Espiritu Santo by Quirós, the famous John Williams from the London Missionary Society (LMS) was the first missionary to come to the New Hebrides. Upon his arrival on Erromango in 1839, he was killed by the islanders – a fate several of his colleagues later shared. The LMS tried to establish Polynesian ‘teachers’ (Pacific Islander missionaries), supposing that they would be more accepted by the Melanesians and also be able to withstand the climate better. However, many – like the Samoan teachers brought to Efate by Turner in 1845 – were killed or died from malaria.[123] At this early stage, the archipelago was under the influence of the LMS; this changed in 1862 when the much stricter Presbyterian missionaries began their work in the area, eventually taking over from LMS, and even broadening their sphere of influence to other islands (Van Trease 1995: 4).[124] The Presbyterians prevented the islanders from drinking alcohol and kava[125], smoking and dancing, not to mention their practising Melanesian

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[122] National Statistics Office 2001: 34, Population and Housing Census 2000: 17 & 2020 Census Basic Tables Vol.1 s.a.: v. The total fertility rate – that is “the number of children that would be born to a woman if she were to live to the end of her child-bearing years and bear children at each age in accordance with prevailing age-specific fertility rates” (Population & Housing Census 2000: 40) – amounts to 3.8 children per woman in urban areas compared to 5.1 children for rural women (National Statistics Office 2001: 7).

[123] Three teachers were placed in Tanna in November 1839 (Gutch 1974: 147 f.), while others were placed on Aniwa (1840), Erromango (1840), Aneityum (1841), Futuna (1841), and Efate (1845) (Inglis 1890: 177; Liua’ana 1996). However, the LMS withdrew them shortly after. The teacher of Futuna was massacred in 1843 (ibid.).

[124] In 1854, missionaries of the Anglican Melanesian Mission travelled the islands (Speiser 1923: 15). John Coleridge Patteson, the first bishop of the Missionary Diocese of Melanesia, was killed in the Eastern Solomons in 1871 (Kolshus & Hovdhaugen 2010: 331).

[125] The kava plant (*Piper methysticum*) probably originated in northern Vanuatu where most varieties are to be found (Lebot, Merlin & Lindstrom 1997: 6, 34), though the plant is spread in many other parts of the Pacific as

customs. While these missionaries often gathered the islanders together in big mission stations on the coast in order to secure their dependence, the Anglican Mission was more eager to maintain compatibility between the Melanesian social organisation and culture and Christianity. Presbyterians and Anglicans concluded an agreement in the beginning of the 1880s, according to which the northern islands (Pentecost, Ambae, Maevo, and the Banks and Torres Islands) would belong to the diocese of the Anglican Church, while the Presbyterians would work in the remaining islands of the archipelago.[126]

Even more open-minded about the Melanesian way of life than the Anglicans were the French-speaking Roman Catholic missionaries who built their first station on Efate in 1887 (bringing with them a dozen Catholic Kanak from New Caledonia as catechists) and then spread to West-Ambrym, the off-shore islands of East Malekula, and other places.[127] Around the turn of the century nearly all the islands had their resident missionary or Polynesian or ni-Vanuatu teacher (MacClancy 2002: 79).[128]

These days there are many Christian churches in Vanuatu. Beside the Roman Catholics (1999: 13%; 2009: 12%),[129] the Anglicans (1999: 14%; 2009:15 %) and the Presbyterians (1999: 32% or about 59 000 members according to the Statistical Yearbook 2002: 12; 2009: 28%), there are also the Seventh Day Adventists (SDA), the Church of Christ, Assemblies of God (AOG), the Neil Thomas Ministry (NTM), the Apostolics, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Ba'hais and the Holiness Fellowship. In addition to these congregations, a small section of the population (1999: 6%; 2009: 4%), mostly on the bigger islands, stick to traditional religious practices (generally referred to as *kastom*).[130] The John Frum movement, a revivalist movement (often referred to as 'cargo cult'), evolved on the island of Tanna about 1941 and still has many followers at Sulphur Bay. Each year the 'John Frum Dei' is celebrated on

far as Hawai'i. In Vanuatu the fresh roots and parts of the stem are crushed by being pounded, chewed or scraped with a piece of coral to produce an intoxicating beverage with a strong and bitter taste. See Merlin, Lebot & Lindstrom 1997 and Ellerich 2008 on details about kava.

[126] The Presbyterians went to Epi in 1880 and to Ambrym in 1883 but stayed on these islands only for a short time. Towards the end of the century, Rev. Bice went to Ambae, followed by Rev. Godden (MacClancy 2002: 82).

[127] The Catholic Mission got its own boat (and thus the possiblity to tour the islands) in 1927 (MacClancy 2002: 112). In 1903, the Catholic mission acquired the status of an Apostolic Vicariat and Mgr. Doucere became its first bishop (MacClancy 2002: 83).

[128] MacClancy numbers 23 Presbyterian missionaries in 1900 and only ten in 1930, 28 Catholic missionaries in 1914 and 18 in 1933 (2002: 111 f.).

[129] All numbers in percent are taken from the 1999 National Population and Housing Census (Population & Housing Census 2000: 20) & the 2009 National Population and Housing Census (National Census of Population & Housing 2010: 25).

[130] In TAFEAs province (see note 36) *kastom* is the most common faith at 28.8% (Population & Housing Census 2000: 20).

February 15th.[131] Recently, a few ni-Vanuatu converted to Islam.[132] According to the last census, only one percent of the population does not adhere to any religion at all (National Census of Population & Housing 2010: 25). There is rivalry between all these different denominations and a person's affiliation with one of them is often accompanied by a political manifestation.

1.4.6 Colonial History and Independence

Competition between French and English settlers concerning the copra trade and ni-Vanuatu labourers became fierce in the late 1880s, while land disputes between settlers and islanders led to a convention held in London in 1905 (MacClancy 2002: 73). In the end, the British and the French agreed to rule the New Hebrides together.[133] Although not settling the land disputes between the Europeans and the islanders, the Anglo-French Condominium of the New Hebrides was signed in November 1906 and proclaimed in December 1907 (Speiser 1923: 16).[134]

The village communities, originally not only separated by forest and stretches of sea but divided by warfare and fragmented politically, culturally and linguistically, became a unit at least in terms of administration. Authors, writing at different times on the subject, generally agree, however, that the condominium rule was a failure (e.g. Speiser 1922; MacClancy 2002 [1980]; Crowley 1990: 4, Van Trease 1995: 12, 58). All institutions were set up twice, beginning with the British and French Resident Commissioner, the Joint Court,[135] two hospitals, two prisons, and a local police corps under the command of a British and a French commissioner (see also Crowley 1990: 4). There were two currencies, the English Pound and the French Franc, until 1935 when the Australian Pound was introduced, which was used in free exchange with the *franc des Nouvelles-Hébrides* (Statistical Yearbook 2002: 82; Crowley

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[131] In the beginning, the movement was addressed against the missionaries and other Europeans. Tannese did not go to church anymore, expecting John Frum to send them 'cargo' which led either to their spending all their money or throwing it in the sea because they would not need it anymore. Leaders of the movement were arrested but the arrival of the Americans in Efate was incorporated into the cult. As it was believed that cargo would arrive from America, the Tannese constructed an airfield. The movement was constantly revived. See Lindstrom 1993 (the fourth chapter) for details on the John Frum movement. There were other movements on Espiritu Santo (the 'Naked Cult'), Pentecost, west Ambae, north west Malekula and Vanua Lava.

[132] Marc Tabani summarized the history of Islam in Vanuatu in his presentation *Islam as kastom in Tanna (Vanuatu)* at the 2018 ESfO Conference (London/Cambridge).

[133] MacClancy claims that the New Hebrides never were technically a colony, but rather a region of joint influence (MacClancy 2002: 105).

[134] In part, this was also a response to the German expansionism in the region (Statistical Yearbook: 11).

[135] The Joint Court was opened in 1910, with a British and a French judge, a Spanish president, a Spanish public prosecutor, a Dutch clerk and a Dutch native advocate (Lynch 1923: 67).

1990: 4). The administration's income was poor, consisting only of taxes and import duties, with the result that staff was kept to the absolute minimum. Education and medical care were under full responsibility of the missions. Misunderstandings frequently occurred because of communication difficulties with so many languages involved.

While the First World War passed the New Hebrides by, more or less without leaving its mark[136], an important period of major change began in 1942, when the Second World War extended to the Pacific. In April 1942, Japanese forces reached the Solomon Islands and Europeans fled to the New Hebrides as an invasion seemed to be approaching (MacClancy 2002: 114). Australian soldiers trained ni-Vanuatu and Europeans that enlisted for the New Hebrides Defence Force (MacClancy 2002: 114). In May 1942, American warships arrived as a reaction to the efforts of the Japanese to build an airfield on Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands. The Americans used ni-Vanuatu labour to build camps, docks and airfields all over the islands. In Espiritu Santo, an important base with several airfields, wharves, offices and a sports ground was built. The number of soldiers stationed there, over one hundred thousand, exceeded the local population of the entire country by far. Half a million men passed through Santo during the war (MacClancy 2002: 116) and the islanders were confronted with vast quantities of equipment and materials.[137] As MacClancy writes, "[t]he friendliness and generosity of the troops and the sight of American Blacks working alongside other Americans greatly impressed people" (2002: 117). With the defeat of Japan in 1945, the Americans withdrew quite quickly and destroyed a lot of their equipment by throwing it into the sea.[138]

After the war had ended, things got going slowly in the Condominium administration. Some of the posts in the services were vacant and several were held by only one man at a time (MacClancy 2002: 120). This meant that the infrastructure and public services were poorly cared for.

More and more ni-Vanuatu cut their own copra, and in the 1960s, European planters had swopped to the raising of cattle because of the lack of labour. They began to clear bush areas on higher and cooler levels, land they had registered but until then not used (MacClancy 2002:

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[136] MacClancy remarks that "news of the First World War took three months to arrive from Europe" (2002: 99). Port Vila was an isolated place where the government officials lived and where settlers came for supplies and to play poker (ibid.).

[137] By the 1930s, Luganville was not more than "two small clumps of buildings" and Port Vila – the capital – had a population of only one thousand (MacClancy 2002: 104, 100).

[138] At Million Dollar Point in Santo the remainders of vehicles and machines can be seen at low tide until today. Shelters of corrugated steel are still in use, especially in Luganville, and the world's largest accessible shipwreck of a cruise ship (the SS *President Coolidge*), which sank offshore in December 1942, is an attraction for divers.

133). The ni-Vanuatu, however, regarded those areas as theirs, and land ownership became Vanuatu's central political concern. In Santo, the Nagriamel movement was founded to oppose the expansion of the Europeans and the Americans. The movement, which is classified as revivalistic by some (see for example Van Trease 1995: 13), soon found many supporters among ni-Vanuatu. Jimmy Steven, leader of the movement, demanded independence for the New Hebrides in 1970. After the New Hebrides National Party was formed on Santo, its President Father Walter Lini demanded in 1974 that independence should take place in 1977 (MacClancy 2002: 135). The division of the population along language, education and church affiliations found expression in the formation of two opposing political camps. Thus the terms 'francophone' and 'anglophone' do not only refer to language but also to church affiliation and political affinity. Not only one's own or one's family's orientation but also the employer of people working in the cash economy can determine "individual party affiliation since the 1970s, when national politics began" (Van Trease 1995: 3).

The anglophone National Party was opposed by a collective of smaller parties, known as the Moderates. The followers of these parties (among others Nagriamel and 'John Frum') were often francophone or *kastom*-oriented ni-Vanuatu. Some of the Moderates held the view that it was too early for independence and wanted to maintain the Condominium system until further development in the country made independence possible. Others, like Nagriamel, were striving for partial independence of Santo and Tanna. MacClancy describes the positions of the colonial powers like this:

> The general feeling at that time was that the British administration wanted to get out as quickly and as cheaply as possible. In contrast, the French administration was not keen on independence, because it would threaten French opposition to autonomy in New Caledonia, renowned for its rich nickel deposits, and would increase pressure against the testing of nuclear devices in French Polynesia (2002: 136).

Moreover, the French settlers and businessmen wanted to maintain their dominant economic position (Van Trease 1995: 31).

In 1977, the National Party was renamed in Vanua'aku Pati (VP). Father Walter Lini signed the constitution publicly in October 1979 and the elections were set for 14 November 1979 (MacClancy 2001: 147 f.). The Vanua'aku Pati won a two-third majority and Father Walter Lini was elected Chief Minister. After riots on Santo and attempts to split away on Santo and Tanna in the first half of 1980, independence was granted by Britain and France on 30 July 1980, and the New Hebrides were renamed the Republic of Vanuatu. Troops of the PNG

Defence Force arrived in mid-August and arrested hundreds in Santo and other islands to safeguard the transition to independence (MacClancy 2002: 158). Despite the affirmations of the British and French to prepare the way for independence, the new government administration was left to care for itself, lacking in experience and facing such problems as having to raise its own army (MacClancy 2002: 153).

When the Australian Government closed Norfolk Island as a tax haven, businessmen turned to the New Hebrides and many new banks came to the capital.[139] Cruise ship tourism has increased with the new deep-sea wharf since 1972. These developments led to a building boom in Port Vila in the early 1970s and many islanders migrated to the towns, although employment opportunities for ni-Vanuatu were mostly confined to manual-labour positions. In Port Vila there was an increase in population from 1 300 in 1955 to 10 000 in 1979 (MacClancy 2002: 148, 150).

1.4.7 Politics, Civil Society and Economy in Present Day Vanuatu

The rivalry between the colonial powers is still reflected in the political landscape of the country. Ni-Vanuatu are ruled by a Prime Minister[140] and a Council of Ministers. The Members of Parliament meet in the capital Port Vila on the island of Efate and are normally elected every four years. At the time of fieldwork, politics were mainly determined by the overwhelmingly anglophone Vanua'aku Pati (VP) and its break-away parties the National United Party (NUP), the Melanesian Progressive Party (MPP) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP), as well as the more francophone-oriented Union of Moderate Parties (UMP), as well as the francophone though Protestant Fren Melanesian Party (FMP).

In the early 1980s, eleven Local Government Councils were established and restructured in 1994 into six Provincial Governments.[141] SHEFA province has the highest population due to the fact that it hosts the capital Port Vila. These days, government services are the second largest sector for formal employment (Statistical Yearbook 2002: 43).

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[139] Vanuatu is a popular tax haven. Trust companies and probably some individuals benefit from deals in this field, however these are immaterial for the majority of the population.

[140] At the time of fieldwork this office was held by Edward Nipake Natapei.

[141] The provinces' names are derived from the major islands' names that compose these provinces: SHEFA stands for Sheperds and Efate, SANMA for Santo and Malo, TORBA for Torres and Banks Islands, MALAMPA for Malekula, Ambrym and Paama, TAFEA for Tanna, Futuna, Erromango and Aneityum, PENAMA for Pentecost, Ambae and Maewo. The presidents of the six provincial governments as well as some members of parliament elect Vanuatu's Head of State, the President (Statistical Yearbook 2002: 26).

'Traditional Chiefs' retain a good deal of power on the local level. Chief is a status obtained by inheritance (only in some parts of Vanuatu) or rank-taking (including the ceremonial slaughter of pigs). Matters relating to the protection of *kastom*, vernaculars and land rights are discussed by the District Councils of Chiefs and, elected among these, the National Council of Chiefs (Malvatumauri). The 'Chiefs' also play an important part in the law system because they are responsible for law enforcement on the village and the island level. Public safety is the duty of the Vanuatu Police Force, although police are not present on all islands, and the Vanuatu Mobile Force (VMF).

While 45% of the housing units in Vanuatu are classified as 'traditional', it was estimated in 2002 that some thirty or forty percent of the capital's population live in squatter settlements in very simple houses made out of corrugated iron, many of which are without electricity, flush toilets or running water (Statistical Yearbook 2002: 148 f., 151). Since then, this number has most likely risen significantly.[142]

The biggest part of the population lives in rural areas and agriculture is Vanuatu's most important economic branch. Nearly 70% of the people depend on the land for their food and as their main source of income; 96% of the households in rural areas own land (Population & Housing Report 2000: 32); it was 92% in 2012.[143] Family agriculture is based on root crops such as yam, manioc, taro and sweet potato. The volcanic soil is usually very fertile and the climate is humid and warm. This means that even if people feel poor in terms of cash, at least the rural dwellers have their outcome from their garden produce. Most households in villages keep fowl and pigs, some also cattle, and many regularly go fishing. The production of copra is the main source of rural income but smallholders also engage in the production of coffee, cocoa and kava (for which there is great domestic demand). 80% of the exports in 2002 were made up of agricultural products (Statistical Yearbook 2002: 49). Other industrial branches include fishing and log production. Agricultural occupations (including subsistence farming) and fisheries add up to over 70% in Vanuatu (Population & Housing Census 2000: 36).

The value of imported goods (mainly construction materials, food, consumer goods and mineral fuels) is higher than that of the exports, with the main export commodities being

[142] The 2009 National Population and Housing Census lists the main material used for walls, floors and roof by province and urban-rural residence in absolute numbers (p. 169 f.). The urban community Freswota is steadily growing, which is why neighbourhoods within this part of Vila are numbered (up to Feswota 6). The majority of dwellings were built very recently – "[t]his reflects Vanuatu's susceptibility to cyclones and other severe climatic conditions" (Population and Housing Census 2000: 29).

[143] More accurately, these households do not 'own' it but have access to customary lands (see Malvatumauri 2012: 20). See 2016 Post Pam Mini Census Report 2017 for details on livestock, gardening and cash cropping.

copra, beef, timber, fish, and, especially since 1990, kava (Statistical Yearbook 2002: 37, 138).[144] Most visitor arrivals (60%) come from Australia. Since 1990, tourism plays an increasingly important part in the economy of Vanuatu, making up about 15% of the national revenue in 2001.[145] Since 1999, the cruise-ships 'Pacific Sky' and 'Pacific Princess' have paid frequent visits to Vanuatu (Statistical Yearbook 2002: 38, 95-97). Recently, also the 'Rhapsody of the Seas' and others have called in port. Port Vila Downtown is flooded by day visitors at certain hours and the arrivals of cruise ships even tripled between 2006 and 2011 (DeBlock 2019: 136). The informal sector (such as small bakeries or cement block making) plays an important role, especially in rural areas. The present currency is the 'Vatu' (vt; see Table 1 for prices). On 1 January 2004, the exchange rate was 1 US$: 117 vatu (vt).

Unemployment is a problem, especially among young males who come to Vila in search of employment (see Mitchell 1998). The highest proportion of migrants that come to Vila is made of such 15-19 year-old youth, as well as of young people coming to the capital for schooling (National Statistics Office 2001: 74 f.). The level of illiteracy is still high amongst adults in some areas and the majority of the adult population only has a low level of formal education.[146] There is only a very limited number of secondary school places at the 59 secondary schools in the country (National Statistics Office 2003);[147] a fifth of the population aged fifteen and over has attended secondary school (Population & Housing Report 2000: 23), the biggest schools being the English-language Malapoa College and the French-language Lycée Louis Antoine de Bougainville, both situated in Port Vila.[148] There is tertiary education available at facilities of the University of the South Pacific (USP) in Port Vila and

[144] Australia has become the most important country as a buyer of exports as well as a source of imports (Statistical Yearbook 2002: 38, 140 f., 145 f.).

[145] The direct contribution to the gross domestic product was 17.2% in 2016 (according to the publication of World Travel & Tourism Council: Travel & Tourism Economic Impact 2017).

[146] School attendance drops "drastically from the age of twelve onwards, but it does so at a much faster rate in rural areas. Of the age group 6-16, 75.8 percent of males were attending school at the time of the census …" (National Population and Housing Census 1999: 22).

[147] There were 96 secondary schools in 2015 (2015 Annual Statistical Digest, published by the Ministry of Education and Training).

[148] As Van Trease points out "at independence, Vanuatu inherited two totally separate and different school systems, reflecting the divergent colonial policies and political goals of the British and French governments" (Van Trease 1995: 55). While the British placed emphasis on preparing the ni-Vanuatu for independence, the French, who opposed an independent republic, did not provide education at a tertiary level (see also Van Trease 1995: 54-57).

Luganville.[149] Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) contribute both to youth and adult education (Statistical Yearbook 2002: 65).

The transport and communication infrastructure on many islands is undeveloped, for example compared to the bigger islands of Fiji. Often there are no paved roads, and roads and bridges are sometimes unusable because of bad weather. At the time of fieldwork, only 3% of the households in rural areas privately owned a vehicle (Population & Housing Report 2001: 32). Some parts of the islands can only be reached by boat. Sea transportation plays a major role and "poor service is regarded a major constraint to development and the cause of hardship for the outer-islanders" (Statistical Yearbook 2002: 103). There is also the domestic airline Vanair, but domestic airfares are high compared to surface transport.

All power, which is only available in Port Vila, Luganville, Lakatoro (Malakula) and Isangel (Tanna), is produced by diesel-powered generating sets.[150] The country is entirely dependent on imported petroleum products, with the exception of small solar panels that are occasionally used for telephones at airstrips (Statistical Yearbook 2002: 120). Small generators are operated throughout the country, especially by hospitals and schools.

The national telephone density was far below the world average in 1999 (about 0.4 telephones per 100 people), but the sector of mobile telecommunication services has expanded in recent years to such an extent that 76% of the households had a mobile phone by 2009 (Statistical Yearbook 2002: 105, Census Summary 2010: 27). During the time of field work there were only few public places in Vila and Luganville where there was access to the internet, and then at very high rates. Meanwhile, "Digicel launched 3G mobile phone Internet access in December 2011, and TVL [Telecom Vanuatu Limited] did so in January 2013" (Stern 2014: 3). Information about the media (press, radio and television broadcasting) in Vanuatu is given in Chapter 5.

The production of stringband music is closely connected with these diverse historical, social, political, economic and cultural facets of the life on the islands, and the consideration of these aspects is crucial to the understanding of the music, as well as the role of music in the creation of identities for ni-Vanuatu.

[149] The USP was established in 1968 and has 12 member countries but only three campuses in Fiji (Laucala campus), Samoa (Alafua campus) and Vanuatu (Emalus campus in Port Vila). On the Emalus campus the main focus is on the Pacific Languages Unit and the School of Law. 1.3% of the population attended a tertiary education (Population & Housing Census 2000: 23). See 2015 Annual Statistical Digest (2015: 27-30) on recent details about tertiary education. A small number of students have the possibility to study abroad on government scholarships.

[150] These same places and additionally Norsup (Malekula) also have a water supply system (Statistical Yearbook 2002: 153).

2 A History of *Stringban Miusik* in Vanuatu

In this chapter, I provide an overview of local conceptualisations of musical styles found in contemporary Vanuatu (2.1), as well as an account of the history of the Western-inspired musical styles of the 20th century and recent relevant developments in the field of stringband music (2.2).

2.1 Musical Genres in Vanuatu

For an understanding of contemporary stringband music with respect to identity, it is necessary to identify the most important varieties of music in Vanuatu and their interdependence. The four main categories of music in Vanuatu, *kastom miusik*, *stringban miusik*, church music and *pop miusik*, have been mentioned in 1.1.1. The category of *pop miusik* is not only related to the different popular music styles from Vanuatu but from anywhere in the world. Thus, it incorporates those music genres and styles that are usually subsumed under the label of 'popular music' in the global arena but it does not include stringband music.[151] The perception of these music categories is reflected in the programme of the annual Fest'Napuan, the country's biggest music festival. Thursday, the first day of the event, is devoted exclusively to stringband music.[152] Table 2 summarises some crucial characteristics of the genre *stringban miusik* in comparison to *pop miusik*.

The differences between the four main music categories in Vanuatu concern both musical characteristics like rhythm, harmony, instrumentation and vocal technique, as well as lyrics topics, language choice, ways of performance, the production of sound carriers, marketing, consumption, organisation and other social aspects. However, it is important to note that an individual person may adhere to all four categories of music, depending on the situation. Thus,

[151] My interlocutors usually understood jazz as one of those styles referred to under *pop miusik*, while classical music falls somewhat out of line, not being referred to as *pop miusik* but nevertheless conceived of as a 'style'. Jazz and especially classical music play only a marginal role among music lovers in Vanuatu, as neither genres are consumed by many – surely less than for example film musics (by watching movies) – and neither are produced.

[152] There is popular music on the Friday and Saturday night programme, and on Sunday, the last day, the stage is reserved for religious music groups. Performances of *kastom miusik* are not displayed at the Fest'Napuan but rather at special events such as the Nasonal Dei blong Kalja (National Day of Culture) or at Arts Festivals and 'Mini-Arts Festivals'.

in Vanuatu there is no distinction along social criteria as far as the production and reception of the various musical genres are concerned. The same is true with regard to age – I did not identify any preference of different age groups to any of the categories.[153] The individual can adhere to different genres at musical events and behave according to the prevailing context without changing their belonging to a certain social group.[154] Each music, each genre and style, does nevertheless correspond with one's identity in a special way. Over the course of time, the importance and presence of certain musical genres in a given society changes. In 2.2 I focus on these changes in the development of stringband music.

2.1.1 *kastom miusik – pop miusik – stringban*

The range of traditional musics in Vanuatu attests to the country's cultural diversity. There are a multitude of different occasions for the use of *kastom miusik*, the more outstanding being the rites of passage of men/boys and women/girls. Among the most striking genres are circular dances/songs[155] performed at life-cycle feasts. In the central and northern part of the archipelago, hollowed-out log idiophones (known as slit-drums or slit-gongs; *tamtam* in Bislama) lie horizontally (as in Pentecost and Ambae; see Figure 2) or stand upright (as in Ambrym and Malekula; the latter are played together in an ensemble with smaller, horizontally-lying slit drums; see Figure 3).[156]

Among the other instruments used in *kastom miusik* in various places are or were conch shells, panpipes, flutes, lamellaphones (Jew's harp, *susap* in Bislama), idiophones made of wood or bamboo tubes[157] and ankle rattles.[158] The repertoire does not only consist of old pieces

[153] There are parallels to the Tolai society (PNG): "In the early 1990s […] the Tolai maintained a three-part division of musical styles (Neumann 1992b: 307). In Tolai villages, neither "traditional dances", nor hymns, nor popular songs are the domain of a particular generation" (Webb 1998: 153).

[154] In this respect, I disagree with Frith who states: "[…] once we start looking at different musical genres we can begin to document the different ways in which music works materially to give people different identities, to place them in different social groups" (Frith 1996: 124).

[155] In the circular dances of Vanuatu, dancers most commonly circle counterclockwise (see Crowe 1990). The separation of music and dance is a rather Western concept, "antithetical to most indigenous perspectives from Asia and Oceania" (Trimillos 1998: 95).

[156] There is a correlation between the spread of these giant idiophones and the belonging of languages to different groups within the archipelago (Crowe 1998: 689). The position of the instruments, upright or horizontal, can be a hint as to whether the communities trace their descent matrilineally or patrilineally (Kaeppler 1998: 688). These instruments are made from the timber of various trees, e.g. island teak (*Intsia bijuga*), the breadfruit tree, *Garuga floribunda* or others.

[157] Idiophones made of bamboo can be small handheld tubes, like the instruments used in stringband music (see 3.3.4.3), bamboo stamping tubes, or long bamboo tubes like the *maltani* from north Pentecost, which are held by two men on their shoulders and struck by several others.

[158] There are various names for ankle rattles in the different parts of Vanuatu. For example in the Walarano area in Malekula they are called *nvack*, in Bislama *nalake* or *nalaklak*. The fibrous bark of *burao* (*Hibiscus tiliaceus*) is used to tie the seeds together. People use different varieties of seeds to make this instrument; these are the

(*kastom singsing*), as new songs continue being composed nowadays. An example of a new *kastom singsing* was sung to me by elders from Walarano, Malekula, and spoke of the achievements of Vital Soksok, a man from the area.

The VKS regards *kastom* as something that is vanishing and needs protection.[159] At the same time, some ni-Vanuatu musicians interpret *kastom miusik* so widely that fusions with *pop miusik* can be part of it, and an original *kastom singsing* that is played in a *pop miusik* group is still recognized as *kastom*. The musicians themselves regard these fusions as a form of musical preservation[160] or revitalisation, as they are very much aware of the possible loss of the traditional music of their community and the need to pass the knowledge about it on to the younger generation. Sometimes, these efforts are connected to tourism.[161]

In some cases fusions of syncretic musics with *kastom miusik* are welcomed by the *jif* and regarded as more appropriate for some occasions than adhering cultural purity concepts. However, there are also island communities who do not welcome the use of *kastom* musical elements or where this has yet to be negotiated between the musicians, the *jif* or elders and the other members of the community.

Songs are occasionally transferred from their original form into another music genre, i.e. from *kastom miusik* to stringband music or popular music, and not the other way around (see Figure 4). The transfer first and foremost involves the display of local identity for an audience of young people from the musicians' community as well as for a wider public. Given the fact that the older people are the pre-eminent bearers of traditional music, notions of cultural purity or "ethnocentric pride" (as Kartomi puts it in relation to such cases, 1981: 235) perhaps play their part; thus foreign, 'dominant' genres are not 'translated' in the opposite direction. Besides, the process would entail a reduction of instrumentation that would dwarf music genres which desperately need harmonies (these are not common in *kastom miusik*). It is especially the rural stringbands which have songs in their repertoire that were originally *kastom singsing* (like songs from the VUSI BOYS, NAAHU TRIBES, and ERRO STRINGBAND).

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seeds of the *burao*, the seeds of the *snekrop* (*Entada phaseoloides*), the *Pangium edule*, and the fruit of the *namele* (*Cycas ciricinnalis*).

[159] "For the Cultural Centre, the fulfilment of its mandate to preserve, protect and develop *kastom* was becoming ever more pressing and urgent. The need to record aspects of traditional cultures now known by only the oldest generation, to foster an interest in learning these customs in the younger generation and to raise awareness at all levels of the importance and value of *kastom* […]" (Regenvanu 1999: 98).

[160] Not in Nettl's sense of the term, cf. Nettl (1978: 131 f.).

[161] An example for this is the project NEMINAMEL from the community at Walarano in Malekula. The performances of this music and dance troupe take on revitalizing traits, in which some elements are modified and others newly added.

Many *pop miusik* groups (like VATDORO, TROPIC TEMPO, HUARERE, SAMMY G and UPB) also use and used traditional songs from the area they come from, arranging them for keyboards, electric guitars and other non-traditional instruments. The endeavours of TROPIC TEMPO to join popular music and *kastom miusik* have an exemplary function for many younger musicians in Vanuatu. Usually, the modern, often synthetic sounds (produced with Yamaha keyboards and synthesizers) are understood as a kind of superficial layer, which brings the important part (usually *kastom miusik* rhythms or melodies) into a more modern form. The adaptation of a *kastom* song requires harmonisation of the melody, and an appropriate accompaniment with guitars, keyboards and bass needs to be found.

One needs to differentiate between the transfer of an entire traditional song – the song then has to fit in a totally different arrangement and instrumentation – and the usage of single traditional musical elements in an arrangement of a popular music song, which is usually composed by a single person (normally a member of the performing group). These elements are local percussion, sometimes bamboo-flute parts or singing used in song intros or interludes in *pop miusik*.[162] Aside from the use of traditional instruments and their characteristic sounds, sometimes rhythmic patterns of slit-drums or other percussion instruments are split up to be played on the different drums of a drum kit (or programmed into a drum computer) – thus there is the rhythmic structure of the traditional music but not its sound.[163] In other words, there are two different ways of incorporating musical elements of *kastom miusik* into Western-inspired music: first, the sounds of traditional instruments (often only in certain parts of the song), second, the structure of traditional rhythms and sometimes melodies played on Western instruments (often throughout the song). In this respect, there is a significant difference between stringband music and *pop miusik*: in *pop miusik*, either complete traditional songs are transferred (thus played in a *pop miusik* style) or only some musical elements that are explicitly *kastom* in sound and technique are used; in stringband music the latter is not the case. Some smaller local percussion instruments that are also used in *kastom miusik* can be part of the instrumentation of a stringband, but the sound of *kastom miusik* is normally not featured in the sense that, for example, a part of the song is performed by a slit-gong

[162] Examples for both can be found on SAMMY G.'s album "Pacific Unite", SINA Home Studio, as well as on the album "Vois Bilong Ol Bumbu" by TROPIC TEMPO (Mangrove – Vanuata – Ocean Deep, 1996). An early example is the piece 'Taberavoa' by VATDORO (released on the album "Coming Up" in April 1995).

[163] Examples are again SAMMY G.'s songs as well as the song 'Iasa', which was recorded by VATDORO with the north Pentecost *kastom miusik* specialist Thomas Rau in Port Moresby (PNG). The cassette "Vatdoro Peace" was recorded in 1997 at the CHM Supersound Studios. I witnessed a pig killing ceremony in north Pentecost with islanders singing the same song ('Iasa') and playing the corresponding *bolaba* rhythm on a slit gong ensemble.

ensemble.[164] Besides, the application of traditional songs in *pop miusik* is far more frequent than in stringband music.

The VUSI BOYS from south-east Ambae play traditional *bolo* and *sawagoro* pieces in the stringband style, using the corresponding rhythms and setting harmonies to the melodies.[165] In some cases, the influences of traditional musics in stringband music go beyond *kastom miusik* from Vanuatu. The stringband NAAHU TRIBES from West Ambae have a traditional dance from Fiji in their repertoire.[166]

Musicians playing *pop miusik* who want to apply *kastom miusik* elements often engage in what they call 'research' of this topic. They go to their home island (if they stay in town) and ask elders or distinguished experts on the subject of *kastom miusik* – ni-Vanuatu playing popular music do not necessarily have much knowledge about the *kastom miusik* of their home community. In the process, the musicians develop their own interpretation of *kastom*.

The transfer of *kastom miusik* to popular music is bound to certain conditions. Not all songs in a community (if at all) are free for transition. Often the children's songs are free for use while others are not; or only parts of songs may be used. Sometimes payments have to be made to the *jif* in exchange for the right to use the song (as for example in the case of the stringband FUTUNA FATUANA), or bandmembers have to acquire the right to use it (as for example TROPIC TEMPO). None of my interlocutors indicated that any extra 'research' in *kastom miusik* had been conducted for the use of a *kastom* song in a stringband's repertoire – which is, as mentioned above, occasionally the case.

The strong delimitation between the two parallel-existing domains of syncretic music in Vanuatu can be seen by way of how musicians manage *kastom miusik* elements within the different genres: when *kastom miusik* is turned into stringband style it is meaningful in the first place to the community the group comes from, whereas in *pop miusik* the *kastom* elements are combined with global musical idioms to achieve an appeal of 'world music' also to outsiders – other ni-Vanuatu (who do not share the same language and *kastom* with the band members)

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[164] The song 'Melanesian Arts Festival' from the stringband DAUSAKE (on their album "Grassroot Laef") is an exception, although parts with shouts and simple percussion at the beginning and ending of the song should be regarded rather as a sound atmosphere, emphasizing the topic of the lyrics. Occasionally, atmospheric sounds are added in studio recordings of stringband music (see 3.3.4.4).

[165] The *bolo* and the *sawagoro* from Ambae are songs and dances, involving a back- and forward moving group of dancers as well as other people circling them counterclockwise (see Ammann 2012: 239 ff. & Crowe 1998: 695 f.).

[166] In the days of the labour trade, recruits brought a dance called *iri* from Fiji when they returned from the sugar cane fields (*iri* = 'to fan' in Fijian, see also Capell 1991: 74). Now the dance, in which fans are used, is performed as *kastom* in west Ambae, band members told me. The stringband version clearly resembled Samoan music and language to such an extent that students of the USP from Samoa mistook the piece as Samoan.

but also people from overseas: Melanesians, Europeans, and others.

A stringband song is occasionally rearranged for the line-up of a *pop miusik* group – but in this case the song had originally been a *kastom singsing* that, so to say, went through a metamorphosis to become a pop song via a stringband. Original stringband songs are not usually rearranged to be played by a *pop miusik* group.[167] I recorded a few cases in which stringbands played cover versions of popular music songs from Vanuatu and overseas.[168] There are some cases in which stringbands experimented with other instruments than with the typical stringband instruments (see 2.2.5 and 3.4.5) but these are exceptions which do not change the structures and aesthetics of stringband music.

2.1.2 Popular Music Styles in Vanuatu

The most popular *pop-miusik* style that is produced by musicians in Vanuatu is, by far, *rege*. Some groups in Vanuatu specialize in *rege*, while other bands play this local style in their repertoire as one amongst others. Depending on the individual style of the group, *rege* is rooted in Jamaican reggae but also exhibits features of African reggae as well as pan-Pacific characteristics of reggae music to various degrees. Reggae is very popular in the whole Pacific region, and Melanesian reggae has a particularly good reputation.[169] Within pan-Pacific reggae, ni-Vanuatu *rege* is distinctive by its vernacular and Bislama lyrics, the rhythmic structures and melodies derived from *kastom miusik* and the featuring of local instruments. In the following text, I use the Bislama term *rege* when referring to reggae from Vanuatu because local versions of the style are distinctive and can be quite different from Jamaican or Jamaica-

[167] The exceptions I found were a few songs by the group LONWOLWOL, which were 'covered' in *pop miusik* style by the former bandmember Jesse Temar and an instrumental medley played by guitarist SIMON NATO, consisting of the songs 'Island Dress' and 'Pupu John' (both by DAUSAKE), and the Fijian song 'Kisi mai'. Interestingly, a musician came up with this idea abroad: there is a version of the Fijian singer LAISA VULAKORO of the very popular stringband song 'Island Dress' (by DAUSAKE). Webb reports for PNG that "six-to-six bands performed medleys of string-band hits from the 1970s" (Webb 1998: 139).

[168] NAAHU TRIBES from west Ambae play stringband versions of 'Honiara' by NAIO, 'Meri Lewa' by OSHEN, 'Mirror' by LUCKY DUBE, as well as a *kaneka* song. SARA POKASI from Emao recorded 'Close your eyes' on their album of the same name from March 1995 which is actually 'All my loving' by THE BEATLES. FATUANA MAHTUA from Futuna recorded their versions of 'Love Is All Around' and 'Lean On Me' on their album "Pacific Paradise" from October 2000.

[169] The Tok Pisin lyrics by OSHEN, an American who was brought up in PNG and is now living in Honolulu, for example, appear authentic to many indigenous people in Hawaii (personal communication with the anthropologist Katerina Martina Teaiwa, 2005).

derived forms of reggae – indeed to such an extent that outsiders might not recognise them as 'reggae' at all.[170]

The instruments used by groups playing *rege* as well as *pop miusik* in general are usually a drumset, an electric bass guitar, one or two electric guitars, two or more keyboards and occassionally percussion. Some groups use pre-programmed rhythmic sequences as a substitute for drums in live performances. In studio productions drums are mostly programmed (popular exceptions are NAIO and XX SQUAD). The keyboards are often divided into rhythm and lead keyboard, as is usually the case with electric guitars in rock groups. The reason for this is probably that no wind instruments are available to musicians in Vanuatu, so some keyboards take over the parts of the wind section with artificial brass sounds.[171] One of the most characteristic sounds of *rege* is the synthetic sound 'bamboo flute' from Yamaha keyboards, often modified by using the pitch bend wheel. Typically there is a male lead singer and one, two or more male background singers. Often the singers also play an instrument. Musicians also play (and played in the past decades) other styles. Interlocutors related to these as: zouk, rap, R & B, soul, rock and roll, blues, country, ragga, samba, lambada, jazz[172],'dinner music' (as played for tourists in hotel restaurants), and *miusik blong disko* (a general term applied to modern dance music). The unspecified 'pop' was also listed. *Kaneka*, a music genre from New Caledonia, is quite popular especially with young francophone ni-Vanuatu. Some ni-Vanuatu musicians have songs in their repertoire that resemble *kaneka* music, especially the group ERASO.

The Bislama term *pasifik slo* (or shortened to *slo*), describes a pan-Pacific style, a kind of pop ballade, in which the prevailing local percussion instruments and ukulele, as well as popular synthetic sounds are often used. Songs of this kind can be found in many Pacific countries. There is no sharp dividing line between *pasifik slo* and *rege* ballads; both also having been described to me as being played *long aelan stael* – in the island style. Songs of this kind as

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[170] The same could possibly be said about other popular styles such as zouk, however the number of musicians who try to develop their own zouk styles (such as for example the REAL SURVIVORS) is limited – and even they play zouk only as an addition to *rege*.

[171] However, there are a few exceptions: groups with wind instruments (mainly brass) are the pop groups that are made up of members of the two VMF barracks in Port Vila (NEW ETHNIC) and Luganville, as well as the groups KROS ROD (with an alto saxophon) and NOISY BOYS, the latter at least since their spectacular comeback as a pop group (they were a stringband before). At the time of fieldwork, KROS ROD and sound engineer Benson Nako planned to work together with the brass section of the French group MISTER GANG. Recordings made in Vanuatu were sent around the globe and the European musicians were supposed to record their part at home and then send it back to Vanuatu.

[172] In interviews, 'jazz' was given to me as one of the 'styles' of music played in Vanuatu. However, I have never seen anyone performing it – it apparently depends on the definition of what exactly is meant by 'jazz'.

well as popular international pop ballads are the preferred repertoire of soloists entertaining tourists at hotel bars. They accompany their singing with a keyboard, often with pre-programmed drums and bass patterns.[173]

Another important music category in Vanuatu is ecclesiastic music. There are fusions with traditional musics as well as with different forms of popular music. Some traditional musics are preserved through the institutionalisation of church music,[174] and as there are many Christian denominations in Vanuatu, there is a wide variety.[175]

The churches are important spheres for the development of a sense for part-singing. Many singers have a background in gospel singing, especially those belonging to the Seventh Day Adventists. Some groups perform a cappella (sometimes snapping their fingers), while others use a guitar, a playback or a keyboard with pre-programmed arrangements.[176] Although some of the all-male groups model their singing styles on internationally successful boybands like WESTLIFE, BACKSTREET BOYS or O-ZONE, the content of the lyrics is religious and no dancing takes place during the performance.[177] Many groups consist of four to seven male singers, as for example the AMBASSADORS, G'EE VOCALS and THE COMMISSIONERS, however there are also mixed-sex groups like THE REUNION.

Some recognised young female singers started their career by singing in choirs like ELLEN ISSACHAR and ALSINA GARAE. The country's most outstanding female singer, VANESSA QUAI, began her career as a small child with THE MONUMENT SINGERS, a gospel choir, and, at the time of fieldwork was already one of the country's top artists at the age of fourteen. Although the styles of singing of WHITNEY HOUSTON and MARIAH CAREY have meanwhile become the main inspiration of these singers, many of their lyrics still have a religious content.

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[173] The advent of the keyboard in the 1980s created the type of one-man band musicians in the hotels in Vila. Among the many musicians performing in such a manner, who also compose their own songs, are popular artists like REYNOLDS HERERA and ALBEA NALISA as well as newcomers like the young JERRY TARI.

[174] An example is the community of the Catholic Church Notre Dame de Walarano (Malakula), where tradtitional music and dances are incorporated within church ceremonies, although new religious vernacular lyrics substitute the original song texts. Such instances occur also in other parts of Vanuatu, such as north Pentecost (see also Chenoweth 1998: 700), Melanesia (see for example Saumaiwai 1994 for Fiji and Niles 1994 who reports on the use of traditional songs for hymns in PNG) and Oceania, as well as elsewhere in the world (e.g. Waterman 1990: 15, 55).

[175] For example, I found the way of singing in a Catholic service quite different from the Anglican or Church of Christ services.

[176] Don Niles' remarks with reference to PNG can also be said of Vanuatu: "Recent fundamentalist missions have emphasized the importance of singing their hymns in English, and thus numerous groups performing in a barbershop quartet […] have become popular" (Niles 1994: 85).

[177] Apart from the church context, the group AMBASSADORS sang songs of WESTLIFE and others for an audience of tourists at hotels, earning some money; yet its members, around 17 years old at the time of my fieldwork, did not dance in a boygroup-like manner, as this would not have been tolerated by their church.

The music of the John Frum community might be regarded as a special case of religious music. Although this is a subject on its own that cannot be touched upon here in detail, a few remarks to characterize a John Frum people's music performance might be useful in gaining a rough idea about this specific music.[178] The songs are sung in tuneful part-singing by many singers, both male and female. The instruments used are several guitars, all strumming cadenza in the same manner. In the beginning and ending of each song, the guitars play alone for a few measures, then one or two singers join them (apparently as soon as they have internalized tempo and pitch), and then the rest of the singers come in. Occasionally a rattle and a drum are played in eighth-notes, while hands are clapped in fourth, strongly accentuating the beat. The songs are quite even without changes in tempo and measure or any deviation from the cadenza scheme. In the John Frum music I heard, there are no instrumental parts between the stanzas. The text is sung in a vernacular language without any Bislama, French or English, with the exception of occasional shouts of "hallelujah" and "Amen". Whistling and jubilant cheers are heard on the recordings, just as in a wild live performance of stringband music. Members of the movement perform music and dance publicly every Friday night.

Apart from the four main categories of music in Vanuatu, there are also some types of music for special occasions, or performed by special people, which might not really fit into one of these categories. One of these is the music known as *bonane singsing* in Bislama.[179] After New Year's Day until the end of January, people from neighbouring villages, young and old, visit each other collectively. The visiting village community brings boughs of the *krismestri* (flamboyant tree, *Delonix regia*) or other plants, and sometimes a guitar and a *busbes* (a one-stringed bass instrument made from a tea case) and then goes to each house of the visited village to sing songs for the inhabitants. The part-singing is accompanied by clapping hands and stamping feet. The visited villagers hang pieces of cloth around the shoulders of those of the visiting party as tokens of their gratitude.[180] The procession goes through the entire village, which can take several hours. At the end, there might be an address and handing over of a

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[178] The following short description is based on recordings from the archive of the VKS from the celebrations of John Frum Dei, 15 February 2000 as well as later recordings (2003 & 2005) made by Macka Silona and Jacob Kapere, which were released by the VKS as "John Frum Band".

[179] From the French: bonne année; *bonane* can also be used as a verb meaning 'to sing *bonane* songs'.

[180] Often the singers are 'attacked' with baby powder or flour which is thrown on their heads, shoulders and backs as done in villages during the whole period from Chrismas to New Year's Day and after (although respected persons are not teased too badly). People put on old clothes, because, for example everyone who is offered 20 vt has to 'sell' them, as part of the game.

present of some bags of rice or the like. People of different confessions are involved in this custom and most of the songs are religious in nature, some ending with "hip, hip, hurei!" shouts. The songs of those *bonane* occasions I witnessed (and from which I derive this description) were in vernacular languages or in Bislama. Michael Webb describes a local religious genre, *salvesen ami*, a form of Christian hymnody from the Maskelyne Islands, which is practised between Christmas and New Year (2011: 90-93).

Another kind of music which does not quite fit into any of the four categories is military brass music, performed by members of the Vanuatu Mobile Force. The VMF musicians in Port Vila and Luganville follow the European military marching band tradition but also created pop groups who first and foremost play *rege*.[181] In contrast to other places in the Pacific region, brass bands are not popular in Vanuatu.[182] David Daniel considers that if there were two or three other groups and thus more competition, the brass bands would reach a higher standard and would hence become more popular. The interest of the people from 'outside' (the VMF camp) is more oriented towards the usual pop line-up ("*lektrik*").

The above-mentioned genres of stringband music, *rege*, military music and ecclesiastical music are sung and played by ni-Vanuatu. Other styles are consumed through video clips on TV, radio and bought in Port Vila's shops on CD. Modern R&B, soul and hip-hop is known by young people, especially in town, and surely appreciated by many, although it is not easy to find bands reproducing or composing such styles.[183] Exceptions are the mostly female singers of soul-related music already mentioned, who produce their own compositions with, for the most part, programmed music (with the help of usually older males).

There are also some musicians who try their hand at rapping and rap music. At the time of fieldwork, these attempts were rather timid and rap-like vocal parts occurred just as an additive in *pop miusik* songs. More widespread is toasting (although not named as such) – a vocal style not unsimilar to rap, typical in some reggae and especially in ragamuffin/dancehall music. Toasting is realised in a smooth, non-aggressive way in some *rege* music. The presence

[181] The French unit of the police has had a brass music corps since 1977; these were the first military musicians in the country (interview with John Martin 2004). After independence, the French and British police joined together, and the Vanuatu Mobile Force came into being. The VMF brass band has existed since the VMF headquarters was opened in Port Vila in 1981.

[182] In Tonga, for example, brass band music is popular at schools. According to David Daniel (interview 2003) there are brass bands in Fiji, Samoa and PNG.

[183] Meanwhile, more ni-Vanuatu musicians seem to attend to hip-hop (see Webb & Webb-Gannon 2016).

of the hip-hop culture[184] can be felt more clearly in dance. In music clips, the musicians pick up a boy group-like dancing style. Even more significant are the dancing groups which, for the most part are same-sex, and which have about four to ten members dancing mostly in simultaneous movements, as in music clips of Western rap and R&B interpreters.

Some of the most important and successful genres of international popular music are virtually non-existent among ni-Vanuatu youth. Punk rock and heavy metal, with its numerous substyles, is not popular. There is some interest in hardrock, which is generally conceived of as a white man's style. The only groups I found in Vanuatu during my fieldwork which played hard rock music were SPINROD and LOW BROW (consisting exclusively or for the most part of Australian expatriates). Besides, no electronical music or music produced by DJs like house or techno – important in the Western clubbing culture – is existent in Vanuatu as far as the production by ni-Vanuatu is concerned.

2.2 Stringband Music Across the Decades

There is no account of the history of stringband music in Vanuatu, and the need to provide sufficient data on the most significant developments in the past as well as the social forces that led to the emergence of the genre is paramount for an understanding of its distinctive characteristics.[185]

The following account contains a great number of names, years, and titles of albums. Figure 1 catalogues the stringbands most mentioned in this text according to the island of origin. Those readers with a special interest in the history of music in Vanuatu will find valuable information in this chapter. Anthropologists with a more general interest are kindly asked to bear with the author.

Since its beginnings some seventy-five years ago or earlier, stringband music has incorporated influences from Melanesian, Polynesian, European and American musical sources. Although stringband music is a remarkably stable style, some innovations and alterations in performance practice and the use and construction of instruments etc. have by and by changed the genre

[184] The term usually refers to the combined entity of music, dancing, graffiti and sometimes DJ-ing. The last two realms, as well as the characteristic hip-hop vocabulary (e.g. skills, style, writer, tag, flow, boasting, freestylebattle etc.) are not established in Vanuatu.

[185] Information on the history and development of syncretic music in Vanuatu was obtained by documenting the reports of older musicians and other acteurs in the field, and also comparing older recordings to more recent ones. Due to the fact that it is hard to obtain any written data on this topic, I had to rely on the memories of my interlocutors; this is a presentation of individual snapshots, valid only for a limited timespan at a given place.

over the decades. In the following, I elaborate on some foreign musical sources, while portraying the major developments within stringband music. Although it is necessary to name the major foreign influences, I do not examine these "parental traits" (Kartomi 1981: 233) extensively. For one thing, this is because such an attempt would be a work on its own and, for another, the stringband music of Vanuatu (as any other music) "must be regarded as a primary music worthy of study in its own right" (ibid.) and not be seen in relation to its influencing musical sources only.[186]

Rather, my objective is to show which events and developments played a crucial role in the process and which central figures – either carriers of a foreign culture or ni-Vanuatu – transmitted new ideas to the island communities and deserve special mentioning because their contributions are still important for contemporary musicians. It is necessary to keep in mind that apart from the influences listed in the following, Vanuatu's diverse local traditional music cultures and languages had and are still having a strong impact on the development of the country's popular music, and these cultural backgrounds have surely to some extend determined the modalities of appropriation of foreign influence. Concerning musical transculturation, Kartomi points out that "aesthetic tastes and standards, together with many of the extramusical meanings attached to music, [tend] to cross cultural boundaries with far greater difficulty than … tangible objects such as musical instruments" (Kartomi 1981: 244). Moreover, the transfer of single musical elements is much more frequent than that of trait complexes (Linton 1963: 485). We also need to consider that "[t]he process of cultural syncretism [is] often ideologically charged" (Waterman 1990: 33). Besides, non-social factors may play a crucial role in this process (Foster 1960: 227) – at times coming about by chance.[187]

Most of the following subchapters are structured in decades. I have decided for this form of presentation for the sake of clarity and chronology.[188] The writing of a history of music tempts one to look for 'musical lineages', that is, to search for continuities in music traditions.

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[186] Kartomi remarks appropriately: "Frequently, members of the identifying culture are at most only dimly aware of the identity of the parental cultures whose union provided the initial generation of the music. Adherents […] hear it as a […] music with its own unique stylistic qualities, and would not wish, even if they could, to subtract from it its […] traits" (1981: 229).

[187] Foster points out that the time sequence of imported traits plays an important role in acculturation (Foster 1960: 234). The field of material culture is another non-social factor. For example, the tropical climate was not suited to the maintainance of certain musical instruments in Vanuatu.

[188] Abundant information on the development of *pop miusik*, as well as on the nightlife in Port Vila, Luganville and other locations in the islands was also collected during field research. The focus of the work at hand has obliged the author to exclude this material here.

However, culture is constantly changing: rearticulated, negotiated, selected and adjusted, both consciously and unconsciously. Since contact situations are crucial for the emergence of syncretic musics, I first describe the nature of early contacts that were or might have been important sources for local transformation.

2.2.1 From the First Contacts to the Beginning of the Second World War

The culturally and linguistically diverse population of Vanuatu also creates great diversity within the realm of traditional musics. Even those traditions of musics in spatial proximity often differ considerably from each other (Ammann 2002: 42). The customary exchange relations between the islands also comprised the exchange of songs; thus, the music of the different areas within the archipelago were (and still are) influencing each other. Local and language-based identities that are connected with the prevailing music traditions of the island communities continue to play an important role in Vanuatu. However, the degree to which *kastom miusik* is involved in constructions of identity differs from place to place and depends among other things on the denomination and degree of influence of missionaries in that area. As already mentioned, Presbyterian missionaries strongly opposed the performances of Melanesian dances and music. Since music is an integral part of the Christian service, the missionaries brought their own music to the islands, which they taught to their parishioners.[189] European church music was also mediated through ni-Vanuatu who were educated in the Anglican training colleges.[190] Polynesian teachers might well have added Polynesian components of musical influence in southern Vanuatu[191], as might have some Polynesian workers on plantations and ships.[192] Polynesian musical traits may have been picked up by ni-Vanuatu recruits working on plantations in Samoa of the Deutsche Handels- und Plantagen-Gesellschaft (see also Scarr 1967: 5).

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[189] Amman detects that traditional musics in Vanuatu are modified by Christian and occidental influences (Amman 2002: 42).

[190] Men were gathered from the villages and sent to colleges in New Zealand, Norfolk Island and the Solomons for schooling (MacClancy 2002: 54 f., 111; Van Trease 1995: 4).

[191] Such influence is verified for other places in the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea (Latukefu 1996: 34 f., see also 75-78). A second wave of Polynesian teachers arrived in Vanuatu between 1862 and 1875. Polynesians who arrived prior to the teachers probably did not have much influence on musical practices in Vanuatu because of hostile circumstances – in 1829 and 1830 a considerable number of Hawaiians, Rotumans and Tongans came to Erromango (Gutch 1974: 143 f.). Around 1825 a party of 50 Tongans and a Samoan came to the Shepherd Islands, where they conquered the inhabitants of an islet before they moved on to Erakor on Efate (Liua'ana 1996: 77).

[192] The presence of New Caledonians and Polynesians on plantations and ships coming to Vanuatu is mentioned for example by Cawsey (1998: 139, 200-202, 210, 322).

Although stringband music evolved in Vanuatu and the bearers of this cultural form are of Melanesian or of mixed (usually European and Melanesian) descent, knowledge about European music and instruments was an important precondition for the evolution of the genre.
In the course of the 19th century, there was more and more frequent contact between ni-Vanuatu and people from Australia, New Zealand, America and Europe. Seamen may have introduced their songs. Gutch reports about John Williams' call on Futuna in 1839, where an islander was given some cloth to put on: "He was given a mirror and as soon as he caught sight of himself in it, 'he danced with surprise and shouted a song very similar to that of sailors when heaving an anchor or hauling a rope'" (Gutch 1974: 147).[193] These influences were surely stronger in some places like Aneityum than in other areas because of the whaling station, which was established there in 1870.[194] In fact, such musical culture contact happened very early on as can be seen from Georg Forsters' report on Cooks' second voyage (1772-1775), when German, English and Swedish folksongs were sung for the amusement of the islanders on Tanna (Forster 1983: 774, 777, 795 f.).
Later, male ni-Vanuatu signed on for the crews of the ships which sailed the Western Pacific, and, in this way, crossed the boundaries of their original communities, getting to know not only sailors of different nationalities on the ships and people in the ports of New Zealand and Australia but also other Pacific islanders. This is of course also true for those who engaged in the labour trade; they surely came across string instruments like mandolines, fiddles and guitars, as well as wind instruments such as bandoneons and others.[195] I assume that it was in the plantation context, with Melanesians of multiple cultural backgrounds, that the foundations of stringband music were laid. Just as Melanesian pidgin evolved, the labourers might well have created the basis of music based on string instruments.[196] However, this assumption concerns more the use of I-IV-V harmonies[197], 4/4 measures and maybe other musical characteristics, rather than the use of string instruments themselves, which seemed to have

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[193] The influence coming from seamen has often been quite contrary to that of the missionaries. As can be seen from some Bislama vocabulary, there were not only the highly-strung Europeans that left their traces in contact situations.
[194] Freeman & Constead had a station on Aneityum from 1870 (Vanuatu Daily Post, 1/24/2004, p. 3). There was more early contact in the south of the archipelago, due to the sandalwood trade. In the northern islands contact was initially restricted to missionaries and traders in copra and tortoiseshell (Scarr 1967: 6).
[195] Rev. John Inglis published a letter by Williamu, a man from Aneityum, who took singing lessons in Great Britain and who received an accordion as a present there (Williamu in Inglis 1890: 344 f.).
[196] Comparing pidgin and music, Webb writes about "a Melanesian, and perhaps pan-Pacific *music* lingua franca – a common-currency musical style complex – [which] is employed across areas where indigenous music systems are in geographical proximity, though are mutually unintelligible" (Webb 1993: 1).
[197] According to the Western theory of harmony, the chords based on the first, fourth and fifth degrees of the major scale are essential for the succession of chords (called 'progression'); applied in countless musical pieces.

gained greater popularity later on, when the Second World War extended to the Pacific islands. Referring to the second half of the nineteenth century, MacClancy writes:

> "In Queensland labourers worked on sugar-cane or cotton plantations or graziers' land. The normal routine was a ten-hour day in the fields working from dawn to dusk with an hour's break for lunch. In the evenings there were often songs and dances accompanied by concertinas, jew's harps and tin whistles. Leisure was spent tending private gardens, hunting, fishing, going to racecourse meetings, or visiting friends on other plantations. Saturday evenings many labourers walked miles to the nearest town where they illegally bought drink, frequented gambling dens, and went to brothels where there were European, Japanese and Australian Aboriginal women" (MacClancy 2002: 60).

Even if the islanders experienced European culture and music, making music was probably mostly confined to the labourers among themselves – not so much with Australians or other representatives of European culture.[198] The recruits were far from building something like a "black bourgeosie [emulating] British middle-class practices, including […] concerts of the work of Bach, Beethoven, Handel, and so on" (Waterman 1990: 33), as in parts of Africa. The plantations rather were important sites of syncretic cultural construction, and the plantation context in the Pacific might well be a case in which Kartomi's general description fits:

> "[…] diverse peoples in early contact situations may feel a need to make music together, partly in order to communicate with each other socially. People thrown together from multiple musical backgrounds would tend to learn to practice music of their common experience, which would usually be the music of the dominant culture, for relaxation, social prestige, life crisis ceremonies, social dancing, and the like" (Kartomi 1981: 242).

Labourers who returned to their islands were dressed in European clothes and impressed other young people with their experience and knowledge. Some had converted to Christianity overseas; in Queensland, there were the 'Queensland Kanaka Mission' and the 'Presbyterian Kanaka Mission'. Some brought with them, among other trade goods, a Jew's harp or another musical instrument.[199] These instruments would sometimes be in circulation on the island according to Melanesian distribution patterns (see also MacClancy 2002: 67). The returning plantation labourers surely were a cause of musical change to some degree, just as they were

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[198] "It was a time and Queensland was a place of racial inequality and prejudice. […] Generally, Queenslanders at that time did not like Melanesians living in their colony. The labourers were regarded as a necessary evil to be tolerated, not liked. Seeing *kanaka* enjoying themselves in town on Saturday evenings offended the sensibility of most Australians" (MacClancy 2002: 61). See also Cawsey (1998: 281).

[199] The goods bought by Melanesian workers were of quite a different quantity and quality depending on which plantation they worked. Accordingly, some places were favoured by ni-Vanuatu (as Maryborough in Queensland) while others were not (such as plantations in Fiji) (see Wawn 1973 [1893]: 121, 123). Some ni-Vanuatu also worked in the nickel mines of New Caledonia (Henningham 1992: 67).

with respect to the spread of the predecessor of the Melanesian Pidgin.[200] Within the archipelago there was also a considerable flow of labourers, as people did not usually work on their home island so as to make escape more difficult (see Wawn 1973 [1893]).

Some Europeans intermarried with local women and taught them to play European musical instruments. As Julian Thomas wrote: "gifted, as many of them were, with fine musical ears, [they] learnt to play well on the concertina or accordion. They would pick up any tune. One Aoba[201] woman I heard play a melange of opera bouffe, Christy minstrel and Moody and Sankey" (Thomas 1886, quoted in Cawsey 1998: 250).

Other European men came with their wives, as did some missionaries. Missionary John G. Paton printed the 'Aniwan Hymn-Book' with an old press from another missionary, Gordon, who had previously been murdered (Paton 1898: 360). Paton appreciated his wife's playing of the harmonium as a means of converting the Aniwans:

> "Next after God's own Word, perhaps the power of Music [sic] was most amazingly blessed in opening up our way. Amongst many other illustrations, I may mention how Namakei's wife was won. […] Mrs. Paton began to play on the harmonium, and sang a simple hymn in the old woman's language. Manifestly charmed, she drew nearer and nearer, and drank in the music, as it were, at every pore of her being. At last she ran off […] to call together all the women and girls from her village 'to hear the bokis sing!' […] that was the first avenue by which the New Religion winged its way into the heart of Cannibal and Savage" (1898: 362 f., original orthography).[202]

The special case of North Efate deserves attention here because of the long-term consequences. As already mentioned, the traditional ways of the ni-Vanuatu living in this region are no longer practised. The strong Presbyterian influence is what is ultimately responsible for the fact that stringband music took the function of traditional music in various contexts during the twentieth century. Peter Milne (*1834, †1924) of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, initially went to North West Santo in 1870 and later came to Nguna, one of the offshore islands of Efate (Speiser 1923: 15, Don [1927] 1977). He persuaded the whole population of Nguna and other islands to join the church:

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[200] For example, Wawn writes: "Children pick up South Sea English very quickly; and I have known boys who come on board my vessel converse fluently, having acquired the language from returned labourers and by visiting trading and labour vessels" (Wawn 1973 [1893]: 41).

[201] Aoba is the old name for the island nowadays called Ambae.

[202] In Bislama, *bokis* refers to any container. Here, the harmonium is meant. Another example recorded by Edward Jacomb is the description of a piano for which there was no word in Bislama: "*Bigfala bokis blong waetman, tut blong em sam i blak, sam i waet; taem yu kilim emi singaot*" (Tryon & Langoulant s.a.: 5). Of course, no one uses this long-winded expression nowadays (but instead 'piano'); yet it is often cited as an oddity in tourist literature on Bislama.

> "Peter Milne, strictest of a strict church, was converting the Ngunese and their neighbours to his set of rules: people who washed in the sea on Sundays were not allowed to keep more than their head out of the water. Otherwise they would be playing, and play was banned on Sunday. Milne sat on an overlooking hill with his telescope to see his regulations obeyed" (MacClancy 2002: 80).

The stringband music style from the northern part of Efate is by far the most influential throughout Vanuatu. People draw a direct connection between the work of the missionaries and stringband music when stating that stringband is a substitute for the *kastom* of the people from the area. This is the popular view held by ni-Vanuatu in general, as well as by people from North Efate themselves.[203] On the island of Emao, for example, traditional music was used in the past when the bride was brought to the house of the groom. Later, people sang new songs accompanied by a single guitar, until later again, a stringband played on that occasion. Joel Kaltang, famous stringband musician and composer from Emao, explains:

> "if something disturbs you in enacting your traditional ways, you switch to something else of which you think that it can keep alive your own ways. You lose your traditions but at least you have something of your own. Like us in Efate: we had traditional dances before but when the missionaries tried to stop these practices, we had nothing to keep our own lifestyle and so we played stringband music. An example from Tanna: the traditions were strong but when the missionaries came the John Frum Movement emerged. This is […] a change in the life of our forefathers in Efate, here in the north. That's it."[204]

Thus, at least for some parts of the country, it can be said that the agency of missionaries led to the loss of local music traditions which left a gap that was filled by stringband music as time went by. Insofar, stringband music can be seen as a direct creative response to colonialism.

The Protestant hymns from the 19th century are still sung in the services, often in the Bislama translation. The Kristin Kaonsel blong Vanuatu edited a *himbuk* in Bislama, an edition of hymns (*Ol Sing Blong Niu Laef*) in four volumes, published in 1970, 1973, 1983, and 2001.

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[203] The time span between the 'loss' of *kastom* and the emergence of stringband music is in fact too great for the possibility of a direct transfer of function and meaning. There was possibly some other kind of music preceding stringband music which filled this gap.

[204] "[…] *wan samting we i kam disturbem yu long kastom blong yu, yu jiam go long wan samting we yu ting se bambae hem i […] encouragem laef blong stael blong yu* […] *yu lusum kastom blong yu be* at least *yu holem wan samting. Olsem mifala long Efate i bin gat kastom danis bifo be afta we ol misinari oli kam, oli traem blong karem aot ol fulap kastom danis* then *yumi nomo gat samting blong mekem laefstael blong yumi laef* and *yumi go stringban. Eksampol blong Tana: kastom i strong i stap. Misinari i kam – i gat John Frum Movement. Hemia nao* […] *wan jenj long laef blong ol bubu blong Efate long mifala long not. Hemia nao*" (Interview with Joel Kaltang 2002).

This allowed three-part vocal harmonies to become deeply rooted in ni-Vanuatu music, as is especially reflected in stringband music.[205]

The missionaries' influence as well as Western influence in general, differed in the various islands and locations. On the island of Efate, where the administrations were located, the life of ni-Vanuatu had changed considerably by 1911/12 (Speiser 1923: 3). About 1 600 workers from other islands stayed on the plantations of Mele and in other parts of Efate at the time – which exceeded by far the original population of the island (amounting to 1 150) (Speiser 1923: 35, 37). As far as the rest of the archipelago is concerned, colonists only visited their stations at the coast and most Presbyterian missionaries also worked among people there, while Pacific Islander missionaries went into the interior of the islands.[206] Thus, it is likely that ideas about Western music extended inland from the centres on the coast.

In the 1910s, 'trade mouth-organs' were popular objects of trade between Europeans and islanders (Lynch 1923: 62, 152), and many copra traders preferred to pay in kind (Speiser 1922: 45). Larger European instruments like the piano, used by the 'natives' lawyer' Mowbray in Port Vila in 1913, were the rare exception (Lynch 1923: 71 f.). Robert James Fletcher reports that 'phonographs' were used in 1912 by planters who received new discs on a monthly basis from a steamer coming in from Sydney.[207] There was a cine-projector in Vila as early as 1913, although the Melanesians were not interested in watching films (ibid.: 99 f.). Fletcher also mentions Sankey's hymns being sung in 1914.[208] At least some islanders had heard recorded music from overseas on discs. Crowe suspects: "Pan-Pacific pop, supposedly based on pop-Hawaiian *hula*-music heard on 78-RPM disks, may have had currency in the 1920s and 1930s, via expatriates" (Crowe 1998: 139).

Not only Polynesians and Europeans but also Asians from China, Japan and Java came to the archipelago. From 1913 onwards, people from northern Vietnam worked on the plantations, and by 1925, their number had risen to 5 000 (MacClancy 2002: 96, 100; Douceré 1934: 42).

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[205] Likewise, Niles notices in respect to 19th century hyms in PNG that "[p]olyphonic singing based on Western concepts of harmony also proved to be important in the development of Central Province stringbands […]" (Niles 1994: 85).

[206] Speiser 1923: 35 f. and Coote 1882, quoted in Cawsey 1998: 195. During the 1920s and 1930s, ni-Vanuatu teachers, "poorly paid and trained at the Tangoa Teaching Institute", became more and more important because the number of European missionaries declined (MacClancy 2002: 111).

[207] These men listened to, for example, "Our Miss Gibbs" (Lynch 1923: 23), a musical that was staged in London in 1909 and in New York in 1910. Robert James Fletcher wrote letters to his friend Bohun Lynch who edited and published them in 1923.

[208] Ira David Sankey was a 19th century singer and compiler of gospel hymns (www.wholesomewords.org/biography/biorpsankey.html; last accessed on 1st February 2018). Fletcher mentions the song 'What can wash away my sin' (Lynch 1923: 106 f.).

Every year, as MacClancy writes, "those on the Plantation Colardeau, just outside Vila, held a large festival to which they invited many outsiders. Dressed in elaborate costumes and heavily made up, the Tonkinese put on a lengthy floorshow of traditional dance, music, and drama" (2002: 97). At a parade on the 14th of July they were "banging big bass drums made of wine-cases and cowhide, playing flutes and dancing together in papier mâché dragons" (ibid.: 102). By the 1930s, Vila had become a white town – ni-Vanuatu had to be out by nine in the evening. The French and British, meanwhile, enjoyed themselves:

> "Planters rode into town, tied their horses up outside the New Hebrides Club and went inside to meet their friends for a drink while their wives played tennis and met one another at afternoon tea parties. […] A travelling cinema came for month spells three times a year from Noumea. The Chinese relaxed with opium […]" (ibid.). [209]

The encounter with music from other islands within the archipelago but especially from elsewhere – Polynesian, Asian and European musics – must be regarded as a central precondition for the genesis of stringband music and popular musics in Vanuatu. Although there was no stringband music prior to World War II, some important concepts concerning the aesthetics, part-singing, rhythms etc. had probably begun forming before the 1940s.

2.2.2 The 1940s: David Samoa and the Americans

At a point in time when the French influence by far exceeded that of the British[210], a great number of American troops entered the archipelago. The huge impact of the latter's presence during World War II on ni-Vanuatu society is not only made transparent in special cases like the John Frum Movement but is also apparent in popular culture and especially in the music. The Melanesians familiarised themselves with the leisure activities of the American soldiers which included watching films at open-air cinemas[211], doing sports (e.g. boxing which was very popular in Vanuatu until decates later) and making music. McClancy writes:

> "Every camp had electricity and running water […] loudspeakers played music and relayed news daily. Aore held a vast rest and recreation camp, described so attractively and renamed Bali Hai in James Michener's *Tales of the South Pacific*. 54 cinemas put on different shows every night, such as *Sex Takes a Holiday* and *Withering Tights*. Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, Larry

[209] In 1913 Fletcher portrays the 150 Asians living in Vila at the time as immoral pests that entice the locals to smoke opium (Lynch 1923: 84).
[210] "In 1910 there were 566 French citizens to 288 British subjects. By 1939 the French outnumbered the British by 10 to 1. Vanuatu had become a French colony in all but name" (MacClancy 2002: 92).
[211] "The U.S. base on Espiritu Santo boasted forty-three mostly outdoor cinemas that islanders attended" (Lindstrom & White 1998: 26).

> Adler, Jack Benny, and Poogie Poogie, among others, came to entertain the troops. […] Ten thousand Ni-Vanuatu were conscripted on three-month contracts to unload cargo, wash uniforms, and work as domestic servants for the troops" (2002: 117).

During the war, some islanders were introduced to the new technologies like radio broadcasting, record-players, and tape-recorders (Lindstrom & White 1990: 158). As Van Trease puts it, the experience of the Second World War linked the New Hebrides to the modern world (1995: 14). The history of syncretic music – made in Vanuatu – seems to begin in the 1940s.

Some ni-Vanuatu, also women, entertained wounded soldiers at the hospital with their singing, dancing *kastom danis* and playing the guitar and ukulele (Annie Kaltiua & Lele Moli in Lindstrom & Gwero 1998: 82-84), or participated in performances of soldiers at a place nowadays known as *Independens Pak* (Charley Malau & Levy Pollen in Lindstrom & Gwero 1998: 251).

I assume that the ukulele was introduced to Melanesia from America and Polynesia, where it had already been in circulation before World War II. People who worked on the trading ships that linked the different islands were frequently the first to purchase string instruments in the 1940s and 1950s. For example, a man called Shem Tafmatua from Marou was the first to bring a ukulele from Australia to Emao (interview with Joel Kaltang 2002). When he brought the instrument, no one could play it.

It was the U.S. servicemen who taught ni-Vanuatu how to play the guitar and harmonica (White & Lindstrom 1989; Lindstrom & White 1990). The migration of the islanders also induced musical change. As Peter Crowe observes, people from northeast Ambae introduced a new style of singing in parallel thirds from the island of Paama, where they worked during the war (Lindstrom & White 1998: 26). Another example of musical influence through migration is of a man from Tanna called Iautan, who learned to play the organ at the mission school on Aore Island.[212]

The Samoan missionary called David Laban but later remembered as David Samoa[213] was one important initial popularizer of the ukuele, the guitar and other instruments in Vanuatu; he stayed in the southern part of Efate and in the southern islands of the archipelago and

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[212] He was one of the first ni-Vanuatu who played such an instrument. TIMTEO KALMET, who is regarded as one of Vanuatu's top musicians today, heard him playing when he was a young boy. Iautan's son and nephews later founded the stringband NOISY BOYS (interview with the NOISY BOYS 2003).

[213] Although he was mentioned by many of the older musicians, none of my interlocutors knew his proper surname. Graham Kalsakau from Ifira, one of his contemporaries, provides the name Laban in the book about ni-Vanautus' experience of World War II, edited by Lindstrom and Gwero (1998: 249).

influenced many ni-Vanuatu musicians of the first generation (as far as syncretic music is concerned) by teaching them to play these string instruments. Probably the biggest part of his repertoire was composed of religious songs. He seems to have provided major impetus to the emergence of a music played primarily on string instruments.

One of the first groups that emerged during the time was the FILA AELAN BAN, trained by David Samoa. One of its members, Alick Sualo from Erakor, reports that they played for the white men of different nationalities in town: on the Queen's birthday, the 14th of July festivities and also parties of the Americans and at the navy hospital. Apart from diverse neck lutes they also used a piano (Lindstrom & Gwero 1998: 249).

Andrew Seirangi learned to play the guitar from David Samoa on Aniwa Island. Seirangi moved to Tanna, got married and then taught two men called Peter Sesil and John Kalatei, the latter being the husband of Seirangi's niece. Seirangi's skills were passed on within the extended family, which produced the recent groups NAIO and NOISY BOYS.[214]

David Samoa's first student from Emao was a man called Sam Kupen. It was he who brought the knowledge of how to tune a ukulele to Emao and he also taught the children.[215] The spectrum of instruments used during the time was not confined to guitars and ukuleles. There were also other instruments that are hardly to be found in Vanuatu anymore, like mandolines, banjos, violins, harmonicas and accordions. It seems that David Samoa was able to play all of them and, after showing the people how to play the guitar and ukulele, he also showed them how to play the guitar and ukulele together (interview with Joel Kaltang 2002). The combination of the greater popularity of string instruments among American musicians stationed in Vanuatu, and the greater sensitivity of costly instruments like violins or accordions in the tropical climate most probably led to the characteristic combination of guitar and ukulele in stringband music. The gutbucket, a bass instrument, arrived during the war in some areas of the Pacific but in Vanuatu it only became part of the stringbands in the 1960s (in form of the so-called *busbes*). Also, contrary to other areas, ukuleles were seldom carved by ni-Vanuatu before the 1980s; imported instruments were rather bought from the stores.

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[214] The NOISY BOYS were founded by, among others, Thomas Nalau, son of John Kalatei. Kalatei founded the (alleged) first stringband of Tanna, called TINGI RAPRAP. He came from a village called Isini (originally founded by missionaries as 'Sydney'). Andrew Seirangi's brother was the grandfather of Jack 'Marvin' Maravi, who is a member of the NOISY BOYS and a former member of NAIO (interview with the NOISY BOYS 2003).

[215] "*Hem fes olfala long Not-Efate we hem i karem tiun blong yukalele, i had blong tiunem, i had blong andastanem i gud. Hem fes wan olfala we hem i tijim ol pikinini, ol bubu blong mifala*" ("He was the first at North-Efate who had a good grasp of how to tune the ukulele, it is hard to tune it, to understand well how to tune it. He was the first of our forefathers who taught the children, our grandfathers"; interview with Joel Kaltang 2002).

It seems that Vanuatu's stringband music emerged as a genre around the mid-1940s, although it took much longer to reach some places in the islands. In contrast to forms of popular music, direct connections between the stringband musics from PNG, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu do not exist anymore. This seems to have been different during the war when some songs, for example 'Ha Ha Japani Ha Ha', were widely known.[216] Like other war era songs[217], this piece survived for decades. It addresses the joy about the war being finished and that the Japanese have been defeated. On the island of Ambae I found a stringband with two older members, the COOL SHADOW STRINGBAND, performing this song in 2003. Lindstrom and White report:

> "Chief Kalosike of North Efate […] learned to play the harmonica from American servicemen and, decades later, still could play "Pretty Baby". Elder Johnson Nase of Tanna recalls learning to play the guitar from a Samoan he met during the war. Nase became one of the first skilled guitar players in southern Vanuatu" (1990: 158).

Ni-Vanuatu also took over new styles of dancing by the Americans. Nowadays, *teksas* in Bislama refers to mixed couples dancing to stringband music – a novelty at the time since, as Peter Crowe writes, "Vanuatu traditions had no mixed-sex dancing" (Crowe 1998: 139).[218] From its very beginnings, stringband music was also dance music.

2.2.3 The 1950s: Ilo, Nimoho and New Ideas on the Islands

On the small offshore island of Emao (North Efate, see Figure 5), which has always been a centre of stringband music, the groups NASONAL (Lausake and Ngurua village), PUSKAT (Wiana village) and NABURA (Mapua, Mangarongo and Marow village) formed early on.[219] These groups were in high demand to play at marriages – not only on Emao but also on Nguna, Pele and Efate, because in those days there were not as many stringbands as there are nowadays. PUSKAT was the first group from Emao that introduced uniforms: the musicians played in long khaki-coloured shirts and wore white hats.[220] The character of this uniform – maybe the very idea of dressing uniform – suggests a European influence.

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[216] See also Lindstrom & White 1990: 160. Lindstrom & White provide two stanzas in a version from the Solomon Islands (1998: 31).

[217] A marine officer on Efate reported that ni-Vanuatu were singing "God Bless America" and "The Marine's Hymn" (Heinl 1944 is quoted in Lindstrom & White 1990: 155. I was unable to gain access to the original source). Lindstrom & White write: "In the 1990s, older Vanuatuans could still sing "God Bless America"" (1998: 26).

[218] *Teksas* is also used as a verb: *yumitu teksas* = we (both of us) dance holding each other (also *danis teksas*).

[219] Lausake is also spelled Laosake. Other spellings of place names also differ from map to map and interlocutor to interlocutor.

[220] Interview with Joel Kaltang 2002. His father was a member of this group.

The process of dissemination of instruments to the outer islands via ship crews and workers coming from Luganville or Port Vila continued througout the 1950s. Compared to the contemporary situation, there were certainly less groups and less instruments available. In its early stages, stringband music was played with a different instrumentation, confined to guitars and ukuleles. Guitar-shaped ukuleles, made in China and painted in bright colours with coconut trees, sunsets and such-like, could occasionally be purchased or ordered on the copra boats that came from Santo and Vila or in the trade centres, and were often the first Western instruments on the islands. Guitars usually had to be ordered. Back then, stringband music was exclusively live music. In some places, several people knew how to play string instruments but only a few knew how to tune them.

The older and middle-aged people remember those who introduced the first string instruments in their community. Often these men had acquired a Western education in the capital or overseas. One of these influential individuals was Dr. Philipp Ilo from North Pentecost. He went to Vila and Fiji for his education and returned not only as the first doctor of Vanuatu but also with many new ideas for his home community: ideas about sports, social programmes, stringband music and ways of dancing.[221] Ephraim Bule, senior musician (VATDORO) said about Dr. Ilo: "*hem i karem save blong waet man*" – "he brought the knowledge of the Europeans". He impressed the boys of his village who later formed the popular stringband (and then *rege* band) VATDORO. According to the liner notes of the album "The Best of Vatdoro" (Vanuata Productions 1998), Dr. Ilo "taught them a song which he had composed about the island and people of Pentecost… 'Vanua Raga' – the first song ever sang by these kids". HUARERE, another stringband and later pop group from the same area that was to become successful in the following decades, was founded (for the first time) as early as 1959.

While the introduction of the *teksas* dance is ascribed to Dr. Ilo from Abwatuntora (North Pentecost), another man, Luke Bule from Loltong, a bit further south, first introduced the guitar and the ukulele.[222] He saw a ukulele in Santo during the war but was not aware of its musical opportunities until he witnessed a performance by Tongoa Islanders on Oscar

[221] Ephraim Bule, senior musician (VATDORO) said about Dr. Ilo: "*hem i karem save blong waet man*" – "he brought the knowledge of the Europeans".

[222] Interview by the VKS fieldworker Richard Leona with Luke Bule, 13. 10. 1989 (Audio Archive VKS, Kaset 8/1: Stringband History – North Pentecost, "First taem we ukalele mo kita i kam long Loltong").

Newman's plantation at Bushman's Bay, Malekula.[223] Afterwards, Bule ordered a guitar via Oscar Newman and then learned to play the instrument in Vila.

Another 'cultural broker' or pioneer of popular music in Vanuatu was a man from Futuna, Charlie Nimoho. He was born in 1930 or 1931 and was educated by his uncle, a teacher on Futuna.[224] For his further education Nimoho was sent to mission schools in Tanna, Santo and, in the early 1950s, to Australia. When he returned at the end of the decade he became a skilful composer and choir leader who utilized the attraction of music to attract pupils to school. Someone who had worked in the sugarcane fields in Queensland had brought a guitar to Futuna. Because no other string instruments were available, the same guitarist had to accompany the singing of some twenty people at every function, a situation which Charlie Nimoho improved by inventing and modifying a couple of instruments. He assembled a set of bottles, blown by his students, according to tonic sol-fa.[225] Later, they moved on to striking a set of eight bottles (an entire octave) with sticks, and different pitches were achieved by tuning the bottles with water. Even before stringbands were founded on Futuna, people played syncretic music on the bottles; however, it took nearly two decades until the 'bottles' became part of a stringband ensemble and thus a typical feature of stringband music from Futuna (see 3.3.4.4).

Another speciality of Futuna stringbands is the use of assorted bamboo tubes (Figure 6). The player strikes the vertical fixed tubes with flip-flops and thus produces deep, percussive but clearly pitched tones. In Australia, Charlie Nimoho had contact with other Melanesians from PNG and the Solomon Islands. The practice of playing on bamboo tubes comes from Malaita, Solomon Islands, where people lay long tubes horizontally in piles on the ground and bend over one end to play them.[226] Nimoho modified this practice and used shorter tubes in an upright position (see 3.3.4.3 for further details). The first place he introduced this new bamboo

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[223] Bule unfortunately provides no details about when all of this happened. I assume that the event took place in the 1950s because of Bule's references to the war and to Dr. Ilo. However, in the 1960s Kalo Daniel and other ni-Tongoa were performing at the same place (see 2.2.4). Maybe Bule refers to this incident?

[224] Nimoho moved to his uncle's village and stayed in the house of the family of Natapei, Prime Minister of Vanuatu at the time of fieldwork, to which he was related. Most information on Charlie Nimoho was obtained through an interview with his son, Graham N. Nimoho.

[225] "Tonic sol-fa emphasizes the relation of the notes to one another and to the tonic, or key note (do in major scales, la in minor scales). If the key changes do (or la) shifts to a new pitch […]. A special notation using the initial letters of each syllable is utilized" (http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/553469/solmization#ref259083; last accessed on 17 January 2022).

[226] As published, for example, on the LP "The Bamboo Band and The Pan-Pipes. Festival Music from the Solomon Islands", Hibiscus Records (1976).

instrument was not in Futuna but in Aneityum, where he worked as a teacher for some time.[227] Nimoho also invented and modified several other instruments.[228]

However, francophone teacher and politician Bob Kuao from Tanna tells a different version of the story of the invention of these instruments. He claims to be the one who has invented both the 'bamboo piano' as well as the 'bottle piano'. Kuao reports that in around 1956, when he was a boy of about six years, he listened to the sounds produced by rain dropping into empty bottles which had been brought home by his father, a seaman. The boy recognized the differences in pitch, according to the amount of water and different bottle sizes. He sorted and tuned the bottles and played on them with a fork.[229] Shortly afterwards he applied the same principle to dry bamboo tubes. Kuao broke the internodes with a stick and hit the tubes with rubber thongs. He preferred the bamboo tubes to the bottles because they are not as fragile and easier to carry around. These attempts were conceived of as children's play in Tanna, but about ten years later he formed a stringband on Aneityum with one member playing the bamboo tubes. Kuao claims that it was on this island where Charlie Nimoho witnessed his musical experiments. Whether Nimoho picked up the ideas about these instruments in Australia in the 1950s or in Aneityum in 1967 remains relevant for the question of intellectual property rights but does not change the fact that they are perceived as coming from and belonging to the people of Futuna.

Several other ni-Vanuatu are remembered for being the first to bring new instruments to their island. A man called Philip Rarua from Lumbukuti, Tongoa Island, an early centre of stringband music, went to Fiji for his education and brought back a mandolin banjo when he returned (interview with his cousin Kalo Daniel 2003).[230]

Clubs emerged on the islands and in Port Vila and Luganville where people played music, danced and drank liquor. It was in such a bar in Vila downtown where Kalo Daniel, cousin of Philip Rarua, started his career as a musician at the age of about 15.[231] The old establishment of the white planters, "[t]he Club, destroyed in the 1959 hurricane, was not rebuilt; its time had passed" (MacClancy 2002: 148).

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[227] Graham Nimoho pointed out to me that this is the reason why people on Aneityum nowadays use the bamboo tubes but not the bottles which are accepted as an invention from Futuna.

[228] To avoid repetition, some of these are introduced below.

[229] Bob Kuao knew the sol-fa-system from SDA-choirs. The 'motif' of raindrops in bottles has also been established for the 'Nimoho-version' of the narrative; it was also used by Futuna Islanders I spoke with.

[230] A mandonlin banjo is constructed like a banjo but is tuned like a Napolitan mandolin (g, d, a, e) and has four double strings (which makes it different from the banjolin which only has four strings).

[231] Kalo Daniel reports that one of these bars was ruined by Tongans – big men who were always ready for a brawl. They came to build the main road in Port Vila (interview with Kalo Daniel 2003).

The island communities, even more isolated from each other than they are nowadays, began to develop characteristic styles of stringband music. Looking back now, some older people say that these styles where quite raw and wild. When I asked an older musician about how their music sounded in those days, he replied: *olsem wael hos nomo* (just like a wild horse).

At the end of the decade, a radio programme was produced in Vanuatu once a week, which was sent to Nouméa, New Caledonia, and also broadcast from there. Each Thursday at 6 pm the French programme began with a jingle, played by ni-Vanuatu on string instruments and sung in a vernacular language (interviews with Peter Ngwero 2003 & with Kalo Daniel 2003). Broadcasting quality was quite bad at the time. People used long bamboo canes to lift the antenna wires but still there was much background noise and the speech was sometimes hard to understand.

2.2.4 The 1960s: Peter Posa and Changes in Stringband Music

In some places, like Makira, people had grammophones and listened to music from Tahiti (interview with George Pakoa 2004). During the 1960s, vinyl discs arrived in Vanuatu, making Western popular music consumable to a greater extent than before. On the islands, people now also used battery-operated record players (*pikap* in Bislama). Some of these devices were imported from Nouméa, New Caledonia.

The transistor radio became popular during the 1960s. Radio Vila (called Radio Port-Vila by the French) began broadcasting in the mid-1960s (interview with Paul Gardissat 2004, MacClancy 2002: 127). In Sangafa, Emae, for example, people would listen to Australian country music in the mornings and to Fijian music in the afternoons on shortwave radio. According to Moses Stevens, a member of the WESTERN BOYS, both influenced Vanuatu stringband music.[232]

It is not entirely clear when the terms ‘stringband’ and ‘stringband music’ first came up, although it was surely being used since the 1960s. I was told that the older people on Makira Island, had a name for making this music: *konsaen*. This word is not Bislama, nor is it *Kira* (or *Namakira, Namakura*), the vernacular of Makira. I suppose that this special local term was derived from the English “concert” (interview with George Pakoa 2004). Many of the early stringband lyrics from bands of the Shepherds Group and Efate were in the language of

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[232] His uncle (*bigfala papa*), who was working with the British police, introduced the first guitar to Emae Island (interview with Moses Stevens, 2004).

Nguna, which had been introduced in the region as a lingua franca by missionaries – the language of education, the bible, and the hymnbook (interview with Moses Stevens 2004).

Early stringband music seems to have been more open to contemporary forms of popular music as compared to recent stringband music. For example, rock and roll clearly had some influence on stringband music, as is evident in songs played by the COOL SHADOW STRINGBAND, which was founded in 1964 in Southeast Ambae. Although most members nowadays are boys and young men, the group has two senior members and still a couple of old songs in the repertoire, for example a lively stringband version of "Cotton Fields". Meanwhile the rap music, reggae or other forms of popular music these days have a very limited impact on stringband music.

In the 1960s, Peter Posa from New Zealand was one particularly popular musician among ni-Vanuatu, as well as among other Melanesians (for Fiji see Saumaiwai 1994: 94).[233] PETER POSA served as an example for many ni-Vanuatu guitarists, for SIMON NATO, who was widely regarded as a skilled guitarist and also known as the '*blak* (black) Peter Posa', as well as for Nato's elder brother BOB KUAO, who founded a Peter Posa fan club and has been corresponding with Posa since 1967. When Kuao listened to Posa's 'Silver Bell' on Radio Melbourne, he said to himself: "No, this is not a man. Probably it is an electronic machine" ("*No, i no man ya. Ating hem i wan* electronic machine"). He bought a small, flat tape recorder at the Fung Kuei store in Vila and recorded Posa's songs from the radio.[234] Then he tried to play the song 'Silver Bell', which took him half a year to learn.

Explanations of older musicians give the impression that there was a greater variety in stringband music before, as compared to these days. While the style of Efate and its northern offshore islands now strongly influences stringbands all over the country, some decades ago, stringbands probably sounded more different to each other. When people speak about this period, the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s, they often hint at the fact that the stringbands used to play in the 'old style', which was different from stringband music now. For example, in Northeast Ambrym there is a stringband by the name of OISAL, which is still active and

[233] Peter Posa was born in Auckland, the son of a Yugoslavian family (http://www.peterposa.com/?i=1, last accessed on the 24th March 2018). He was popular in New Zealand, Australia and the Pacific Islands. The most popular and most copied songs in Vanuatu are 'The White Rabbit', 'Wheels', 'Silver Bell', 'Guitar Boogie' and 'Kisi Mai'. 'The White Rabbit' (1963) was his biggest success. Posa came to Vanatu around the time of the first landing on the moon in 1969 (see 2.2.5).

[234] The Fung Kuei store in Port Vila sold small portable tape recorders and also battery-powered amplifiers for electric guitars, bass guitars and microphones, as well as other musical instruments like tambourines and even mandolins. Fung Kuei still exists but does not sell musical instruments anymore.

playing in the 'old style' at special events like Christmas. Young musicians from the same village (STONEY BOYS) described the music of the old men as quite fast in comparison to their own, modern stringband music. It would be an interesting task to trace the musical characteristics of these 'old styles' throughout the country – as long as people can be found who know how to play them. Interestingly, my interlocutors' descriptions of older stringband music suggest that songs tended to be sung in a lower pitch, and stringband music was anyway played while seated (hard to imagine for those used to the performances of contemporary bands).

The former techniques of guitar playing differed to the present-day styles of stringband guitarists. Guitarists picked the full-stringed guitars (six strings) rather than strummed them (as is done nowadays) or combined both. Stringband guitarists now usually only have four or sometimes five strings on their instruments. However, in the 1960s at least one guitarist in a stringband had to play a bass line on the lower strings of his instrument, as the groups had no bass instrument. John Peter (*1949) still composes songs 'in the old style', for example a welcome song for Prime Minister Korman I recorded in December 2003 (Figure 7 shows him during this session). John Peter was born in 1949. Peter is one of the founding members of the COOL SHADOW STRINGBAND.

On the island of Emae, string instruments became popular among the workers from the Sulua plantation who originally came from Central Vanuatu (Epi, Paama, Lopevi, Tongoa) and from Wallis and Futuna (Polynesia). The latter brought in their styles of music and dance and played guitars, mouth organs and used cases as drums. They picked the guitar strings, rather than strummed them and locals picked up their way of playing (interview with Moses Stevens 2004). On the small island of Makira, people made music in a style which resembled the music of the southern islands of Futuna and Erromango at the time. The latter had some musical influence from the *kanak* from New Caledonia who worked on ships and mingled with ni-Vanuatu (interview with George Pakoa 2004). There was some immigration to New Caledonia, especially during the nickel boom between 1968 and 1972 (Henningham 1992: 65). Many instruments were brought from there, like the instrument of musician BOB KUAO, an electric guitar with a tremolo by the brand Echo.

There were still some instruments left from the period of the Second World War. As a young boy, TIM KALMET from Erakor (Efate) played on his uncle's "squeezebox", which was a present by an American friend. The small squeezebox was already old when Kalmet saw it for the first time; it probably came to the country in the 1940s. In 1963, he gave his first paid

concert with this instrument (interview with Timteo Kalmet 2003). To play a squeezebox was exceptional for ni-Vanuatu even then. The Burns Philp Store and Fung Kuei sold these instruments but buyers were expatriates who not only could afford to pay for them but also knew how to use them and who had a taste for music that was usually played on these instruments.

In the 1960s, ni-Vanuatu continued to use guitar-shaped ukuleles (also referred to as *yuka blong waet man*). When the original strings broke, they were replaced with fishing line. Whereas acoustic string instruments in Vanuatu are now confined to guitars and ukuleles for the most part, in the 1960s mandolins and mandonlin banjos had some degree of popularity – given the fact that someone had brought the instruments to the islands from outside.[235] The mandolin was played together with guitars and ukuleles; it was not used to play chords but rather melodies.[236] The LUMBUKUTI BEACH BOYS from Tongoa continue to be famous for featuring a mandolin in their stringband music.[237] The mandolin player, Kalo Daniel (*1947), taught himself to play the mandolin banjo in the 1960s whenever his uncles, who had formed the group SINGER TEAM, left their instrument alone. When Daniel worked as a seaman for the Australian planter Oscar Newman, he was known for his musical skills and entertained at a *lafet* (party) in 1967 on Newman's plantation in Malekula (at Bushman's Bay) with some other men from Tongoa working there and on the ship. This event was fateful, not only because his future wife became interested in Daniel at the occasion, but also because islanders from different places experienced Tongoan stringband music for the first time.

There was less influence from European musicians on the islands than in Port Vila, yet people exchanged new modes of performance nevertheless. In 1967, a stringband from Aneityum played at a football match in Isangel, Tanna. The peculiarity of this performance was the use of eight bamboo tubes which were tuned to a major scale. The group, which had no name, was trained by Bob Kuao ten years after his first attempts on Tanna (see 2.2.3). By then he was a young teacher on Aneityum. He said that the bamboo tubes were used to play the bass line. There was no other bass instrument in the group.

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[235] Peter Ngwero from Nduidnui area (Ambae) for example, played a mandolin at dances, which he had bought off someone who went to a theological college in Melbourne and had brought it from there (interview Peter Ngwero 2003). Timteo Kalmet reports of a man with a mandolin banjo by the name of François Nalpini, who came from the southern part of the archipelago and who stayed with his family in Erakor village near Vila (interview with Timteo Kalmet 2003).

[236] Peter Ngwero said wordly: *Yumi lid long hem* (interview with Peter Ngwero 2003).

[237] The same old instrument was used by another stringband from Lumbukuti, the MAKAMBO BROTHERS, in the 1980s.

Towards the end of the decade, a simple, self-built bass instrument, the *tin kerosin* or *dram kerosin*, was increasingly included in the string instrument ensembles. The musicians used a 20-litre kerosene canister as a resonating body and a stick, which was put next to it on the ground. A string made from the aerial roots of the banyan tree was fastened at its handle and at the upper end of the stick. Later, a common cord (*rop blong waet man*) was used. As the lid of the container was taken out, one disadvantage of the instrument was the escaping smell of kerosene while playing. Another was that the player had to press down the canister with one foot while varying the tension of the string with one arm by pushing the stick more or less away. Some bands weighed down the canister with stones, and some tuned the instrument by filling water inside. The *tin kerosin* spread slowly and arrived about ten years later in some places. Although the 'gutbucket' was already used in the 1940s in some parts of the Pacific (Lindstrom & White in Love & Kaeppler 1998: 27), none of my interlocutors could tell me where the idea for the *tin kerosin* came from.

The stringband NASONAL removed the bottom of a kerosene canister, installed the inner tube of an old car wheel (*pikinini blong wil*) instead, and used it as a drum (interview with Lui Philip 2003). As another percussion instrument, occasionally two spoons were used, the concave sides facing out, as known for example in American folk music. In fact, some groups used anything that could give a good sound: the COOL SHADOW STRINGBAND played on fish-tins and generally experimented with sounding items.

With the appearance of electric guitars, a type of 'Pacific flavoured' instrumental music also appeared which was based on PETER POSA-like guitar technique. Many ni-Vanuatu preferred the new styles coming in from abroad, and the first *pop miusik* groups formed which used electric guitars (*stilgita* or occasionally *lektrik gita*), bass guitars and a drum set. These groups were able to produce a more voluminous sound than the stringbands although there were no keyboards and also despite the fact that only small battery-powered amplifiers were used. Interest in stringband music therefore subsided to some extent, yet stringbands themselves remained in existence. Only a few people, for example teachers with a regular income, could afford electronic equipment.

2.2.5 The 1970s: Towards Independence

Pop miusik was very popular in Vanuatu in the early 1970s, even on the islands which had limited electricity and infrastructure.[238] George Pakoa remembers:

> "At that time, in the 1970s, *pop miusik* was very popular because Peter Posa just toured round Vanuatu and went back. I was schooling in Lamen, on the island, probably in 1969 or '68 when Peter Posa came for his tour round the New Hebrides. At that time everywhere, in every village, every island, people bought amplifiers and electric guitars, yes. To play *pop miusik*."[239]

Compared to *pop miusik*, stringband music is accessible and unassuming as far as the required equipment is concerned, and this fact surely contributed to its spread throughout the islands. In the mid-70s, when the efforts towards independence were becoming stronger, stringband music regained its popularity and in fact became more popular than ever. The image one has is of an atmosphere of awakening when listening to the memories of older musicians from the successful groups of the time who remember the second half of the decade as an exciting, golden era. Stringband music changed in style, performance and technique, but above all it became politically significant. The great and still familiar names which are connected to what we might call the 'classical era of stringband music' are SOUWIA, MAKURA TOKOLAU, SARA POKASI and LUMBUKUTI BEACH BOYS.

2.2.5.1 The Early 1970s: 'Go raon long Toyota' and the First Stringband Competitions

In the early seventies, the popular stringband MAKURA TOKOLAU emerged, later referred to as *papa* or *mama blong stringban* (father/mother of all stringbands/of stringband music).[240] In 1971 George Pakoa (*1956), lead singer and guitarist of the group, came from his home island Makira to Vila and found a job at the airport. He became interested in music and bought a guitar in a Chinese general store in town that sold guitars alongside calico and ironmongery. Pakoa tried to find something new. He did not want to play in the 'old style' like the other stringbands. He asked a relative (a *tawian*[241]) to buy a Chinese ukulele at Ballande, a big

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[238] There were still no PA systems but all of the instruments and microphones were plugged into battery-operated combo amplifiers. Usually the pop groups of the 1970s had no keyboards.

[239] "*Long tetaem ya, long '70s i kam ya, taem ya pop miusik i kam strong ya from Peter Posa i jes kam tua raon long Vanuatu nomo i go bak. Mi mi stap long skul long Lamen, aelan ya, long 1969 ating, o '68, Peter Posa i kam long tua blong hem raon long Niu Hebridis. Taem ya, long evri ples, evri vilej, evri aelan ya, oli pem* amplifier*, stilgita, yes. Blong plei pop miusik*" (interview with George Pakoa 2004). The NIKALBEIAU ROLLING BAND played instrumental music until the style of PETER POSA went out of fashion in around 1975.

[240] This nickname was coined by Paul Gardissat (see below).

[241] A *tawian* is a relative, either a cousin on the mother's side or an in-law. In this case, it is the mother's male cousin's son ("*mama blong mi, wan kasen brata blong hem, pikinini blong hemia*").

French store in the centre of town, where the man worked. His *tawian* did so and when he and Pakoa sat down to practise, Pakoa told him to start with his instrument – the first *introdaksen* (ukulele introduction in a stringband song) was born. Pakoa recruited two other *tawian* for a second guitar and a plastic basin, which was used as a drum and struck by hand. The group practised in the afternoons after work, composing their own songs and singing lyrics in *Kira* (the vernacular of Makira) and in Bislama.

LEVIYAMBO, a group from Makira with many members (among others, with about ten guitarists) wanted to compete in the first official stringband competition in 1974, which took place in a timber building named Owen Hall (see Figure 8).[242] For the occasion they asked Pakoa for his guitar. He went to Owen Hall just to get back his instrument, but when he arrived, the last stringband was on stage and it was announced that if any other group present wanted to join the contest, they should do so now. Two of his fellow musicians pursuaded him to perform spontaneously by assuring him that they would win the competition because they played their new style of stringband music. The band members went to the church that stands just next to Owen Hall and prayed for their success. To enrol for the competition, one of Pakoa's *tawian* proposed calling the group (which until then had no name) TOKOLAU.[243] The three boys lent a ukulele and another guitar from LEVIYAMBO, as well as the *tin kerosin*-player of the group, who had to improvise to their songs on the spot. They played a song which was to become a stringband classic, 'Go raon long Toyota', and won the first prize of a trophy and some money.[244] From then on, MAKURA TOKOLAU was very popular in Efate and was booked for many weddings and other events (interview George Pakoa 2004). 'Go raon long Toyota' is about the first car on Emae Island and it appeared in a review of the Toyota Corporation that went around the world. The group was even sponsored by the company (interview with Paul Gardissat 2004).[245]

The competition was organised by a comittee around a young charismatic man called Jack Keidadi, who was working at the New Hebrides Cultural Centre (the predecessor of the VKS)

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[242] The Owen Hall, described as "one of the most historic and important buildings in Port Vila" (The Independent/L'Indépendent Issue No. 11, January 10 2004) was pulled down in 2004 to make way for a new hall on the same site. The old hall was built in 1959 and was named after a missionary (ibid.).

[243] See 7.2.2 for details on the naming of this group.

[244] The song was composed by Collin George who lives on Emae where he founded a stringband by the name of FAUTU STRINGBAND. When he was in Port Vila, he had also a *pop miusik* band which performed at functions around town (interviews with George Pakoa and Moses Stevens, both 2004).

[245] The label Viking Sevenseas (Wellington, New Zealand) published the song as 'Me Fella I Go Round Long Toyota' on a vinyl album called "New Hebrides String Band Parade" with songs of MAKURA TOKOLAU (falsely spelled Mokura Tokalau), SINESIP STRING BAND and LUMBUKUTI BEACH BOYS in 1976. The songs were recorded by Keith Southern in the studios of Radio Vila.

at the time. Sheperd and Efate Islanders met at the Owen Hall, the meeting point of the Presbyterians, which was also a place of political debate. Keidadi had the idea to stage a competition and organised it thoroughly in the spirit of the Presbyterians (interview with Paul Gardissat 2004). This first big stringband competition is a milestone in the development of stringband music of Vanuatu and its significance cannot be overestimated. The modern form of the genre and the beginning of the golden era of stringband music dates back to this occasion. It is a crucial event for the identification with stringband music, as can be seen from statements like "*stringban hem i bon long taem ya nao*" ("that is when stringband music was born", interview with Lui Philip 2003). In the perception of many ni-Vanuatu this is the point when stringband music became socially and politically significant, and also emancipated from foreign musical influences and "parental traits" (Kartomi's term 1981: 233). Musician Moses Stevens told me that his attitude towards stringband music changed after this event. Earlier on, he and his friends had considered stringband music simply as part of everyday life in the islands. After the work of the day the boys used to grab a guitar and a ukulele, playing them as a leisure activity. But when they saw how successful their older relatives had been, it became 'serious': stringband music became something that could be and had to be organised to achieve aims like recording albums or winning competitions. Most of the groups mentioned in this chapter participated in the big annual stringband competitions that took place in Port Vila from 1974 onwards.

A couple of young men from the island of Tongoa founded the stringband LUMBUKUTI BEACH BOYS in 1974. Soon they were requested for parties and weddings all over the place, not only in the part of town known as Manples, where many people from Tongoa stay. At the first big competition mentioned above, they won the third or fourth price. From 1975 onwards, the LUMBUKUTI BEACH BOYS had a mandolin, played by Kalo Daniel, as their trade-mark.[246] As with many others, the group supported the New Hebrides National Party (NP)[247] but dissolved already before independence became a reality.

At the competition in 1976, a band from Emao took part which consisted of members from six different villages. After the competition, some of them founded the group SOUWIA[248] while the

[246] The group united recently and yet used the same instrument at a fundraising concert which I recorded on the 15th of December 2003.

[247] The NHNP, henceforth NP, was founded in 1971 and later became Vanua'aku Pati, VP.

[248] The members of SOUWIA come from the villages Lausake, Ngurua and Wiana.

others began TOKOTAKIA STRINGBAND (both will be mentioned frequently in the further course of this work).

Some of the competitions, like the 1979 competition at a site called FOL (a hall for sports and music events now called Ex-FOL), were recorded by the Frenchman Paul Gardissat.[249] The competitions were announced in richly illustrated articles in the newspaper of the French residency 'Nabanga'; they were even subject of the newspapers' headlines. According to Paul Gardissat and other interlocutors, stringband competitions were far bigger than today – allegedly with "thousands of people" in the audience. The enthusiasm of competition not only moved the musicians but also their supporters. Smaller competitions took place nearly every month, organised for example as fundraising events by the communities (interview with Lui Philip 2003).

Competitions also took place on the islands. Just as with the groups in town, rural stringbands tried to come up with new ideas. Charlie Nimoho's group won the first prize at the Tanna Agricultural Show 1977 when his group introduced 'the bottles' and another new instrument (the *beluso*, see 3.3.4.4). To win again the next year, he incorporated a *kastom* musical instrument, the *ruesu*.[250] The fact that the NOISY BOYS from Tanna had won the competition at the Southern District Show in 1979 ensured that the group had good prospects and from now on asked for money when they were requested to play at a function (interview with the NOISY BOYS 2003). Occasionally there were separate competitions for *pop miusik* groups, in Vila as well as elsewhere (for example at the Tanna Show in 1972).

Paul Gardissat recalls that the nights then, in the New Hebrides, were entirely different from the nights in Vanuatu nowadays (interview with Paul Gardissat 2004). Instead of drinking kava, many young men concentrated on playing stringband music, because competition was strong and was taken seriously. Communities in the islands competed with each other, as did one island area with another island area, island with island, bands in the islands with bands in town, groups from Vila with groups from Luganville. The rivalries between some groups can be felt until now, even if most protagonists of the 1970s no longer play.

[249] Paul Gardissat was born in 1939 in Algeria and lived from 1963 in Vanuatu. After initially working as a teacher in various places, he became chief of the Bislama section within the French Radio Port-Vila in 1975. See Appendix 2 for a biography of Paul Gardissat.

[250] In the vernacular of Futuna *ruesu* also refers to the cicada. The instrument is made from a slender bamboo-internode. One node is taken out and the bamboo nearly entirely split to the other one, the mouthpiece. The instrument produces a kazoo-like, chirping sound. Nimoho revived the usage of this *kastom* instrument (interview with Graham N. Nimoho 2004).

2.2.5.2 Stringband Music Becomes Politically Significant

MacClancy writes with reference to the 1970s: "(…) *kastom* had become a political category and was seen as one of the few ways by which urban-based politicians and villagers could express their solidarity" (MacClancy 2002: 137). Stringband music was another tool to create solidarity and unity among ni-Vanuatu in rural as well as in urban areas.[251] In the second half of the 1970s, ni-Vanuatu political leaders saw the potential in stringband music to attract an audience and thus used popular stringbands as MAKURA TOKOLAU and SOUWIA for their political events and election campaigns. Ni-Vanuatu politicians tried to make people aware of their own cultural resources and chose stringband music as a modern, attractive and yet distinctive cultural practice – rather than other popular music, which was oriented at Western rock and pop music and involved much copying.[252] Their styles and repertoire were not suited to promote ideas of independence. Accordingly, local politicians promoted stringbands, which often sang in Bislama and composed their own songs instead.

From the mid-seventies on, stringband music became so popular that it even drove out people's interest in international popular music and modern instruments to some extent. George Pakoa from MAKURA TOKOLAU recalls:

> "When stringband music came up… brother, it drove out all *pop miusik*! […] Stringband music aroused at that time, it increased since 1974. The colleagues suspended their electric guitars. This went on to '77, '78 when there were no more electric guitars. The amplifiers rotted. This went on until *rege* came up and these things were fashionable again".[253]

This is of course somewhat exaggerated. *Pop miusik* still existed, just as stringband music did in the 1960s. Politicians approached stringband musicians, as Pakoa remembers: "[T]hey came to see me, for I should write songs for them".[254] Important politicians of the NP like Barak Tame Sope came to Pakoas' house. One day, Walter Lini, then president of the party,

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[251] Tonkinson notes the "recent rise to national prominence of 'local string bands'" (1982: 312 f.).

[252] At the time, those musicians who engaged in *pop miusik* played *miusik blong waet man* – Western popular music (see 4.1 for details). SAMSON ANDREWS 'FENDER' entertained at the Hotel Rossi from 1976 and both TIM KALMET and JOHN 'BERI' WILLIE likewise played at hotels and restaurants (interviews with these musicians in 2003 & 2004). Groups like NEW RAINBOW and TROPIC TEMPO played American and European music at expatriate parties.

[253] "*Taem we stringban ya i girap ya… brata, samting ya i kilim evri pop miusik ya! […] Stringban i girap long taem ya, i girap long '74 i kam antap ya, ol brata ya oli hangem ol stilgita blong olgeta. […] Hemia i stap go long '77, '78, ol stilgita i finis finis, oli nomo gat. Ol* amplifier *i roten ya. Go go ale, naoia we rege i kam nao, ale ol ting i stap kam antap bakegen ya*" (George Pakoa, interview 2004).

[254] "*[O]li kam from mi, mi raetem ol singsing blong olgeta*".

requested a song by Pakoa shortly before he left for the Solomon Islands in 1978.[255] He wanted to present the song as a gift from his party at the independence celebrations in the Solomon Islands. Overnight, Pakoa wrote a song 'Julae namba 7 1978', called together his group and recorded it with his small tape recorder. Lini came the next morning to pick up the cassette just before flying to the Solomon Islands. That night, George and his boys sat on a trunk at the waterfront, listening to the radio station from the Solomons, when the song was played. He never received any payment for his work (but he seems not to have expected it either). With this song, Makura Tokolau won the first prize at the competition at the FOL in 1978, even though Pakoa was replaced as a singer at the particular event because he was ill. As Webb describes for PNG in the 1990s, in Vanuatu already before independence stringband music was preparing to become "the musical standard of national authenticity" (Webb 1998: 139). The role of stringband music in the second half of the 1970s is a good example for the connections between church affiliation, popular culture and politics in Vanuatu. The Presbyterian Church was supporting independence and even if the church did not get involved in politics directly, most of the important politicians were Presbyterians and even church leaders. Some were also Anglicans, like Father Walter Hayde Lini, Vanuatu's first chief minister. Before independence, anglophone Anglicans and Presbyterians made up over 60% of the total Melanesian population of Vanuatu. Most were NP supporters and thus supported independence (Van Trease 1995: 27 f.). Van Trease notes:

> "Local churches also began to play an active role in politics at this time. […] Their growing involvement is also reflected in the number of clergy or those trained by the churches who took on leadership positions in the various parties – both Anglophone and francophone. Likewise, ni-Vanuatu were becoming aware of the historical link between their church membership and the two colonial powers and affiliated accordingly with one political side or the other" (Van Trease 1995: 27).

In fact, it can be assumed that this background is the reason why stringband music is particularly popular in Central Vanuatu and it is also the cause for there being no French lyrics in stringband music even nowadays (see 6.1). In the 1970s, the popular stringbands of Emao, like SOUWIA, were clearly assigned to the NP. John Apei (former member of ERRO STRINGBAND) explains:

> "This is because Vanuatu'aku Pati made much use of the Presbyterian Church. It used religion. It used the Presbyterian Church, the Anglican Church and the Church of Christ. The UMP

[255] In 1974 Sope was elected Secretary General and Lini was elected president of the NP (Van Trease 1995: 23).

> made much use of the Catholic Church. So you will see that everywhere Catholic people support the UMP."[256]

Dillon's Bay in Erromango for example, was an NP/VP-voting area, while in Central Pentecost, the francophone Catholic community supported Vincent Boulekone, one of the country's leading francophone politicians (interview with John Apei 2004; Van Trease 1995: 269 f.). It is no wonder that groups like SOUWIA sang songs about freedom. Church affiliation, education, politics and music were inextricably linked. In the end, the support for a certain stringband was dependent on these aspects.

The stringbands composed songs about the activities and events of the parties. Many subjects of stringband lyrics still perfectly fit into the agenda of a given party: they are meant to create awareness in education, health programmes, agricultural produce, development, tourism and the environment. These popular topics of contemporary stringband music arose during the political campaigns of the 1970s.

Apparently stringbands in town took a clear stand and played for one party only. Stringband musician Kalo Daniel did not even shrink from violence toward the supporters of the other side (interview Kalo Daniel 2003). Members of the rural COOL SHADOW STRINGBAND, however, told me that the group used to greet politicians in the village when visiting on their tours around the islands. They were not attached to any special party but played as a welcome for any party's politicians. Sometimes the stringband entertainment had to be omitted because there were so many rally teams coming through.

At the FOL stringband competition in late 1979, the singer of a stringband from Pentecost Island sang "the stringbands in this club are happy and they play to help this country to achieve independence" ("*ol stringban insaed long klab ya oli hapi mo oli plei blong helpem kantri ya blong i karem indipendens*", transcribed from a recording made by Paul Gardissat). Some of the particularly active musicians, who see their part in the efforts towards independence, are disappointed that there is so little recognition of their contribution. Joel Kaltang, former member of SOUWIA, imagines receiving a medal or something like that.[257] At the time SOUWIA played at fundraising events at Tagabe to raise funds for politicians who travelled overseas. The groups played for free on most occasions or just received a small

[256] "*Hem i* because *Vanua'aku Pati hem i yusum Presbyterian Church plante. Hem i yusum* religion. *Hem i yusum Presbyterian Church, hem i yusum Anglican, hem i yusum Church of Christ. UMP hem i yusum plante Katolik. So bae yu luk se, evri ples we oli Katolik bae oli UMP*" (interview with John Apei 2004).

[257] Kaltang wrote a letter about the matter to Father Walter Lini and sent copies of the letter to the politicians Barak Sope, Donald Kalpokas and Joe Natuman (interview with Joel Kaltang 2002).

amount of money for new guitar strings. However, many of the stringband musicians were not real political activists. Seen from the perspective of the stringbands, it could be rewarding to release a song about a party (or songs otherwise assigned to a party) because the adherents would buy the cassettes. As young people coming from communities in which the idea of independence was popular, stringband musicians just followed the political attitudes of their kin and accordingly played songs to support independence. Members of the NOISY BOYS told me that they were persuaded by a politician to found themselves as a formal group in order to raise funds for travelling politicians of the NP.[258]

An example of a political song of MAKURA TOKOLAU is 'Seli Ho', meant to support Vanua'aku Pati which had "Seli Ho!" as their cheer. It was probably composed in 1977 and refers to election day on the 29th of November (interview with George Pakoa 2004). To compose a song like this was not on commission from politicians but rather the idea of George Pakoa. However, he did not compose it himself but gave the task to his *tawian* Thompson David on Makira to do it. David sent the song (written down on paper and recorded on a cassette) to Vila, and it was properly recorded by Paul Gardissat at his house (see Figure 9). Gardissat also played it for several weeks on Radio Vanuatu before two policemen (one British and one French) came to the station and forbade him to do so.[259] Pakoa thinks that this particular song helped the party very much because even people living in remote bush areas became aware of politics. In general, pro-independence songs, broadcast on the radio, helped to create political awareness among people living througout the country. MAKURA TOKOLAU often played the song at rallies of the party. 'Seli Ho!' was published in one of the group's albums and it allowed the band to win another stringband competition. Other stringbands, namely from Ambae and Pentecost, composed songs to welcome the UMP on their campaign tours, using "Hute, hute, ho!" as their battle cry.

One of the scarce sources on Vanuatu stringband music in the literature refers to lyrics of 1970s stringband songs:

"The pretty mask of innocence cozens missionaries and ni-Vanuatu politicans, struggling to homogenize their peoples. Once pierced, the surface of much pan-Pacific pop never looks the same. The ubiquitous string band, Vanuatu's vigorous, cutting-edge form, where "you have to know the words", has a deadly, religious-political side" (Crowe 1998: 198).

With this in mind, I asked my interlocutors about the lyrics in the 1970s (and in general) but when pressed for an explanation about critical song texts, people answered in the negative or

[258] One member of the group said: "*Wan* politician *hem i bin fosem mifala blong mifala i mekem stringban*" (interview with the NOISY BOYS 2003).

[259] This is the only case of official censorship I came across during my research.

reacted uncomprehendingly. The same is true for contemporary stringband lyrics. I would imagine that the aspect Crowe refers to, namely the criticism of religious and political (colonial) institutions, might have been true for some of the groups of the 1970s – a period when ni-Vanuatu society was highly politicised – but which has since become lost. Nowadays, the ni-Vanuatu themselves are the clergymen, the leading politicians and the teachers. Often politicians like Edward Natapei, Prime Minister at the time of fieldwork, played stringband music themselves when they were young and thus share the perspective of the musicians. In my own research, I rather found that stringbands worked together with ni-Vanuatu politicians in the 1970s, contributing to the homogenisation of the population. All this is not meant to state that Crowe is wrong, as it is very difficult to find examples of stringband music from the 1970s. However, as far as my research revealed, it is safe to say that stringband music was never a form of social, political or ideological revolt.

2.2.5.3 '*Olketa man ol i sing sing*'

While MAKURA TOKOLAU was established in the capital, a branch of the group was established on the island of Emae under the name of TOYOTA STRINGBAND (see 7.3 on the concepts of 'band' in Vanuatu).[260] The first recordings of TOYOTA STRINGBAND were made by Paul Gardissat for the radio in 1978 (interview Moses Stevens 2004). The recordings were broadcast on the radio programme 'Olketa man ol i sing sing' ("All the people sing"). 'Nabanga' magazine printed a corresponding photograph of the group.

The programme 'Olketa man ol i sing sing' was an iniative by Paul Gardissat. His idea was to record rural stringbands on their home islands and then portray them and play their music on Tuesday evenings at 6.45 pm, just before the news.[261] Gardissat not only went to town but also to the northern side of Efate and to other islands to record the groups. One special quality of the programme was that people could send in their own cassettes.[262] If this was not possible, Gardissat sent cassettes and a small tape-recorder, sometimes also a small camera, and people could record their group and take a photograph themselves. Sometimes the musicians included comments on their songs, for example explanations of vernacular lyrics. In this way, the radio had access to the most remote villages in the country and people could actively take part in the

[260] It was led by the older brother of Moses Stevens, Richard Jeneri, the lead-singer of this group and its name was derived from the popular song of MAKURA TOKOLAU mentioned above.

[261] In the 1970s this was prime time, as people were not consuming kava regularly. Contemporary programmes at this broadcasting time surely have far less listeners because it is the time many men usually spend at the *nakamal*.

[262] Grammophones (*gramafon* in Bislama) were still in use but in the 1970s tape cassettes also came into use – an era that was ongoing at the time of fieldwork.

arrangement of the radio programme. Gardissat used the newspaper 'Nabanga' to advertise his radio programme by publishing photographs of the stringbands. Every two weeks there was a new announcement with the name and origin of the group which was to be portrayed next (two examples from 1976 are shown in Figures 10 & 11).[263] 'Olketa man ol i sing sing' contributed to the new rise of popularity of stringband music. Gardissat created awareness among ni-Vanuatu that stringband music is something special, a cultural practice worth being recorded and worth caring for. This is acknowledged by most ni-Vanuatu musicians who regard him as an expert on the topic of stringband music of the 1970s and 1980s. Some even see him as the initiator of the stringband music boom: "Paul Gardissat. This man started this thing [stringband music]" "*Paul Gardissat. Man ya nao i statem samting ya*" (interview with Simon Nato 2003).[264]

Gardissat spent much time with editing: cutting and joining the reel-to-reel tape to take out noise or long pauses in which musicians talked or tuned their instruments. This gave a professional character to the radio programme and contributed to the professionality of stringband music in general. When Paul Gardissat started his famous and popular radio programme with stringband music played live in the studio (see also 5.3.1), stringband musician Kalo Daniel was among his first guests. In this programme, broadcast on Saturday nights, a stringband played live in studio 3, a big room, so that the groups could also bring some of their supporters.

After stringband musicians kept asking if they could not produce an album, Paul Gardissat recorded his first stringband cassette with a small tape recorder in 1979 at his private house in Agathis, Vila. The group he was recording was FUTUNA FATUANA, including some young band members who became powerful men at the time of fieldwork, like a high officer of the police and even the Prime Minister, Edward Natapei. After this first commercial recording, many others followed (see 5.1.1.1).

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[263] Although stringbands occasionally experimented with electronic instruments, the group NANA STRING BAN (Figure 10) clearly represents an extreme exception. The instrumentation is such that I would normally not identify it as belonging to a stringband.

[264] Gardissat also recorded traditional musics when he went to the islands and was involved in the first National Arts Festival in Vila in 1979, another important event on the eve of independence. At this occasion, people first displayed *kastom* practices that had been concealed from missionaries until then. In a speech, politician Father Walter Lini already spoke about Vanuatu without pronouncing its name (interview with Paul Gardissat 2004).

2.2.5.4 The Late 1970s: Important Features of Stringband Music Are Established

By the end of the seventies, stringband music had developed its main features in performance, instrumentation, technique and sound, which now define the genre (of course this does not mean that stringband music has not changed since then). Each of the most important stringbands contributed to this development and added one or more features. It is commonly known that George Pakoa contributed the characteristic ukulele introduction which is used in most stringband songs (see 3.5). He also claims the invention of the *tri step*, a special rhythm in stringband music (see 3.6), for his group MAKURA TOKOLAU. The group played the first song arranged in this rhythm at a competition that took place in the FOL, probably in 1978.[265] Several other important alterations are attributed to SOUWIA STRINGBAND. This group was the first to stand up during performances.

Up until then, stringbands sat while practising and performing. The band first performed like this at the 1979 stringband competition at the FOL. My interviews with older stringband musicians revealed that another process accompanied this change in performance practice. Guitars first had the usual six strings and were played in a picking manner (the lower strings were also used to play the bass part). When stringbands played while standing, the singers were able to sing at a higher pitch. Changing aesthetics made such singing desirable. Instead of transposing the songs and using other chords, the musicians changed the tune of their guitars and ukuleles. However, the lower strings of the guitar could not be tuned as high as the rest (otherwise the bridge would be harmed), so they took away the E-, and often also A-strings. Nowadays, stringband guitarists usually have only four or sometimes five strings on their instruments. I suppose this is due to the change in singing style and, in the end, a result of the changing performance practice, started in 1979 by SOUWIA at the FOL.[266] As they no longer had to manage the bass part, it became easier to play the chords. This probably contributed to the diffusion of stringband music and enabled the guitarists to play for hours. However, as with other novelties, it took time until it gained acceptance all over the country. The big stringband competitions were the arena where the groups introduced their new ways in terms of musical style, performance style and instrumentation.

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[265] It is difficult to verify some of these claims. Lui Philip, a member of SOUWIA, the big rival of MAKURA TOKOLAU, also states that they invented the *tri step*, which was then taken over by all other groups.

[266] George Pakoa deliminates himself from guitarists who only use four strings in stringband music which, as he says, is typical for the musicians from Emao. A guitarist who wants to play with him has to have at least five strings on his instrument: “*Sapos yu pleim fo string bae mi no laekem gita blong yu ya*” (“If you play four strings, I do not like your guitar”, interview with George Pakoa 2004). I interpret his mentioning of the musicians from Emao as a sign of the rivalry between MAKURA TOKOLAU and SOUWIA.

SOUWIA, who won the competition at the FOL in 1979, also introduced various percussion instruments like the conga, which in Vanuatu is called *bongo*.[267] They also built instruments, similar to a parade drum, from cow skin and hollow wood, or a 20-litre kerosene container without a bottom and top. The skin was fastened at both ends of the drum which was hung around the neck and played with sticks. Also, for the first time, SOUWIA used a tambourine, a kabassa and a *bongo* at the FOL competition. Kaltang claims that the percussion instrument, usually called *bambu* or *rasras*, was brought into stringband music by his group.[268] By this time, many stringbands still used only guitars and ukuleles, some also the *tin kerosin*.

During the second half of the decade, musicians constructed a better sounding and louder bass instrument, which is now part of every stringband: the so-called *busbes* or *kona bokis*. It consists of an old Lipton tea case (*kes blong liv ti*), a stick and a cord and replaced the *tin kerosin* (see 3.3.1). Again, this new instrument reached remote areas several years later.

The new popularity of stringband music around 1976/77 was catching. Former styles of stringband music were neglected during the course of the 1970s, so taken was the new generation of musicians with the various novelties. Some people say that stringband music spread from North Efate to the rest of the country. The styles of bands like MAKURA TOKOLAU and SOUWIA were taken up by stringbands all over Vanuatu. Pakoa reported that the music of MAKURA TOKOLAU helped spread the *teksas* dance in the southern islands Erromango, Futuna and Aneityum. Even in places where there are strong regional stringband traditions with an own determined style like Futuna or Pentecost, the local groups played in the style of the famous bands from Makura and Emao at parties, and even took on their names. The groups had their own names but were called SOUWIA or MAKURA TOKOLAU, according to the repertoire they copied or the style they imitated at such occasions. From now on stringbands all over the country performed while standing and used the new percussion instruments introduced to stringband music by SOUWIA.

In the late 1970s, the stylistic hegemony of the groups from North Efate and the Shepherd Islands began to be shaken by other popular stringbands that came on the scene in Vila, notably VATDORO (founded in 1975) and HUARERE (reformed around 1977), both composed of young men from north Pentecost. Important stringbands that emerged in the southern part of the archipelago were the NOISY BOYS from Tanna (founded in 1977) as well as FATUANA

[267] They ordered a conga drum through BP's electrical department because such instruments were not available in Vila's stores.

[268] See 3.3.4.3 on details about these percussion instruments. Others attribute the use of the *rasras* to Charles Nimoho.

MATHUA and FUTUNA FATUANA (founded 1978) from Futuna.[269] 1979 was also an important year for stringband music because, at the competition, FUTUNA FATUANA displayed a completely new variety of stringband music which was characterized through new creative instruments, a different singing style and Polynesian influences. While the conventional singing and interesting instruments (from European perspective) pleased the European expatriates and visitors, the group was very much criticised by ni-Vanuatu and was in fact initially not regarded as stringband music at all by some (interview with Paul Gardissat 2004).

The first and only stringband formation from the island of Erromango (that is to say the only organised stringband with a name, a steady line-up, own songs and releases) was The ERRO STRINGBAND (first called ERRO BOYS STRINGBAND). It was founded in Vila in 1978 by six young men from Erromango and started to take part in competitions in the same year. Characteristic for this group was the use of a lead guitar playing melodiously in the background, an influence picked up in PNG by one member of the group (see 3.2).[270]

Stringband songs tended to be longer in the 1970s as compared to nowadays. Some songs had seven stanzas while now there are often only two (see 3.5 and 6.2.1). Besides, more stanzas mean more choruses. Interlocutors told me that song lyrics addressed whole stories told in greater detail, when compared to nowadays. They pointed out why a long song was of advantage: when people danced in pairs at a party (*lafet* in Bislama), this was an opportunity for flirting, a long song meant that the dancing couples had more time.[271] George Pakoa explained that dancing in pairs (*teksas*, or as a slang expression: *glu*) came out of fashion around 1976 or 1977: “By that time the disco dance came up, that is why people liked to jump around and let go dancing in pairs” (“*Long taem ya disko i kam, taswae ol man oli laekem blong jamjam nao oli livim*”, interview George Pakoa 2004). This development probably had something to do with changing music at nightclubs – rock and disco music becoming popular.

All these groups mentioned above influenced stringbands in yet other places. The famous stringband musicians of the 1970s self-confidently hold the opinion that contemporary stringbands cannot measure up to the standard of their own groups.[272] However, these same

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[269] In Tanna, there is a community of people from the island of Futuna. A branch of the original FUTUNA BAND on Futuna Island was known as FUTUNA COMMUNITY STRINGBAND. The two succsessful stringbands FUTUANA FATUANA and FUTUNA MAHTUA both emerged from this group.

[270] The lead guitar, featured mainly in instrumental intros and outros, gained greater popularity in stringband music after the release of “Souwia Fridom” in 1981 (see 2.2.6.1).

[271] A musician of advanced age said that in his view the young boys are too lazy to learn long songs, so many stringband songs are very short nowadays.

[272] For example Joel Kaltang, George Pakoa, Lui Philip and John Apei.

musicians are content to see that the performance of a stringband is paid reasonably now, in comparison to then.

It is true that the emerging stringbands of the 1970s brought about several important novelties and considerably formed stringband music as we now know it. But they were building on what their fathers, uncles and grandfathers had already been doing for decades in a less public way. Ephraim Bule said that he and his peers were inspired by Dr. Philip Ilo (see 2.2.3) and sees the group VATDORO in his tradition.[273] Another example is the SOUWIA STRINGBAND.

2.2.5.5 The Case of SOUWIA STRINGBAND

The fathers and grandfathers of the founding members of SOUWIA were already playing stringband music on Emao Island, e.g. those of Joel Kaltang played in the group PUSKAT. The following narration is quoted at length because it touches upon several important aspects of this study: [274]

> *"O, mi talem wan lelebet samting* about *hao Souwia i stat, hao mifala i statem Souwia. Wanem nao tingting blong statem stringban? Bifo mifala i no tingting nating blong mekem stringban. Mifala i stap plei boksing. Ale, mifala i lukaot mane blong plei boksing. Ale, wan taem mifala i stap insaed long ples we mifala i tren long hem long 'New Hebrides Motor' oli kolem,* […] *'Asco Motors' naoia* […]. *Ale taem we mifala i stap mifala i harem program blong Paul Gardissat ya nao. Hem i stap kamaot long Radio* […]. *Program blong hem hem i tokabaot lokol miusik ya, hem i stringban miusik. Ale, from ol bubu blong mifala oli bin plei finis afta mifala i lego longtaem lelebet. Mifala i plei pop-grup lelebet, kaen long… yu plei lektrik wetem* amplifier. […] *Ale, taem mifala i stap harem mifala i ting, okei yumi gobak long stael blong ol bubu blong yumi. Ale, mekem se wantaem mifala i sitdaon tugeta, mifala i putum komiti nao. Mifala i sitdaon, putum ol komiti, jeaman,* vice-*jeaman,* treasurer, […], *ale mifala i pem ol gita. Wanwan long mifala i pem wan samting. Ale, mifala i pem wan busbes blong mifala, ale mifala i statem"* (Joel Kaltang, interview 2002).

In this case, the motivation to form a stringband was quite practical – and not at all political (for more information on this topic see 7.1): "Oh, I tell you a little bit about how we started Souwia. What is the point in starting a stringband? At first, we never thought about setting up a stringband. We were boxing. Well, we were looking for money to do boxing". Kaltang goes on: "Well, one day we were at the place where we trained, at 'New Hebrides Motor', which is now 'Asco Motors'. When we were there, we listened to this programme of Paul Gardissat. It came out on the radio […]. His programme was about local music, stringband music". Gardissat, who was used to going to the communities to record bands there, later heard about

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[273] "We wanted to come back to the ideas he had before, so that's why we started Vatdoro Stringband" ("*Mifala i wantem karem bak ol tingting we hem i gat long bifo, ale taswe mifala i statem Vatdoro Stringband*", interview with Ephraim Bule 2002).

[274] See the next paragraphs for the translation.

SOUWIA STRINGBAND and came to see them at 'New Hebrides Motors'. He recorded two or three songs and played them on the radio, with the result that the group had many requests for concerts. Kaltang explains that they became interested in a musical practice that was regarded as old-fashioned at the time:

> "Well, our grandfathers already played this kind of music but then we gave it up for quite a while. We played a little bit *pop miusik* of the kind where you use electrical equipment, an amplifier. […] Well, when we heard [stringband music] we decided to return to the style of our grandfathers, so we sat down together and set up a committee with a chairman, vice-chairman, treasurer […] and then we bought guitars. Each one of us bought something. Well, we bought ourselves a *busbes* and started."[275]

Some members of the group, like Lui Philip, already played *pop miusik* in the village of Lausake (Emao) from 1971 to 1975 and called themselves ECHO BAND. The quote illustrates the upcoming popularity of stringband music, with the group switching from a pop group with battery-powered amplifiers and electrical guitars to a stringband.

The first significant public appearance of SOUWIA was organised by Liseri Kalsau, the wife of one of the band members, and took place on Moso Island in 1975. In the same year, one of the bosses of the Burns Philp company became aware of SOUWIA (Kaltang worked in the hardware department of BP) and asked them to replace music groups from Fiji and Tahiti which entertained the tourists in front of the BP buildings at the wharf when cruise ships arrived. This job was well paid, they received a 'white man's salary' (*praes blong waetman*) as Kaltang said.[276]

SOUWIA was the first stringband that released a commercially produced cassette, produced in a warehouse by the electrical department of Burns Philp.[277] The cover shows a man from Emao Island standing in a canoe. This first album was distributed among the islands via the trade ships of BP. As it sold well, the group recorded about seven other cassettes at BP.[278] The band was requested for gigs all over the country through the ship crews, so they toured the islands: Epi (1976), Espiritu Santo (Luganville, 1976), North Ambrym (Ranon), Tanna, and Malekula (Lamap and the plantation of Oscar Newman, 1977). There, the musicians were received as

[275] It is typical that a band committee is set up before any music is made (see 7.3.2).
[276] Stringbands were generally paid very badly in the 1970s, even if the group performed the whole night.
[277] Joel Kaltang, lead singer and ukulele player provided other details than his colleague, singer and guitar player Lui Philip about when they started the group and when the first album was produced, i.e. around the mid-seventies. Lui Philip also tells another version of why they started the stringband. According to him, MAKURA TOKOLAU and the stringband competition impressed the boys and motivated the founding of SOUWIA.
[278] One of these albums was 'Across the bridge', with a picture of the group on the bridge at the hotel 'Le Méridien' on the cover. On this cover, the band was called BP EMAO SOUWIA STRINGBAND.

stars of *lokol miusik* (local music) and people awaited them at the airport in Luganville. A Hilux jeep picked them up, beeping all the way to town where they played at the jam-packed 'Seven Star Night Club'. Some people began to cry when the band started the first song. Kaltang explained that the audience already knew the songs from the cassettes but now saw the band with their own eyes. People even followed the musicians to their hotel. The next morning, they played at BP in Santo and people climbed roofs to witness the spectacle. Less popular stringbands toured less comfortably, for example the COOL SHADOW STRINGBAND had to walk by foot and to carry their instruments when they toured around Ambae in 1978 because there was no road.[279]

SOUWIA saw many communities around the islands, at a time when *kastom* life was – at least in some places – stronger than today. Security was needed when they played at the Junior Secondary School in Ranon (Ambrym) and a fence made of corrugated iron was broken down by fans in Tanna when the group was announced. The young musicians were impressed and happy – no wonder they remember the second half of the 1970s as a glorious time for stringband music.

2.2.6 The 1980s: Independence

According to a text published on the homepage of the VKS, "the songs 'Fridom' by Souwia, '30 Julae' by Huarere and 'Yumi hapi long 1980' by Tokolau […] provided the soundtrack to national independence in 1980".[280] The national anthem was composed by FRANÇOIS VINCENT AISSAV who had won a contest, which was announced by the government in 1978.[281]

Moses Stevens remembers that after the elections in 1980, there was a peaceful parade of the different communities through Port Vila from the waterfront to Independence Parc. MAKURA TOKOLAU headed the parade.[282] They had composed a song for the occcasion. Stevens joined the march with his fellow students from Malapoa College. The new flag of the Republic of Vanuatu was raised on this day.

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[279] And they did it the same way decades later, when the author witnessed a performance of the group at a stringband competition in southeast Ambae in December 2003.

[280]http://www.vanuatuculture.org/site-bm2/film-sound/20050803_Stringband-music-preservation-completed.shtml, last accessed on 2nd January 2010.

[281] Aissav began to work as a DJ at Radio Vanuatu in the mid-80s (interview with François Vincent Aissav 2003).

[282] The march began where there is a place called 'Trader Vic's'. In 1980 there had been another establishment at that spot. In the film 'Marching for Independence' about the independence of Vanuatu, MAKURA TOKOLAU can be seen heading the parade (interview with Moses Stevens 2004).

The politicisation of stringband music reached a peak with independence. Starting with the celebrations around Independence Day, the 30th July 1980, big stringband competitions were held on (or around) the date each year, as was recommended on the part of the committee of politicians who had prepared independence (interview with Moses Stevens 2004).[283] During the course of the 1980s, stringband music became accepted as a national style of music in Vanuatu. This is reflected by the fact that popular groups like HUARERE and VATDORO had contracts with hotels.

2.2.6.1 Experiments

In general, stringband music is played on acoustic instruments without any amplification.[284] The successful group MAKURA TOKOLAU was an exception in not only being able to afford many instruments but also an amplifier, microphones and microphone-stands. They did not use electric guitars but pick-ups with their acoustic instruments. So, interestingly, in these days this stringband was more equipped with technical equipment than are contemporary stringbands. One of the albums MAKURA TOKOLAU released in the 1980s was called "Taem Bifo, Taem i kam", others were "No mani" (1986, Vanuata Productions) and "Wan Taem Moa Bakegen".

The beginning of the 1980s was a period in which stringbands experimented with different instrumentations in their studio recordings that deviated from a normal stringband line up. SOUWIA used a piano player, TIM KALMET from Erakor, on their album "Fridom" (1981).[285] As a student at the Lycée d'Antoine Bougainville, TIM KALMET had secretly played on a piano that was brought to Vanuatu by a French teacher who had taken the instrument first to Tahiti, and later, in the 1960s, to Tanna and then to Vila. This teacher changed over to a French school on Nguna Island and took the piano with him again. When he finally left the country to go back to Tahiti he wanted to give the piano to Kalmet as a present if Kalmet covered the costs of transport from Nguna to Vila. Kalmet got it to Vila by ship in around 1975 with only one string broken which he managed to replace with a new one from Australia.

"Souwia Fridom" was recorded at Radio Vanuatu by Paul Gardissat. The new building for Radio Vanuatu had just officially opened on 30th of April 1981, although the radio had moved

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[283] See 4.5.1 on information on the 1980 stringband competition and stringband competitions in general.

[284] I have seen microphones and a big PA-system used to amplify stringband music only on the occasion of the Fest'Nalega, part of Fest'Napuan (see 4.5.3).

[285] Paul Gardissat suggested this cooperation (cf. Tracks 15 & 16; the latter song is about the experience of participating in a music festival in Melbourne).

in already in 1979, around the time of the first Arts Festival (interview with Paul Gardissat 2004). The musicians managed to get the piano to the radio station. The former owner of the instrument had passed a tuning wrench to Kalmet and showed him how to use it.[286] The piano was used in every song on the album but only once in a live performance at a music festival at Cine Hickson, a cinema in Port Vila.

Gardissat was criticised from all sides for encouraging ni-Vanuatu to use a European instrument in stringband music. He received letters from outraged ni-Vanuatu who opposed the new instruments *blong waet man* in stringband music (a criticism that leaves out the fact that guitars are European instruments too). Although the piano, as played by TIM KALMET, fits perfectly to the songs of SOUWIA and although the album is now regarded as a classic of stringband music, neither SOUWIA nor any other stringband ever repeated this attempt.

After their performance at the Cine Hickson in 1981, the SOUWIA STRINGBAND went to a music festival in Melbourne (see 4.5.4), where they 'represented' Vanuatu. The trip was sponsored by the government of Vanuatu, probably to promote Vanuatu as a tourist destination after the political unrest of the previous year.[287] Six musicians from SOUWIA went to Melbourne, each receiving a fee of 100 000 vt when they came back. Those left behind were of the opinion that they should receive some money too. A stringband has usually many more members than those performing (or performing at the same time), in the case of the SOUWIA STRINGBAND there were about 20.[288] Kaltang tried to calm them down by hinting at the fact that those who had gone had promoted the name of the group but the others were not consoled.[289] As a consequence of these divergences of opinion, Joel Kaltang called all the boys of his village Wiana (Emao Island) together to a meeting and then founded a new band – SARATOKOWIA, which he formed with top musicians and composers from other stringbands:

[286] Kalmet adjusted the pitch of the piano by comparing each key with an electric keyboard. From then on Kalmet also worked as a piano tuner. Some expatriates and prosperous ni-Vanuatu (like members of parliament) now have pianos and Kalmet uses a battery-powered tuning oscillator with built-in microphone. He tunes the strings which are out of tune for 500 vt each. His only competitor is a Japanese man who tunes by ear (interview with Timteo Kalmet 2003).

[287] The group was not sent because of their involvement with the VP (a relationship that came to nothing after independence) but because SOUWIA had won a competition (interview with Lui Philip 2003). SOUWIA performed a couple of songs at the radio of the French Service in Australia. The group was requested to entertain for two weeks at the City Square Hotel; however, despite the offer that the return flight of the group would be paid, the government of Vanuatu did not agree (interview with Joel Kaltang 2002).

[288] This aspect is discussed in 7.3.

[289] According to another report, the band received only 190 000 vt in total. Kaltang allegedly invested a share of this money in a Toyota Hilux, a house and a store. Two other members also used some of the money privately, building houses and a well. I prefer to withhold my interlocutor's name.

SARA POKASI, TOKOTAKIA and SOUWIA. Kaltang then played in both groups, SARATOKOWIA and SOUWIA.

Some other stringbands also experimented with unusual instruments. The trade-mark of the LUMBUKUTI BEACH BOYS remains a mandolin (which was not an unusual instrument in the early days of stringband music but which can hardly be found nowadays). TUKI IMERE from Mele (Efate) used an accordeon in stringband music. The group produced only one album, "Oh! Imere Marie" (recorded by Paul Gardissat in the studio of Radio Vanuatu). Some stringband musicians occasionally used an electric guitar, for example MAKURA TOKOLAU.[290] However, the outcome has been less convincing than SOUWIA's efforts to incorporate the exotic piano in stringband music. The quality of the loudspeakers was bad, so Paul Gardissat did not encourage the usage of electric guitars in stringband music.

The keyboard added new sounds to Vanuatu's *pop miusik* in the 1980s but at the same time stringband instruments changed too. From 1980 onwards, ni-Vanuatu increasingly began to carve their own ukuleles (*yukalele* or just *yuka* in Bislama), modelling them like the instruments from Tahiti, which are worked from one piece of wood and stringed with fishing-line – instead of buying instruments made in China (see 3.3.2). SOUWIA claim to have been the first to use a Tahitian ukulele which they had bought from Tahitians living in Vanuatu.[291] In 1981 TOKOTAKIA and other stringbands, also rural bands as LONWOLWOL from West Ambrym[292], bought such costly instruments from a woman from Tahiti (interview with Jesse Temar 2003). Touring popular stringbands brought about changes in the performances and styles of rural stringbands.[293] At the same time, various home-made percussion instruments were sometimes substituted by store-bought tambourines, kabassas etc. All of these attempts

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[290] It was played by a man by the name of Matais from the settlement Mele Maat, one of those ni-Vanuatu guitarists playing in the PETER POSA-like *Pasifik stael* (interview with Moses Stevens 2004). One member of the original SOUWIA line-up remarked to me that TOKOLAU tried to imitate SOUWIA in using another non-typical instrument in stringband music, which leads in instrumental parts. However, a few stringbands already used electric guitars in the 1970s.

[291] In Figure 11 a usual ukulele in the shape of a guitar can be seen. Some people were carving their instruments already in the 1970s as other photographs of stringbands prove that were published in 'Nabanga'.

[292] This group began in 1978 under the name of LONAKON STRINGBAND. In 1986, they changed their name to LONWOLWOL. The stringband produced four albums, one of them being "Craig Cove Harbour" (1986), before the band eventually changed to a pop group (interview with Jesse Temar 2003).

[293] VATDORO and HUARERE from Pentecost, for example, were standing while playing, when they toured Southeast Ambae. The teacher Hendry Tari had invited the groups because people already knew the songs from cassettes and were very interested in seeing the groups actually perform. These visits mark an upheaval, because, since then, stringbands in Southeast Ambae have also stood up during performances and used new percussion instruments.

of including new instruments in stringband music could not change the basic structures and aesthetics of the genre.

For a while there were a few all-female-stringbands in the 1980s. Ellen Wap, sister of NOISY BOYS founder Thomas Nalau was a member of an all-female stringband called NOISY GIRLS. This group was founded in 1982 in the island of Tanna. The NOISY GIRLS never recorded an album but one of their songs was recorded by the NOISY BOYS on their second album, featuring Ellen Wap. Wap also sang at a live performance of the NOISY BOYS at the Tanna Show competition, an event where the stringband always won the first prize between 1979 and 1983 (followed by FUTUNA FATUANA who always received the second prize, as I was told). At the competitions at the independence celebrations several other all-female stringbands took part (interview with the NOISY BOYS and Ellen Wap 2003). During the 1980s these women's bands vanished and apparently there were no more groups like these until MAUNA STRINGBAND was founded in 2001 (interview with Maria Manua 2002).

Several successful (and thus affluent) stringbands began to reform themselves as *pop miusik* groups during the 1980s, playing with electronic instruments and drumsets. This was stimulated by the famous pop group BLACK BROTHERS from Jayapura, West Papua, which settled down in Vanuatu and set up the first multi-track recording studio in the mid-80s (interview with Andy Ayamiseba 2003; see Appendix 2). Apart from their work as musicians and producers, the BLACK BROTHERS tried to win support for the seperatist movement of West Papua in Vanuatu, which had just achieved its independence.[294] The name of the business, Vanuwespa, is a combination of the two country names Vanuatu and West Papua. It was situated in the district Namba Tu in Port Vila. The BLACK BROTHERS recorded many of the well-known stringbands of the time but also groups playing music with electronical equipment.

In 1979 the MAURI STRINGBAND had started in a secondary school in east Ambae. As the musical taste of young people changed when the BLACK BROTHERS toured Ambae, the stringband changed to a pop group.[295] Another stringband that changed to a pop group under the influence of the BLACK BROTHERS was the famous band VATDORO from the small village Abwantundora, north Pentecost. In 1983, VATDORO made their first stringband recordings

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[294] The BLACK BROTHERS was founded in 1973 in Jayapura, West-Papua (see 5.1.1.2). It is a widely accepted fact that the BLACK BROTHERS made reggae music popular in Vanuatu. Although Paul Gardissat had already played international reggae artists on Radio Vanuatu before that, people never realized the potential in reggae music for their own musical productions. Now was the time for the history of Vanuatu *rege* to begin.

[295] Prices for copra and kava were high so they could afford the necessary equipment and altered their name to EX MAURI (interview with Mark Hensley 2004).

with Paul Gardissat on Radio Vanuatu, and in 1984 the band moved to Port Vila. They had a contract with a hotel and recorded three stringband albums with the band leader Ephraim Bule as lead singer and lead guitarist.[296] Bule left the group as an active member when it turned to *pop miusik* after 1986. The BLACK BROTHERS became interested in VATDORO because of their good vocal harmony and thought that they were suited to *pop miusik* (interview with Andy Ayamiseba 2003).[297] The band spent nearly ten years in the capital, progressing and changing over time (interviews with Ephraim Bule 2002 & with John Brown-Sigeri 2002). VATDORO is the pioneer of Vanuatu *rege* music and still serves as an example for many, especially young musicians from Penama province. Around the time when VATDORO recorded their first album as a pop group at Vanuwespa, the MAKAMBO BROTHERS recorded a stringband album at the same studio.

On the album "Melanesian Gel" from 1986, produced at Vanuwespa, a keyboard was added into the usual stringband arrangement. This was the last recording of George Pakoa's stringband, which was now called NEW TOKOLAU. The musicians invested much time in the production and were too disappointed to go on with the band after the BLACK BROTHERS released the album and left the country in 1988 for Australia with the mastertapes but without paying any money to the group. After all cassettes were sold, no new copies could be produced.

Vanuwespa studio was a strong competitor for Paul Gardissat's Vanuata Production (see 5.1.1.1 and Appendix 2). Vanuwespa was successful; the BLACK BROTHERS played at many political events and were close with politician Barak Sope, who had a share in the studio. After things changed on the political landscape of Vanuatu, their affiliations to local politicians finally led to the deportation of the BLACK BROTHERS from Vanuatu in 1988.

2.2.6.2 Classic Stringband Albums

Gardissats' influence on stringband music continued during the 1980s. Around 1981 Paul Gardissat founded the first recording studio of the country, Vanuata Production, together with

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[296] The albums were called "Vanuatu", "Land-Diver" and "In Love Song" (the CD with the audio examples entails two excerpts, Tracks 17 and 18, from their album "Vanuatu").

[297] They recorded "Kastom" at Vanuwespa studio as well as "Blak man paoa" (maybe the album's title was written in English, "Black Man Power"). In this production, members of VATDORO were only singing while members of the BLACK BROTHERS were playing the instruments (bass player John Brown-Sigeri said worldy: *oli bakemap mifala*, interview with John Brown-Sigeri 2002). This procedure reflects a mode of production as common in PNG's big studios (see for example Crowdy 2018: 128).

his friend Jean-Paul James, who also financed the enterprise (see 5.1.1.1).[298] After "Souwia Fridom", Gardissat also recorded all other albums of SOUWIA until the band eventually split in 1986. SOUWIA was a very productive group in terms of albums released.[299] Band member Lui Philip said that the band's successful years were those between 1979 and 1984.

The NOISY BOYS came by ship from Tanna to record an album with Paul Gardissat on Radio Vanuatu, which was released in December 1981; it was called "First Tour". The second album, "Second Tour", was released around 1983 (anyhow before cyclone Uma, as I was told by bandmembers). Although several band members told me that their third album was "Amazing Vanuatu" (1991), I later found another album called "1986 Tanna Inta Distrik Gems". This album is most probably also from the 1980s. After their 'second tour' the band went back to Tanna and disbanded their group. Some members got married (and thus stopped playing) and some moved away. Others founded another group by the name of HAN 7. Following the cyclone Uma (that is after 1987) they changed their name to THE YOUNG DESTROYERS. After Thomas Nalau, the stringband's former bandleader, joined again around 1989 when the band wanted to participate in a competition, the group was renamed NOISY BOYS (to take advantage of the already popular name).[300]

In 1981, HUARERE STRINGBAND recorded their first album under the leadership of Samson Tugu, who had already started the group in 1959.[301] After that, the band returned to Pentecost Island and stopped playing until Edgar Hinge initiated new beginnings with an entirely new generation of members in 1987. Hinge had worked at the Hotel Intercontinental (nowadays called Le Méridien) and always saw the performance of a band coming from the Philippines. He thought that he could do the same job, so he quit, and went to his home island to get the musicians together. He even took over some melodies of the Asian band he had heard so often at the hotel and devised new lyrics in Bislama or in his language, *raga*, for the songs (interview with Edgar Hinge & Benjamin Siro 2002). Some of these songs, like one called 'Bloody Mary', were published on the album "Huarere Tumoro".

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[298] The partners also engaged in the production of pirate cassettes.

[299] Some of these are "Dollar", "Across the bridge", "Fridom" (1981), "Census day" and "Arts Festival". Maybe this is not the correct chronological order. The last album of SOUWIA in their original line up was "Olsem bifo" (1986).

[300] I witnessed a concert of the group, meanwhile called NOISY BAND, in which they played a song of the HAN 7-era that is reminiscent of the cyclone Uma. Other songs, which were composed while the group was HAN 7, were later included on the album "Amazing Vanuatu" (1991). The band did not record any album while called HAN 7 (interview with the NOISY BOYS 2003).

[301] It was called "Huarere Tede" (possibly spelled "Huarere Today") and was recorded at Radio Vanuatu with Paul Gardissat.

Apart from the successful stringbands of the 1970s which continued to perform and record albums, some new groups entered the scene. The WESTERN BOYS, a group from Emae, partly coming from the TOYOTA STRINGBAND (which, again, had some affiliations with MAKURA TOKOLAU), recorded several albums in the 1980s, all of them with Paul Gardissat.[302]

One of the popular stringband songs of the 1980s was 'Philip Kating', a song about a famous boxer from Vanuatu, by ERRO STRINGBAND (on the album "Goldie River"). This stringband from the southern island of Erromango released three albums before the group disolved in 1988 or 1989.[303]

Some boys had founded a stringband on the island of Tongoa and came to Vila to record a cassette in 1989. They asked Kalo Daniel, the mandolin player of the LUMBUKUTI BEACH BOYS to play with them. Daniel asked Gardissat what the group should be named and Gardissat proposed YOUNG BEACH BOYS. Their album was called "Lumbukuti Tongoa," it sold very well – after a week all the Chinese stores in Vila town were out of stock. In this album two mandolins were used. Among the popular stringbands of the 1980s were the MAKAMBO BROTHERS from Lumbukuti, Tongoa, who also used Kalo Daniel's mandolin (interview Kalo Daniel 2003). The group had a contract at the Le Méridien Hotel and entertained there twice a week (interview with Leonard Willie 2002).

The stringband MAGAWIARUA (pronounced: Ma<u>ng</u>awiarua) was founded in 1987 by related Emao islanders staying in Port Vila. The band started off with nothing but soon became successful by entertaining tourists at Hotel Rossi[304], the Intercontinental Hotel and other places. The band then released its first album, "Emao Hem i Stanap Yet" a year later.[305]

When Gardissat's partner, whose wife worked for the French embassy, left Vanuatu for Morocco, he sold Vanuata Production to two people: to the boss of Imprimerie de Port Vila (IPV) and to Mrs Goiset from Tanna (her family had originally come from Vietnam) who had shares in the business.[306] After only a few months, Mrs Goiset took over the whole business

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[302] Their first album was recorded in 1984 at Radio Vanuatu, the second, "Cookie Bar" was recorded in 1986. The third, "China Town" was recorded in 1987; by then, Gardissat worked at the private recording studio business Vanuata Productions. The last album of the WESTERN BOYS (with the original line up) was recorded in 1988. The first and the last albums of the band were called "Lovely Home" and "Again", probably in this order. "Again" was quite successful.

[303] These albums are: "Goldie River" (1980 after independence), "Jaksen Rod" (1981 or 1982) and "Kauri Tri" (1985 or 1986). All three were released by Vanuata Production (with Paul Gardissat).

[304] 'Rossi' was once a big hotel, and nowadays it is a restaurant.

[305] Interview with Magawiarua 2003 & with Jeffrey Thomson 2003.

[306] Gardissat assumes that the IPV was not really interested in recordings but wanted to prevent others from competing with IPV by using the small machine for offset printing which was used to produce covers for the cassettes and other small-scale printing works.

and became Gardissat's boss. Divisions over business matters, however, made Gardissat leave the enterprise. The album "Black Freedom" by LAUTANO STRING BAND from Newora, Nguna Island, was one of the last albums released (1988)[307]. Due to lack of a skilled sound engineer, Goiset had to sell Vanuata Production to Jean-Marc Wong, who maintained its name and its logo, a conch shell (*bubu* or *pupu* in Bislama). After Vanuwespa closed down, Vanuata gradually filled this gap over the years and became a modern multi-track studio (see 5.1.1.3). Meanwhile, in 1989, Paul Gardissat became the manager of the recording studio and printing house Sun Productions in the part of town called Namba Tu in Vila.[308] The album "Bloody-Mary's" by the stringband STONEY BOYS, which was founded in the mid-80s in Ambrym, was one of the first albums recorded at Sun Productions.

The stringband HUARERE comes from the same area in north Pentecost as Vanuatu's first Prime Minister Walter Lini. His brother was the spokesman of the group and bought a small keyboard for the boys at the Sound Centre.[309] When they came to Vila, HUARERE found it hard to compete with the stringbands from Efate and the Shepherds Islands but they thought of a good marketing strategy: the group wanted to combine *kastom* music with the stringband genre and approached Kirk Huffman, then director of the VKS, to ask him, whether they could produce a video clip at the VKS. He agreed and the band used a *tamtam*, bamboo instruments and a conch shell, along with the usual stringband instruments. In the video, the group can be seen performing a *kastom danis*. A cassette was produced in addition to the clip. On this album, entitled "Smael" (1988), they also used their small keyboard. After the band had returned from a tour to New Caledonia "Smael" was played everywhere around town.[310] Hotels also became interested in the group, and HUARERE stayed in the capital, having signed three contracts with Hotel Rossi. The band also released "Custom", a mini cassette with the same three songs on both sides (produced by Radio Vanuatu).

Although stringband music is still very popular in Vanuatu, older musicians insist that the old popularity of this music in the second half of the 1970s and first half of the 1980s has faded.

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[307] It was the first of the four albums of this group.

[308] The owners of Sun Productions are a Chinese family, who also have other, far bigger businesses in Vila.

[309] Organs and keyboards became available in the 1980s. Keyboards and other instruments could be bought at the Sound Centre, an Australian-owned store where TIM KALMET (the piano player of SOUWIA) was working for some time as the department manager for instruments. The Sound Centre sold TVs and hi-fi equipment (at first radio boomboxes) since the 1970s. After a few years, music instruments were sold in addition. Although CDs were added to the product range, vinyl discs were never sold at the Sound Centre. Since around 1989/1990, the shop also sells perfume and watches (interview with Luke Sadler 2004).

[310] Kirk Huffman had arranged the tour to New Caledonia in 1989. The band took part at the Kanaki Festival and stayed for one week (interview with Edgar Hinge & Benjamin Siro 2002).

Especially in Port Vila, the genre has had to compete with other popular music played on advanced music equipment since the advent of the BLACK BROTHERS. As far as media are concerned, video and television challenged the sole position of the radio, which was more important for the distribution of stringband music then, as compared to now. Another factor was brought to my attention by Paul Gardissat and after observing life in Vanuatu, especially in Port Vila, I am tempted to accept his view: the spread of (excessive) kava drinking is detrimental to the practice of stringband music (see 7.7).

2.2.7 The 1990s

Quite unexpectedly, MAKURA TOKOLAU won the 1990 stringband competition again – unexpectedly for one thing because the group did not really exist anymore, and for the other because it competed with two songs that were written in the night before the competition took place (for more information about this incident see 3.8).

In 1990 there was another album by the WESTERN BOYS, "Independens 10 Yea" (Sun Productions)[311]. After that, the group did not play anymore because, as band member Moses Stevens explained, people on the island began to get interested in *ol miusik long disko*. This is international popular music, well suited for dancing at clubs – or in the case of island communities, temporary venues equipped with lighting and a sound-system (powered by a generator) for a special occasion. Oddly, the youth also used to play cassettes by the WESTERN BOYS at such a *danis* (dance).

The YOUNG BEACH BOYS travelled to New Zealand in the same year (see 4.5.4). After the group returned, they recorded their second album and were lucky to have a contract with the hotel 'Le Lagon' for entertainment every Sunday. The group nevertheless ceased to exist in 1993 because, as band member Kalo Daniel said, too many of the boys drank too much kava.

Also in 1990, the stringband STONEY BOYS from Ambrym recorded their third and last album at Paul Gardissat's new studio Sun Productions.[312] The group dissolved but was reformed ten years later by the original member's sons and nephews (interview with the young STONEY BOYS 2003). Another of the early releases of Sun Productions was the album "Vanuatu Tusker" (the brand name of Vanuatu's local beer) by the group COOL SHADOW STRINGBAND from south-east Ambae, which commemorates the opening of Vanuatu's local brewery. Sun

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[311] According to the records of Paul Gardissat.

[312] After "Bloody-Mary's", the STONEY BOYS produced "Green, Green Island" and "Sweetness Blong Taon", all at Sun Productions.

Productions also released remix albums by FATUANA MATUA ("In Australia", 1990, and "Nina, Rita", 1991).[313] In the same year, 1991, the stringband album "Amazing Vanuatu" was released by the NOISY BOYS[314]. HUARERE recorded "Kam long Vanuatu" at Sun Productions.

In 1992, LONWOLWOL from West Ambrym came to Vila to produce their fourth and last album as a stringband with Vanuata Productions ("Mi laekem Vanuatu"). The band changed to a pop group in the same year, inspired by the examples of VATDORO and HUARERE, the two popular groups from Pentecost which also underwent this transition.[315] In some cases, not entire stringbands but rather individual stringband musicians changed the genre; e.g. Mark Hensley, a former member of MAURI STRINGBAND (who formed the pop group EX MAURI with two of his stringband colleagues and then, in 1998, founded REAL SURVIVORS in Luganville) or Sarabera 'SAKA' Sakaria, former member of the stringband TUKI IMERE, who became a sought-after lead guitarist (interviews with Mark Hensley 2004 & with Sarabera 'Saka' Sakaria 2003).

David Andrew, one of the members of the NOISY BOYS STRINGBAND, changed to *pop miusik* when he became the lead singer of the BLUE CYCLE BAND in 1993. The band attempted to travel abroad to record an album in PNG or New Caledonia but were refused to enter these countries because of the criminal past of some of the band members (see 4.5.4). However, as a result of these attempts, David Andrew had the possibility to take part in a programme of the Papua New Guinea government and learned sound engineering in Port Moresby (see 5.1.1.5). While staying in PNG, Andrew produced three albums.[316]

Meanwhile, MAGAWIARUA were quite successful. The band released an album in 1992 and was booked by the National Tourism Office for a tourism fair in Darling Habour, Sydney. The group had won an award and received a certificate that stated that it was officially representing the country Vanuatu. The musicians were able to afford a Hilux pick-up which was used to contribute to their income as a device for public transport. However, after the group had returned from Australia, three band members left the group to join Joel Kaltang and his group SARATOKOWIA (see 2.2.6.1). These members used the band's instruments in the other group, which was a violation of the stringband's rules. These rules are determined in the group's constitution, a guideline that was accepted by the court, who ruled in favour of MAGAWIARUA

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[313] The group later changed the spelling of their bandname, adding an 'h': FATUANA MAHTUA.

[314] I do not know whether it was released by Sun Productions or by Vanuata Productions.

[315] The band's second album was produced in 1990. The third ("Love Song") was released in 1991 (interview with Jesse Temar 2003).

[316] Interviews with John 'Beri' Willie 2004 & David Andrew Iaukou Ruben Holden 2004.

in 1993 (interview with MAGAWIARUA 2003 & with Jeffrey Thomson 2003). The row within the stringband SOUWIA that had been in the making since the 1980s affected all the other stringbands from Emao Island and finally led to reconciliation between MAGAWIARUA and SARATOKOWIA (see 7.3.2).

The group LUKUNAEVA was founded in 1993 or 1994. The band was rejuvenated by younger relatives who carried on and were quite successful in Vila a decade later (interview with Tony Alvos 2003).

In December 1996, SOUWIA, the famous stringband, came on the scene again with a new album.[317] Lui Philip, member of the original SOUWIA, had put together a new young group and trained them since 1994 because his younger relatives had asked him to do so. He initially took part actively and even sang lead vocals. In 1996 his son, Philip Louis, joined the group and took over from his father (interviews with Philip Louis 2002 & with Lui Philip 2003). When Jean-Marc Wong began recording stringbands after taking over Vanuata Productions in 1990, the cassettes sold well because there were no new releases since Paul Gardissat had left the studio.[318] In the 1990s, Wong released many albums.[319] In 1992, the pop group TROPIC TEMPO produced their second album "Waiting for you" (Vanuata Productions). Up until then, Vanuata Productions had only produced stringband recordings or recordings of individual performers such as TIM KALMET or small groups such as the NEGATIVES (a trio). After "Waiting for you", other pop groups with more members like VATDORO and HUARERE also started to record albums at Vanuata Productions. In 1997, Vanuata Productions released a HUARERE CD with the pop album "Waili'n & Sayi'n" (with nine tracks), which also includes the stringband album "My Home Vanuatu" (with another 14 tracks).[320]

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[317] This album was recorded at Sun Productions and was called "Poverty mo Smoke". The sound quality was not good, as I was told.

[318] Mrs. Goiset, the former owner, had offered the business to Wong. After a respite of three months, he eventually bought the studio in 1989, which included the building in Manples (an area of Port Vila) and the equipment (see 5.1.1.3).

[319] The volumes (that is the albums in chronological order) of a band, especially stringbands, are often numbered in Vanuatu. If the volume number is given on the cover of the sound carrier, I also use it when citing these cassettes or CDs. Among the many stringband cassette releases by Vanuata Productions in the 1990s are albums from the groups SARA POKASI ("Close Your Eyes", Vol. 3, March 1995), LUKUNAEFA (Vol. 1, August 1996), MAKAMBO BROTHERS ("Somewhere my Love", August 1996), MAGAWIARUA ("17th Anniversary", Vol. 5, July 1997), SARATOKOWIA ("The Pride of the Pacific", December 1997 & "Operation Lagoon", Vol. 6, July 1999), SISIRO STRING BAND ("Unity", September 1998), TOKORUA ("My sweet Island Bougainville", August 1998 & "Sounds of Tokorua Brothers", Vol. 2, July 1999) and TOKOTAKIA ("Round taon long bus", Vol. 6, December 1999).

[320] HUARERE STRINGBAND bought a set of electronic equipment at the Sound Centre and changed to a pop group in 1990. The group had contracts in three different hotels and entertained there as a stringband. Thereafter the band had a contract with Club Vanuatu in the mid-90s and played there as a pop group each weekend until 1999.

The Sun Productions' accountant detected that the recording studio was not worthwhile for the business, resulting in the studio operations being stopped around 1994, and leaving the printing house which still exists. When Gardissat stopped his audio productions, he had recorded and released a total of 175 stringband cassettes while working for the Radio, for Vanuata Production and for Sun Productions. Other small enterprises filled this gap. Ken Oshika from Japan settled down in Vanuatu in 1991[321] and began to operate a computer school and a recording studio called Ocean Deep Studio in Namba Tu. FUTUNA FATUANA made recordings at Ocean Deep. The group's second album produced with Ken Oshika even came out on CD.[322]

In 1993, Ken Oshika gave lessons to some ni-Vanuatu musicians who wanted to learn about computer systems and home recording. Among his first students were Maurice Michel, Timteo Kalmet, Samson Andrews 'Fender' and Falau Jacob.[323] Kalmet then, in the mid-1990s, set up home recording facilities he called Vantrax in Erakor village.[324] The other early ni-Vanuatu run studio was set up by John Josiah from Ambrym Island, who began producing commercial recordings at Sina Studio in Freswota (Port Vila) around 1993 or 1994. Josiah went to school in the USA (New Mexico), where he got in touch with music recording as a hobby among his classmates. When he returned in 1993 he brought a four-track-cassette-recorder, a device that was not to be found in Vanuatu back then. The group LONWOLWOL from his home island Ambrym persuaded him to record a cassette with them.[325] Josiah took out a loan from the ANZ Bank, invested in better equipment and developed his recording activities into a small business.[326] Thus, John Josiah can be regarded as the ni-Vanuatu pioneer of sound recording because, apart from him, only foreigners (or people of non-Melanesian origin but born in Vanuatu) had engaged in the business. In around 1997, Josiah improved his equipment and bought an eight-track-mini-disc-recorder. As the new recorder was not working properly, Josiah changed to computer technology in 1999. When he purchased the computer, Josiah replaced the inadequate house made from masonite and corrugated sheet iron to a better one and in addition built a small extra house which is used only as a studio. Josiah got himself a

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[321] This date was derived from the radio feature "Tropic Tempo – neue Musik aus dem pazifischen Inselstaat Vanuatu" by Karl Rössel (of the series *Musikwelten*, Westdeutscher Rundfunk 5, 11/2/2001).
[322] Neither the cassette nor the CD are available anymore, since Oshika closed down his business.
[323] The costs for the course were 3 000 vt for a month for each participant. Piano lessons given by Oshika's wife were included (interview with Falau Jacob 2004).
[324] See also Hayward 2009: 62; however, when I interviewed him in 2004 these operations were interrupted.
[325] LONWOLWOL, former stringband and pop group since 1992, split up in 1998.
[326] Josiah works at ANZ Bank as a lending officer and thus, he said, probably had better chances to get a loan (interview with John Josiah 2003).

business licence in 1999. Before that, he had declared his activities as a trial which would not yield him any profit.[327] When he needed advice, Josiah asked Oshika and in 1999 he employed Joel Malesi, who had been trained by Oshika and had recorded a solo album at Ocean Deep Studio in 1998 (interviews with John Josiah 2003 & with Joel Malesi 2003).

The year 1995 marks the advent of a new sound carrier: "Coming Up" (Vanuata Productions 1995) was the first popular music album from Vanuatu which was published on compact disc.[328] Wong sent a copy of the cassette album to a music dealer and promoter in New Caledonia who was interested in distributing it there too, but who also wanted to sell the album on CD. In the early period of CD production, music labels in the south-west Pacific ordered the CDs at the manufacturer Pacific Mirror Image in Melbourne, Australia. Wong sent the digital mastertape (DAT) to the businessman from New Caledonia, who ordered the CDs from Australia; the route for the album production was thus Vanuatu – New Caledonia – Australia – New Caledonia – Vanuatu (interview with Jean-Marc Wong 2003). Because of this great effort, most other albums produced at Vanuata Productions were released on cassette only.

FUTUNA MAHTUA and FUTUNA FATUANA, the two successful stringbands from Futuna Island, toured extensively in the 1990s (to New Zealand, Australia and New Caledonia). FUTUNA MAHTUA even went to Spain in 1992 to perform at the Expo and otherwise entertained at the Le Méridien Hotel, whereas FUTUNA FATUANA entertained on several cruise ships and, since 1992, at the Iririki Island Resort.

The late Charlie Nimoho, pioneer of popular music in Futuna, trained a group of students for the centenary of the Presbyterian Church, which he called GOLDEN JUBILEE BOYS. He died on the 5th of March 1997 in Port Vila before the event took place in 1998. Nimoho had introduced yet another new instrument, the so-called *fakapaku*, which consists of a piece of masonite that gives a thundering noise when moved. The *fakapaku* is occasionally used within stringband music, for example at the Tanna Agricultural Show in 1998 (interview with his son, Graham N. Nimoho, 2004).[329]

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[327] The musicians who recorded with him had to buy the empty cassettes themselves, he just made the recordings. From 1999 onwards Josiah had to make profit to be able to pay his employee (interview with John Josiah 2003).

[328] Of course it took a while before some people in the islands noticed the new media. For example the musician Gaëtan Telemb left the capital in 1994 and went back to the island. He only became aware of the existence of CDs when he returned to Vila in 2002 (interview with Gaëtan Telemb 2003).

[329] Graham Nimoho told me that the *fakapaku* is meant to remind one of the noise made by a jumping whale. He said that around August every year, a whale jumps near the island of Futuna to announce the coming of the yam-season. *Fakapaku* also refers to the beating of the water in the sea, which produces a splashing sound.

DAUSAKE, a young group founded in 1997 that drew its members from the villages Malaliu, Matoa, and Mere (Nguna Island) recorded their first album ("Sweety Ice-Cream") at Sina Studio in 1998, after the band had moved to Vila (interview with Kalo Malesu 2003).

Beginning in 1999, Vanuata Productions released stringband music collections with diverse songs of Vanuatu stringbands which had previously been released by the same studio. The first compilation, 'Vanuatu Stringband Vol. 1' (June 1999) includes songs of the groups TOKORUA, MAGAWIARUA, SARATOKOWIA, HUARERE, TOKOTAKIA, SARA POKASI, VANRUWO, and LUKUNAEVA.

Jean-Marc Wong also began managing concerts for artists from overseas in Vanuatu from 1993 when he was approached by a promoter from New Caledonia who was looking for someone to stage the concert of a South African artist.[330] This connection most surely contributed to the popularity of artists like LUCKY DUBE, OYABA, and MAKOMA in Vanuatu.

In the mid-1990s, a musician from PNG, BASIL GREG, toured Vanuatu to raise funds for the Bislama translation of the Bible. After three nights at the Korman Stadium in Vila, he and his band went to Tanna, Malekula, and Espiritu Santo before the last concert was staged at the Chiefs' Nakamal in Port Vila. According to involved ni-Vanuatu musicians, the Vanuatu Christian Council organised this tour because BASIL GREG was already popular in Vanuatu and it was hoped that he would attract a big (paying) audience. The band was equipped with the necessary instruments and ni-Vanuatu guitarist Lennard Willie also joined the group. The musicians raised 7 million vt (50 000 €; interviews with Lennard Willie 2002 & with John 'Beri' Willie 2004).[331] Willie also played at Greg's wedding with the group from PNG.[332] In the 1990s, ni-Vanuatu became increasingly interested in popular music from PNG.[333] Some ni-Vanuatu musicians fitted some Tok Pisin expressions into some of their song lyrics to imitate examples from PNG. Their intention was not to sell cassettes in PNG but rather to please the audience in Vanuatu.

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[330] The promoter sold albums from various South African musicians and took Wong as a partner to distribute them in Vanuatu.

[331] For simplicity's sake, I take the average exchange rate of 1 € : 140 vatu as a basis for the time of my fieldwork. See also Table 1.

[332] According to Leonard Willie Basil Greg later married the daughter of Barak Sope, at the time Prime Minister of Vanuatu (interview with Leonard Willie 2002). Basil Greg engineered the album "Vatdoro Peace", which was recorded by VATDORO at CHM supersound studios in PNG.

[333] For example, HENRY KUSKUS from PNG gave a concert at Club Imperial. He was the first interpreter from overseas to perform in this new hot spot in Port Vila's nightlife which was opened in 1994 (interview with Maraki Samuel 2002, the club's Disc Jockey. His father owns the Club Imperial and the grounds where it was built).

A big club for music and many other social events with the name 'Club Vanuatu Limited' was officially opened in its new building on the 28th July 1994, an event witnessed by the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister, and other officials.[334] After a while, pop groups entertained at Club Vanuatu for a dancing and beer-drinking audience on Fridays and Saturdays. Among these were the former stringbands VATDORO and HUARERE. On occasion, for example at a stringband competition, stringbands also perform at Club Vanuatu.

November 17th 1996 was a very important day for the popular music scene of Vanuatu: the first Fest'Napuan took place, becoming a major driving force for the production of popular music in Vanuatu. This festival was staged to celebrate the first anniversary of the Nasonal Dei Blong Kalja (National Day of Culture), as well as the opening of the new National Museum building in the previous year.[335] This idea came from a French woman by the name of Isabelle, who worked as a teacher at the Ecole Française in Port Vila.[336] The name ‚Fest'Napuan' is a combination of the words ‚festival' (from English / French), and the word *napuan* from one of the languages of the island of Tanna, which means music and dance.[337]

Although the official reason for the staging of the festival was to celebrate the National Day of Culture, some of the musicians had yet another reason, as I was told by *jif* John 'Beri' Willie, founder of the BLUE CYCLE BAND. Their aim was to put at ease, as well as to unite, the civilians of the town in a time of political crisis. At the time, there were problems between the government and the Vanuatu Mobile Force because of unpaid allowances, creating a tense atmosphere in the streets of Port Vila.[338] The older generation of musicians (playing *pop miusik*) wanted to do something about this situation. The Woodstock music festival served as an example for the musicians (interview with John 'Beri' Willie 2004). My impression from

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[334] Club Vanuatu emerged from the Ex-British-Servicemen Club, a members-only club. Originally for British sailors, it became by and by more a club for ni-Vanuatu and less for expatriates. The management and the name changed and as the club became 'local', it adjusted to the needs of the ni-Vanuatu customers, changing from a bar to a dance club. Eventually the revenue allowed the building of a new venue close by in downtown Vila.

[335] The National Museum is in the same building as the VKS, the former New Hebrides Cultural Centre. The institution has existed since 1957 (Tryon 1999b: 9). The 17th of November was declared Nasonal Dei Blong Kalja by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Culture Hon. Sethy Regenvanu. The festival was initially planned to take place on that particular date each year, but after the organisation had been handed over to the Nasiviru Asosiesen (see 7.4), this predefinition lost importance (interview with Ralph Regenvanu 2003).

[336] Most musicians only knew her first name. Her present surname is Le Corre, but in Vanuatu she had a different name because she was married then (interview with Henry Toka 2006). I had no possibility to speak with her myself. According to the Daily Post, Le Corre died in 2017 (https://dailypost.vu/news/a-founder-of-fest-napuan-dies/article_819395c1-0fe8-521f-b125-565e2b325a29.html, last accessed on 14 February 2020.

[337] This name was proposed by Jacob Kapere, director of the audio and film unit of the VKS.

[338] According to Willie members of the Vanuatu Mobile Force even arrested a politician and kidnapped a pilot who had to fly him to Espirito Santo. Other politicians were arrested in Malekula. Willie compared the situation with the coup in Fiji.

the interviews is that the widespread notion of music as a language of harmony, with the ability of bridging social and political differences, as often voiced in Vanuatu popular music lyrics, formed the background to this idea.

In 1996, most of the organisation was done by Isabelle and Sero Kuaotonga from Futuna, then curator of the museum (interview with Ralph Regenvanu 2003).[339] Isabelle approached the Vanuatu Kaljoral Senta (which provided the venue), the sponsors, and the musicians. She wanted to promote Melanesian music, so she asked for the participation of the popular groups of Vanuatu[340] but also invited groups from overseas, namely New Caledonia (FLAMENGO and MEXEM). Altogether, over 20 bands participated (Regenvanu 2001: 36). Several weeks before Fest'Napuan, leaflets about the upcoming event, with information and photographs about the participating bands were distributed in town; each week one leaflet portrayed one group (interview with Ralph Regenvanu 2003).

Thousands of people came to the festival; John 'Beri' Willie estimated about 4000 people. He said the venue "was black because of the many people" ([…] *i blak nomo i stap* […]). The people in Port Vila were overwhelmed by the huge live show with popular groups they otherwise would never see for free. Fest'Napuan took place on the grounds between the VKS and Chiefs' Nakamal (a public building in Port Vila), a place now known as Saralana. Loadings of gravel were put onto the meadow to build a temporary stage. Sand had to be brought by trucks to prevent mud from developing and wood was harvested to make stalls for the sale of food. Despite the rain and the macerated grounds, people enjoyed the event and the atmosphere was good when the first band started playing at 4 pm. The organisers had also invited NEW ETHNIC, a band consisting only of members of the Vanuatu Mobile Force, to participate – a tactical decision. The Police as well as the VMF had been asked to provide security during the event. The festival was discussed in the kava bars around town for the next months. John 'Beri' Willie is sure that it defused the situation and helped to avoid a coup (interview with John 'Beri' Willie 2004).[341]

At its first staging, Fest'Napuan was and remains the biggest music festival ever of its kind in Vanuatu, the festival having become an annual event (see 4.5.3). Despite their criticism in the beginning, the politicians eventually congratulated the organisers on the success of the

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[339] Kuaotonga also makes the designs of the logos for each year's festival. For the first Fest'Napuan, it was a last-minute design that was printed on T-shirts at Vila Handprint (interview with John 'Beri' Willie 2004).

[340] These were TROPIC TEMPO, who had released their popular album "Vois Bilong Ol Bumbu" in 1996 as the headliner, as well as BLUE CYCLE, VATDORO and HUARERE.

[341] He said verbatim: "*Had blong wanwan man i no gud i stap be mifala i miksimap savat wantaem*" (John 'Beri' Willie 2004).

festival. On the occasion of the second Fest'Napuan a year later, the late Father Walter Hayde Lini, the Republic's first Prime Minister and then Minister of Internal Affairs, opened the festival and declared it an annual event, showing great support for the organisers.
The musicians shared their instruments, while the PA system had to be rented by Jean-Marc Wong and Ken Oshika.[342] To raise funds, the organisers approached various companies and institutions around town.[343] As a special attraction, the New Caledonian musician EDOU was invited and the organisers managed to pay for his flight at the last minute. The international guests could stay at Hotel Kaiviti for three days but had to be provided with food from somewhere else, which the community of Mele, a village near Port Vila, sprang in for. The UNELCO provided electricity and the Telecom (TVL) erected a big tent at the festival's disposal.
The exchange with the neighbouring island nations brought new musical stimuli in Vanuatu's *pop miusik*, as for example *kaneka* music from New Caledonia. Stringbands did not participate in the festival in the 1990s.[344]

2.2.8 Recent *stringban miusik* in Vanuatu

Despite the slowly increasing availability of electronic instruments, stringband music is still very popular, also in the urban centres Port Vila and Luganville.[345] However, the bigger part of the population lives in rural villages, where electricity is available only if a generator is at hand. There is a multitude of rural stringbands scattered throughout the islands, of which the more ambitious come to Port Vila to record an album and – if they are very lucky – to play in one of the big hotels to entertain the tourists.
At the time of fieldwork, the most successful stringband of Vanuatu was probably DAUSAKE from Nguna (a small offshore island north of Efate). Their second album "New Millenium" was recorded in 2000 by Vanuatu's popular musician TIMTEO KALMET at his homerecording studio in the village of Erakor. Back then, the stores in downtown Vila would not sell any

[342] Jean-Marc Wong (Vanuata Productions) provided the sound system during the first five years of the festival (1996 - 2000).
[343] For example, they asked for a cardboard box of coca cola or for the sponsorship for five T-shirts of the festival.
[344] One day (Fest'Nalega) was added to the festival programme in 2003 which devotes itself exclusively to stringband music. Various aspects concerning this important festival are discussed at length in 4.5.3.
[345] The following description refers to the current situation of stringband music in Vanuatu which I gathered from communication with ni-Vanuatu after leaving the field, as well as from public accessible information on the internet. The main focus, however, lies on my own experience while conducting fieldwork up to April 2004. To avoid repetition, some information which is pertinent to this subchapter, is covered in Chapters 4 and 5.

other recordings than those of Vanuata Productions, so the group made their next release "Dawn of February" (Vol. 3, August 2001) with Jean-Marc Wong. The song 'Island Dress' from this cassette[346] was particularly successful and has already achieved the status of a stringband classic. On their next album "Grassroot Laef" (Vanuata Productions, December 2002) the group not only had another smash hit ('Hey Nono') but also featured a female singer on the title piece 'Grassroot Laef'. The singer, ALSINA GARAE, is a recognised *pop miusik* singer who works together with various musicians playing *pop miusik* in Port Vila. This cooperation is extraordinary because contemporary stringband music is usually a purely male domain. This song, too, proved to be very successful and the band released another album a year later, on which ALSINA GARAE sings another three songs.[347] DAUSAKE has some presence on the internet with accounts, respectively video streams, on Myspace and YouTube (see 5.3.4). Here, the group (Myspace) or private persons (YouTube) make songs (Myspace) and video clips (YouTube) publicly accessible from the band's 8th album.

Another recent development is the attempt of an all-female stringband, the MAUNA STRINGBAND in Port Vila, which was formed by ten women from Emao and Nguna in January 2001.[348] Some of them had already been members of all-female stringbands in the 1980s. At the time of fieldwork, the band members planned to record an album. After the completion of my fieldwork, other all-female stringbands arose in Port Vila; Monika Stern mentions the group SARAVANUA (2007: 170).

In Port Vila, one comes across older, well-known and still active stringbands like MAGAWIARUA and TOKOTAKIA (the members of both groups originate from Emao Island). In 2003, the pop group NOISY BAND, the former NOISY BOYS, a famous stringband from the southern island Tanna, came to Vila and caused a sensation with an elaborated pop show at the Fest'Napuan, even including brass instruments.[349] The band was a stringband up until the year 2000 and then it restarted as a pop group in October 2001. The NOISY BAND stayed with their family in the part of town called Holen and performed at various concerts, for example at the Ex-FOL.

There are also a couple of young groups that hold on to the names of their fathers' and uncles' popular stringbands like SOUWIA (Emao Island), WESTERN BOYS (Emae Island), LUMBUKUTI

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[346] The song was composed by Alphons Jack who is not a group member but who sold the song to DAUSAKE.
[347] "Lav Blong Mama" (Vol. 5), Vanuata Productions, December 2003.
[348] Maria Manua had the idea to form the group after she went to New Zealand in 2000 with several other women. Apart from other church activities, they also made music there (interview with Maria Manua 2002).
[349] This gig was the second public appearance after a first concert at the Tafea Provincial Games earlier in 2003.

BEACH BOYS (Tongoa), STONEY BOYS (Southeast Ambrym), LUKUNAEVA (from Emua village, Efate) and TOKORUA LOKOL STRING BAND (from Pele Island). Some of these are referred to as the YANG (Young) SOUWIA, YOUNG WESTERN BOYS or, as in the case of LAUTANO, LAUTANO II. The latter was founded on a music night of the youth of Nguna and Pele in Vila in 2000, and the band members' families come from two villages on the island of Nguna.

On occasion, YANG SOUWIA divides its members into two different groups; the other one is then called LAURUA STRINGBAND. The band is thus able to play at two venues at the same time – while one group entertains at a hotel, the other half is free to play at a fundraising event, for example. The group was initially split up to increase the chances of winning a competition in 2001; while SOUWIA was not successful, LAURUA at least won the third prize.

Of course, there are also stringbands in Luganville, one of them being TOTAS LOCAL STRINGBAND, which was formed in 2000 after an extensive police operation, the infamous 'Operation Klinim Not' (see Chapter 6.2.2.1).

Around November, stringbands from the islands come to the capital to stay for some time and to participate at the festival Fest'Nalega (see 4.5.3), to record a new album, or both. They play at concerts around town to promote their album releases before Christmas.[350] Among the rural stringbands which come to town to play as many concerts as possible and then go back to the island are, for example, NAAHU TRIBES from Nduindui area (West Ambae).[351]

Releases of stringband music include some productions of the Vanuatu Kaljoral Senta, such as "Lake Siwi" from the STONEY BOYS (2002), "Onesua Golden Jubilee" from (Yang) SOUWIA STRINGBAND (2003) and "Vanuatu the only Destination, Lokol String Band. Vol: 3" from TOKORUA (2003). The recordings of TOROTUA STRING BAND were completed in February 2004.

Countless stringbands only perform within their island communities and never seem to get the opportunity of recording an album, such as SUWALO BOYS from West Ambrym or VUSI BOYS from Southeast Ambae.[352] Comparatively unknown stringbands gain public attention through the publication of YouTube videos by tourists (see 5.2.3 & 5.3.4). Another example for a comparatively unknown stringband which gained some attention through the media is the CD "Miusik Long Narafala Saed Blong Wol" by the LAEF KASTOM STRINGBAN, which was recorded during a stay of the German anthroplologists Thorolf Lipp and Martina Kleinert in

[350] The same applies to some pop groups.
[351] This band was founded in 2002.
[352] Other, less-known stringbands performing in Port Vila are FATEMAUNA, NGUNAMAO and many more.

Bunlap, South Pentecost.[353] They went there to prepare an exhibition in Munich, Germany, and to collect material which led to the publication of a film and a book.[354]

My ni-Vanuatu friends enthusiastically reported of a new style which came up in Vila's stringband scene, connected to the name SHAKURA. Judging from the album "Wind of Change" (Bistaveos Productions, s.a.), this group indeed brings a wind of change to stringband music.

The albums produced and released by the theatre group Wan Smolbag ("Vot Long Pati Ia!", 2000 & "Democracy Dreams", 2001) include contributions by some of Vanuatu's most popular pop musicians, along with the stringbands TOKOTAKIA STRING BAND and FATUANA MAHTUA. This combination of *pop miusik* and stringband music on the same cassette album is exceptional.

Although *pop miusik* and stringband music are separate spheres (as far as style, instrumentation and other aspects are concerned), a look at musicians' networks reveals several relations and overlappings (in terms of people involved) between the genres. One such 'network chain' may serve as illustration: the young acapella group AMBASSADORS, composed of 17-year old boys who sing predominantely religious songs, sometimes play together with a guitarist at Hotel Le Lagon. This guitarist, a man from Kiribas, plays at times in the band of VANESSA QUAI, sometimes also in a duo with guitarist Sarabera 'Saka' Sakaria. SAKA, once member of the stringband TUKI IMERE, played as a studio guitarist lead guitar for an album of DAUSAKE. ALSINA GARAE also recorded with DAUSAKE as a guest singer. Both Alsina Garae and Saka are members of the group SIMPLY STRINGS. Other members of SIMPLY STRINGS are also members of the group XXSQUAD, and so forth. Thus, the practice of music-making plays a role in the construction of social networks.

Among the musicians who are active in both realms, *pop miusik* and stringband music, is ALBEA NALISA (who plays occasionally with the stringband FUTUNA MAHTUA at the Blue Water Island Resort). In an interview, he referred to stringband songs as the "original" songs of his home community.[355] Many musicians who play *pop miusik*, among them members of

[353] The title of the CD ("Music from the other side of the world") as well as the liner notes in German clearly show that this publication is for audiences and customers in Germany and not Vanuatu.

[354] "Auf Augenhöhe? Von Begegnungen mit der Südsee und angewandter Ethnologie" (Dietrich Reimer Verlag & Arcadia Filmproduktion, 2015). The author of the work at hand contributed the soundtrack and also has an appearance with his own group (FASFOWOD STRINGBAND) in this film. FASFOWOD STRINGBAND also performed at the opening of the exhibition in Munich. To my delight, we had the opportunity to play spontaneously together with a young musician from Vanuatu who came as part of a delegation of men from Bunlap.

[355] He said verbatim: "*Mi stap plei pop miusik, be stringban… mi stil holem taet* original *singsing blong mifala ya*".

NEW ETHNIC and HUARERE, assured me that they can easily switch to stringband music when required.

The musicians in Port Vila are naturally influenced by international pop music. The most important influences are listed in Chapter 4. The people living in Port Vila, and especially musicians, are very interested in other Melanesian musicians who come to perform in Vanuatu.[356] Occasionally, musicians from other places visit Vanuatu. In 2001 PETER POSA gave a concert. Posa came without a backing band and engaged ni-Vanuatu musicians, among them the nephew of senior stringband musician Kalo Daniel (LUMBUKUTI BEACH BOYS) who, as Daniel, played the mandoline. Tours of foreign musicians are, for example, organised by the French language and cultural centre Alliance Française and by the charitable association Further Arts.

After 2000, the importance of Fest'Napuan even increased from year to year. This festival is of greatest importance for the music scene in Vanuatu, as musicians aim to prepare their repertoire as best possible for the event. The organisers encourage diversity in music – especially since the festival incorporated the 'Festival of Praise' (choirs) for the first time in 2002 and then, in addition, the 'Fest'Nalega' (stringbands) from 2003 on, making the event a four-day spectacle. On the first day, usually a Thursday in October or November when the weather is still cool and the cyclone season is yet to come, the festival begins with the Fest'Nalega (see 4.5.3). *Nalega* means music in the language of North-Efate and its offshore-islands.

Performance venues in Port Vila include Club Vanuatu, Waterfront Bar, Club Imperial, and Trader Vic's. The latter is fussy about its audience and usually only hosts concerts of expatriate groups, such as LOW BROW.[357] At the Ex-FOL all sorts of events by the various communities in town take place, such as music nights of schools, talent nights of various groups, boxing and concerts.

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[356] Among these have been LAISA VULAKORO from Fiji, as well as singer SHARZY and the group APPRENTICE from the Solomon Islands, who toured Vanuatu in November 2002. Most musicians from overseas tour Vanuatu on occasion of Fest'Napuan.

[357] However, I once attended a concert of the ni-Vanuatu pop group SIMPLY STRINGS.

3 The Genre *stringban miusik* and Its Musical Characteristics

"[…] the "hybrid" has become a new species" (Kartomi 1981: 233).

This dissertation offers an interpretation of the musical genre with respect to identities in Vanuatu. Because of this focus, some musical aspects of stringband music are not addressed in detail. However, for a better understanding of the topic it is necessary to give some basic information about the musical structure of most stringband songs. 3.1 is about the learning and teaching of stringband music as well as about efforts to preserve the 'musical heritage'. The remainder of this chapter describes the 'musical text of stringband': style, instrumentation, form and arrangement, rhythm, harmony and composing.

I do not make the attempt to trace back the musical characteristics of stringband music to their prevailing influences, some of whose sources were mentioned in 2.2. As far as processes of intercultural musical synthesis are concerned, I am with Kartomi who writes:

> "It is not that the whole equals the sum of its parts […]. If it were simply a matter of addition, then the elements that were added together could logically be subtracted from the new whole and be identifiable again in their original form. But "acculturation, like any other phenomenon of cultural dynamics, is not reversible" (Herskovits 1972: 171). It serves no useful purpose to try and disentangle the musical elements from their new cultural matrix and trace them backwards, because they are intermeshed and reorganized on entirely new and specific lines" (Kartomi 1981: 233).

In this work, I restrict transcriptions to some examples. This is not least because of some shortcomings of Western notation (especially concerning other musics than Western art music). Sound – one of the most important features of music – is either not at all or is badly represented in notation systems.[358] My objective is to write this text in a way that is also comprehensible for the 'ethnomusicological layperson'. The examples of transcribed music given in the appendix are meant to verify my statements and to give additional information for those readers who are familiar with standard Western musical notation.[359]

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[358] Charles Seeger emphasises two other problems attached to Western notation of music: "First, we single out what appear to us to be structures in the other music that resemble structures familiar to us in the notation of the Occidental art and write these down, ignoring everything else for which we have no symbols. Second, we expect the resulting notation to be read by people who *do not carry the tradition of the other music*" (Seeger 1958: 186, italics by Seeger).

[359] The transcriptions depict the tones according to pitch, the point in time they appear and their duration. They naturally cannot reproduce other characteristics of sound resulting from the singers' individual voices or the physical qualities of the musical instruments. Fluctuations in the intonation inevitably have to be flattened, and

People tend to find monotony in musics when they lack the prevailing cultural context of the genre. In highlighting some special features of stringband music, I aim to give an introduction to its aesthetics. I focus upon the delimiting musical features which stand out especially in stringband music as compared to other musics (of Vanuatu and elsewhere). In the following subchapters, I describe the attributes of stringband music which characterise the genre as a whole, while also highlighting some special features that are restricted to particular areas or groups.

3.1 Music Education and Preservation

> "People and musical instruments are renewable resources" (Crowe 1998: 692).

There are and have been some efforts towards the teaching of music other than *kastom miusik* and church music, especially in Vila and Luganville. However different these approaches are, stringband music is not in the curricula. While religious music is much practised by music groups at churches and within families, there is no formal education for stringband music. The vast majority of musicians nevertheless first start playing in a stringband before playing any other (popular) music. Henry Toka, member of TROPIC TEMPO puts it like this:

> "Professionally I never played stringband music. I played stringband music, I think all ni-Vanuatu who are interested in music go through this. When one is […] young... and has the chance to play a guitar, one plays with some friends […] or a ukulele, like I started with the ukulele. Then there is the family stringband, small boys, cousins, brothers, just at the house, in the village on the island".[360]

Young stringband musicians usually grow into a working band and eventually take over from their predecessors.[361] Of course, this means that the young take on the old songs of the previous generation. When I was interviewing the stringband veteran George Pakoa from MAKURA TOKOLAU, one of his small children prompted him as he tried to remember some

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rhythmic details as well as slight deviations are lost. Because of these shortcomings, the sound examples on the enclosed CD illustrate some of the most important aspects.

[360] "Professionally *mi neva plei stringban ya. Mi pleim stringban, mi ting se evri man Vanuatu we i intres long miusik hem i pastru long ples ya. Taem hem i* […] *yang… hem i gat janis blong holem wan gita, i plei wetem sam fren* […] *o wan yukalele, olsem mi mi stat long yukalele. Afta i gat famle stringban, ol smolsmol boe wetem ol kasin, ol brata long haos nomo, long vilej long aelan* […] (interview with Henry Toka 2006).

[361] Learning songs 'en passant' is a principle well-established in the field of traditional musics in Vanuatu.

lyrics he had devised long before the child was born. The heredity of repertoire and membership to a group evokes the realm of traditional music.

Musicians in Port Vila often name the 'Music Club' at Malapoa College as the place where they first came into contact with the equipment which is needed to play *pop miusik*.[362] However, there are no music lessons at Malapoa College. Instead, older students or those who already play an instrument, share their knowledge with the others outside normal lesson time.

Charles Pierce, a geography teacher at the school who initiated the Music Club in 1979, told me that his students are generally very talented and have no problems singing in harmony – in fact, he mentioned it being difficult to find someone who cannot sing.[363]

The musician and former primary school teacher, Bob Kuao, taught all school subjects at French primary schools, including music. Each day he sang French children's songs (for example 'Au Claire de la Lune') for about ten or twenty minutes – even in three part harmonies (*soprano*, *alto* and *tena* in his words). Sometimes he accompanied the singing with a guitar. At the time of fieldwork, some volunteers from Japan were teaching at schools in Luganville. One of them, a young woman, was teaching music. As these examples show, the music lessons at public schools (anglophone and francophone) are very much dependent on the personal interests of individual teachers.

Choirs, especially those of the SDA, are the breeding ground for trained singers, both male and female. As in other parts of Melanesia, singers learn to sing written music in the choirs with the fa-so-la method (see Saumaiwai 1994: 94 for Fiji & Manuel 1988: 242 for PNG). Crowe mentions that "Ni-Vanuatu […] sing […] from numeral notation or by ear often with choral precision […]" (Crowe in Kaeppler 1998: 691). At the Lycée Antoine de Bougainville, students are taught tonic sol-fa with a piano. Some guitarists use European concepts of harmonies but are not entirely familiar with the enharmonic equivalents.

There are only a handful of people who are able to read staff notation and these are the members of the military brass band. Sergeant David Daniel from the VMF camp in Vila is the only ni-Vanuatu who studied music at the Faculty of Creative Arts at the University of Papua New Guinea in Port Moresby and graduated with an advanced diploma.[364] In Australia he also

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[362] Malapoa College is a boarding school which originated from the merging of the former British Secondary School and the Kawenu Teachers College.

[363] The Music Club has a president. In 1983 and 1984, musician Moses Stevens held this position. Nigel Quai, father and manager of the singer VANESSA QUAI, was another pioneer of the Music Club.

[364] Daniel had a scholarship from the Ministry of Education. He studied from 1988 to 1992. At the university, teachers from the USA, Singapore, Japan and Australia gave lessons not only in old European music, but also musics from East Asia. He had singing and piano lessons (interview with David Daniel 2003).

learnt to use the basic functions of the software Music Creator 1 to write staff notation. His colleague, Warrant Officer John Martin, founded the brass band at Tiroas Barracks in Luganville with much personal commitment, testing his music recruits with a system he devised on his own. After having passed an international standard exam in New Zealand in 1999, he also uses this test for the musicians of his brass band.[365]

Stringband musicians generally do not use any kind of notation for their music, except for written song lyrics. Constant repetition is rather the usual way of remembering melodies and songs. Crowe stresses the "power of memory" of many older ni-Vanuatu: "Local power of recall is often near-total, so that hearing a song and its text once may be enough to fix it" (Crowe 1998: 259; see also page 692).

Those less privileged than the students of Malapoa College start playing a few chords on the ukulele and the guitar, the most accessible instruments.[366] Just as choir singing is important for the singers, learning by copying from others is important for instrumentalists (to copy is *kopi* or *boroem*, *borem* in Bislama). The children and youth learn mainly through watching and listening while older relatives play. Strikingly, the overwhelming majority of my interlocutors stressed that they had not actually been shown how to play, but that they had simply observed and then experimented for themselves later.[367] Playing by ear and copying from cassettes is another way of learning to play an instrument. No special age is required when joining a stringband.

I was told the same story again and again in the recounting of several of my interlocutors: when the older youth and young men or fathers were doing their gardening, the younger boys (or girls) took the instruments and practised alone or in groups.[368] The story, as told by Moses Stevens (WESTERN BOYS), is typical: each afternoon, when his uncles, cousins and brothers came back from the garden, they took their guitars and ukuleles down to the beach, where they went swimming and played music, until one after the other they finally went home. Moses did not even go to school when he started playing the ukulele. He looked on as the older boys and

[365] He passed grade 6 of altogether 7 grades (interview with John Martin 2004).

[366] Some also have the possibility to use instruments from the church for playing religious popular music on drums, electric guitar and bass guitar, as well as on keyboards. In some churches, all the necessary equipment is available but the youth are allowed to use it only for church-related activities and religious music. For example, this is the case in the Nduindui area (west Ambae), in Emua village (north Efate), and for the followers of the Christian Mission Center (CMC) in Luganville.

[367] This is the case not only for widespread instruments like guitars and ukuleles, but also for exotic items such as mandolin banjos. Such an instrument was played by Kalo Daniel (LUMBUKUTI BEACH BOYS). Daniel said that there is a saying in Bislama: *Lanem mo save*, which is probably best translated as 'learning by doing'.

[368] When her brothers were working in the garden, Maria Manua (MAUNA STRINGBAND) played the *yukalele* and the guitar. Probably far more girls play stringband music in this way than becomes publicly known.

men played, and when they worked in the garden he took his chance. Sometimes he was caught playing and then got tested or was given some advice about how to play.

Another topic that often occurred in the interviews was the secrecy with which children had to proceed when practising with their elder relatives' instruments. TIM KALMET, for example, reported that his older brother took off the strings of his guitar when he went to Nouméa for schooling, meaning that Kalmet had to fasten on a couple of strings of fishing line. He got a beating when his brother came back to spend his school holidays on the island. Later, at the Lycée, Tim Kalmet secretly played the piano but got punished when caught doing so.

There are some entertaining and exciting stories concerning schooling and music learning about FUTUNA FATUANA. According to FUTUNA FATUANA's contract with the Iririki Island Resort, there always have to be at least twelve musicians/dancers for the 'Cultural Night' on Tuesday, which includes stringband entertainment and a display of Futunese *kastom danis* for an audience of tourists. In the cases of the group not having enough members, it had to recruit two boys, Ernest and Michael, then students at the boarding school Lycée d'Antoine de Bougainville. Participating in the stringband was considered even more important than following the rules at school. During their evening studies, they climbed out of the window and hurried to the hotel to join the group, which meant regularly enduring work on Saturdays as a punishment for slipping away on some Tuesdays. David, the member of the group who told me this story, pointed out the fact that both of them had learnt to play stringband music as well as learnt to dance their traditional dances in this way. In David's words: *ol lokol instrumen, yu no lanem. Yu jes waj* ("the local instruments you do not learn. You just watch"). Nowadays, these two are the leaders of the group.

The most important role models for the small boys and young stringband musicians are older male relatives; fathers, uncles[369], cousins and brothers. Often, older stringband musicians, sometimes from a band's previous generation, instruct (*trenem blong plei* in Bislama) a youngsters' group for a while before they are capable of taking over for themselves. Skilled senior musicians can serve as idols for the young. When, for example, Moses Stevens was asked to join the E'S BOYS at Malapoa College,[370] he hesitated at first because the boys'

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[369] In Bislama, the term *papa* refers to father or to uncle on the father's side (father's brother) or to the mother's sister's husband. The father's younger brother is referred to as *smolpapa*. The maternal uncle and the paternal aunt's husband is called *angkel* or *popo*. *Angkel* is also a term of address used by children and youth to refer respectfully to an adult family friend (see Crowley 1998: 35, 180, 465).

[370] In the late 1970s there were about three stringbands at Malapoa College that competed with each other. The E'S BOYS recorded an album in the school's language lab, which was used before by Radio Vila. The recording was made by a man from Malekula, Sammy Davis, who had worked at Burns Philp before. The cassette he

fathers (or uncles) were part of the group MAKURA TOKOLAU. Such was his respect for this famous group. Boarding schools are a special breeding ground for stringbands.[371]

Boys are typically born into a family in which stringband music is already being produced and I suspect that the majority of the male population of Vanuatu over twelve is capable of playing three basic chords on the ukulele. The clearly defined form of stringband songs concerning instrumentation and arrangement surely helps to master the basic, most important techniques, in a comparatively short time. However, the popularity of stringband music varies according to church affiliation. Some churches discourage the practice of playing stringband music (along with other secular activities such as drinking liquor, drinking kava, smoking and public dancing). However, making music and musicianship in Vanuatu is generally respected and supported.[372] Many ni-Vanuatu musicians play more than one instrument; it is rather the rule that people are multi-instrumentalists. I assume that this is due to the practice of stringband rehearsing and performances, where musicians frequently change instruments, and also due to the fact that the stringband's instruments often belong to the group as a whole and not to its individual members.

Some left-handed musicians, like Tim Kalmet, play the guitar the other way around without changing the strings. Kalmet had to learn to play that way, because he did not have his own instrument, but only occasionally had the possibility to use other people's guitars.[373]

There are yet other ways of acquiring the ability to play the guitar. Bob Kuao told me about a supernatural incident that happened to him on his home island, Tanna. Like most ni-Vanuatu guitarists, he already played the ukulele, and a relative had taught him a bit of how to play the banjo too. One day, on the 22nd of October 1966, he went up Mt Tukosmera; a place that was *tabu* (forbidden) to go to. However, he was stubborn ("*stronghed*") enough to go and stay overnight on the mountain. With him he took an axe, a cover, something to eat and the guitar of his half-brother. Although Kuao knew no one who had ever spent the whole, cold night on the mountain, he nevertheless went to pray to a power connected to the mountain and to

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recorded was sold at Burns Philp Supermarket. The students' stringband E'S BOYS was not political, the boys playing rather in order to socialise and for the fun of competing in competitions. When they left school, each member went his own way (interview with Moses Stevens 2004).

[371] Quoting from a text of a cassette booklet of Richard Dellman (1977), Michael Webb writes with respect to PNG: "In educational institutions throughout the country, particularly schools not situated in or near the student's village homes, string bands provided an unequaled social and cultural context for reinforcing cultural solidarity in the face of temporary displacement" (Webb 1998: 139).

[372] Hayward (2009: 64) points to the prestige associated with musicianship.

[373] When the young Kalmet performed his first concert in May 1963, an older boy sat next to him to hold the body of the big guitar, while Kalmet played at the instrument's neck (interview with Timteo Kalmet 2003).

"meditate" about how he would play the guitar. After he had made the four-hour walk back to the house, he listened to someone playing the guitar on the radio and tried to play it himself. He succeeded (interview with Bob Kuao 2003).

During my fieldwork, I spoke with several ni-Vanuatu who ran private music schools in the past or who still operate them in Port Vila and Luganville. As they predominantly focused or still focus on popular music, I do not address them here.[374] However, it is worth mentioning Falau Jacob's written proposal for the application to raise funds for the founding of a new music school in Luganville. Jacob's proposal clearly reflects the expectations which ni-Vanuatu often connect to music-making, namely as an occupation and as furthering prospects for young people – instead of hanging around or getting into trouble (interview with Falau Jacob 2004 and his written proposal).

Even if many people might agree that stringband music is a part of ni-Vanuatu culture to such an extent that it is not endangered at all, some stringband musicians hold a different view. Just as *kastom miusik* needs to be taken care of to keep it alive, the young musicians should not forget about the older songs, styles and traditions in stringband music. Joel Kaltang from SOUWIA, for example, has set it as his goal to collect all songs composed by the five most important stringbands from his island, Emao (SOUWIA, TOKOTAKIA, MAGAWIARUA, SARATOKOWIA and SARA POKASI), to publish them in a book and thus preserve them.[375] He gives the following reason: "[…] I think that if I am the only one who knows this music, then it will be lost when I die. Then no child can learn to play it".[376] In fact, there is some danger that younger musicians could forget about older songs because older cassettes can hardly be found anymore. According to some older musicians, young musicians tend to forget about the older songs once there are new ones. However, I found that even young stringbands generally have remarkably many old songs in their repertoire. This is due to the usual way of learning stringband music: the older musicians pass on the repertoire to the upcoming youngsters

[374] These are first and foremost John 'Beri' Willie, Samson Andrews 'Fender' and Falau Jacob. Since 2002, there is a private music school in Vila downtown, called the Music Academy. It is run by Elizabeth Lysons from Australia. One of the offers is the Music Appreciation Club which focuses on music theory and the history of Western art music (for example unit 1: the Baroque period). The fees of the Music Academy are expensive for Vanuatu standards; the target group is expatriate children. VANESSA QUAI, the most popular pop singer from Vanuatu, had lessons at the Music Academy, paid for by a sponsor.

[375] Kaltang would like to publish the lyrics. Old stringband recordings from the 1970s and 1980s should be stored in the archive of the VKS. His latter wish has meanwhile been put to practice in form of the string band music preservation project of the VKS (see 3.2). Moses Stevens reported of another collection of songs from his father and from Moses' grandfather, compiled by his father. Unfortunately, the biggest part of this collection was destroyed in a cyclone in 1972.

[376] "[…] *mi stap blong tingbaot se sapos mi wan nomo mi save miusik ya i stap be* then *sapos mi ded bae i lus.* Then *bambae i no save gat wan pikinini pikimap*" (interview with Joel Kaltang 2002).

within the group.[377] Joel Kaltang cares about stringband music in a similar way to how others care and talk about their *kastom miusik*:

> "We talk to the people to create awareness about this local music. This music is an identity, it is a unique tropical music of Vanuatu, and there is only one of its kind. And that is why I say that if – especially on Efate – we do not talk to the young people about this music, then they will rather play the keyboard, they will play other kinds of music, modern styles of music" (some repetitions from the original quotation are left out here, see below).[378]

Kaltang, who fears the neglect of stringband music in the face of *pop miusik* ("modern styles of music"), told me about his plans to set up the Malamow Music Association, which is also meant to promote stringband music amongst young people.[379] He envisages an 'awareness-tour' around the island of Efate, in which he would hold meetings in each community and talk about the history and importance of stringband music. Committees would need to be set up in each village as part of the association's structure. In addition, a festival would be held once a year. This vision has already become reality with the first Fest'Nalega taking place on the 13th November 2003.

Some older musicians stress the fact that one has to preserve former ways of playing stringband music in order to be able to compare these to current styles and to study the development of the genre in the future. Not only musicians from the older generation voice the need for continuity. When I asked the young members of TOTAS LOCAL STRINGBAND about what they like about stringband music, I got the following answer:

> "I put it like this: what we are born with, we probably cannot let go of, it will be always with us. Because of this it happens that if a child is born tomorrow, it will [later] have to play the guitar. Because this is [the child's] local style. [The local style] is always there. People are always interested in it. Because they are born with it."[380]

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[377] Even if young musicians are eager to be part of a 'tradition' and to learn the older songs, this does not mean that they always know the details of the history of their own groups.

[378] "[…] *yumi toktok long ol pipol* […] *mekem* awareness *long olgeta* 'bout *lokol miusik ya.* […] *miusik ya hem i wan aedentiti, hem i wan* […] tropical *miusik blong Vanuatu we i nomo gat wan moa*, there is only *wan*. And *wan nomo* and *i nomo gat*. And that's why *mi talem se sipos espeseli* on Efate, *sipos yumi no stap toktok long ol yang pipol* about this *miusik* then *oli go long kibod, oli go long ol narafala miusik*, modern *stael* of *miusik*" (interview with Joel Kaltang, 2002).

[379] Among other things, the lack of financial means has so far kept him from doing so. The association's name is a combination of *malala*, a vernacular term for *nasara* (Bislama), meaning dancing ground, from which the music evolves, and *mow*, Kaltang's home island (Emao).

[380] "*Bae mi talem olsem se, wanem we yumi bon wetem, ating bambae yumi no save lego, bae i stap wetem yumi ol taem. Hemia i mekem se taem we tumora wan pikinini i bon be i mas holem gita nao. From hem i lokol stael blong hem. Hem i stap oltaem. Intres blong hem, olsem… i stap wetem ol man oltaem. From hem i bon wetem.*"

3.2 Styles

The differences between the numerous substyles of stringband music (*stael* in Bislama) practised in Vanuatu extend in space and time. Old stringband tapes from the 1970s exhibit a different sound from the music these days, and stringbands from the southern island of Futuna, for example, sound different from the groups from the Shepherds Islands in the centre of the archipelago. Today's distinct styles are the result of a strong pronunciation of local particularities, as well as of the cultivation of repertoires and playing styles handed down as 'traditions' within the communities. In general, people recognise and pronounce continuities in style if groups are related; such is the case with MAKURA TOKOLAU and the WESTERN BOYS, for example. Notions of intellectual property rights also play their part (see 5.1.3). Stringbands are often sealed off from outsiders. For example, a group from Emao would normally not take someone from Pentecost as a member (see 7.3). Groups in this way keep and hand down their styles, which are often jealously guarded for fear that others could win money with them. Apart from trying to protect their own style, groups fall back on the boys of their own community to ensure continuity and purity in style. Groups nevertheless copy other group's styles, particularly those of famous stringbands who publish their music on cassettes. It is very difficult to document the stylistic change in stringband music because older recordings are rare, having either been lost or having fallen victim to the tropical climate. Moreover, there are no studies about the subject one could fall back upon. It is thus necessary to rely on older interlocutors and versions of older songs that are still part of the repertoire of recent stringbands.

Most recordings are available on music tape only, and older cassettes are often of poor quality. Many musicians no longer have copies of their own albums. It is rather a rule than not that the musicians do not have a copy of their own albums. During research I sometimes asked people, e.g. bus drivers, to lend me their private tapes so that I could copy them. Many Musicians think that Radio Vanuatu archives a collection, but this is not really the case as many cassettes have not been returned. Thanks to Paul Gardissat, however, I was given access to some old recordings. Stringband veteran Joel Kaltang had asked Paul Gardissat to gain access to his old master tapes of SOUWIA. His aim was to preserve the material for future generations (see 3.1). He also approached Ralph Regenvanu, then director of the VKS, and his request was answered

in the end through the stringband music preservation project, in which Gardissat's recordings have been digitalised by the VKS staff and stored in the national sound archive.[381]

The substyles of stringband music have no special names but are mainly associated with the community, area or island of origin of the group. Most of the more successful stringbands remain in the capital, Port Vila, and many of them originate from Efate or its northern offshore islands (especially Emao and Nguna) and the Shepherd Islands (especially Tongoa and Emae). Since the 1970s and still today, popular stringbands from these areas have been setting trends. One of the characteristics of contemporary groups from the SHEFA province is the singing style (see 3.7). Groups like TOTAS LOCAL STRINGBAND from Luganville cover (*kopi* in Bislama) the songs of DAUSAKE, MAGAWIARUA and SARATOKOWIA, and even compose their own songs in the style of north Efate. As many do, the members of this band hold the view that people in (and around) Efate started stringband music, which has since then become a national commodity. For example, I found some boys in west Ambrym covering vernacular songs from Efate stringbands without an understanding of the lyrics. Apart from this repertoire, however, their own songs sound distinctive. An interesting flow occurs between rural and urban styles when successful rural bands move to town and record their songs. The popular urban albums spread to the rural communities on the islands.[382] The style of Efate and the Shepherds Islands dominantes and is most successful commercially. However, there are surely some 'hidden treasures' among Vanuatu's rural stringbands with different singing styles, using more chords and local percussion instruments and with innovative and creative compositions, which are however not put on the market but are only performed in the village context.

VUSI BOYS from southeast Ambae create a particular sound by playing *kastom* songs (*sawagoro* and *bolo*) on the stringband's instruments and by using *kastom miusik* rhythms and the corresponding small percussion instruments in their own compositions. Some other groups do the same with the prevailing local *kastom miusik* of their home islands; thus stringband styles differ from island to island and from place to place, reflecting indigenous musical traditions. Different styles of stringband music around Vanuatu are also spiced up through the

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[381] I was initially involved in the planning of this project to some degree, but I left the country after fieldwork before the first albums were transferred to CD. See http://www.vanuatuculture.org/news/list-all-categories/11-national-photo-film-sound-archive/26-launch-of-completed-string-band-music-preservation-project (last accessed on the 3rd May 2013).

[382] Although the style of Efate stringbands remaining in Vila might be perceived as 'urban', it does not differ from the music of the stringbands of north Efate which they play in their home villages.

various speech melodies of the diverse vernacular languages. Among the principal parameters causing variation in style are rhythm, singing style and ways of striking the guitars and ukuleles. For all the different traditions within the genre or individual styles of the groups, one can say that 'dynamic' is a dimension largely neglected. The different voices and instruments are either there or not – musicians start when their part begins but seldom modify the volume of their singing or playing.

A particular distinctive stringband style is played by the groups of Futuna Island. Most striking is the large instrumentation of the groups which cannot be found in other places (see 3.3.4). Paul Gardissat, who witnessed and supported the upcoming of the Futuna stringbands, told me that some stringband musicians from other parts of the country completely rejected the affiliation of these groups to the stringband genre – because of the difference in style but also out of envy. There are purists in the stringband genre who want to protect the style from change and thus oppose the introduction of new features. Meanwhile, the Futuna style seems to be widely accepted as a variation of Vanuatu stringband music. However, competition between the groups is still an important aspect.

ERRO STRINGBAND from Erromango was influenced by guitar picking styles from PNG and used a lead guitar player who played a second, decorative melody throughout the song.[383] The novelty, according to John Apei, was to pick the strings (*pikim string*) instead of strumming them (*stramem*) as other stringbands did in 1978. He told me that once a cheeky listener remarked: "You guys play just on one string" ("*Yufala i plei long wan string nomo*"). While the other group members were cross, Apei said: "No, it's true, that's one string, this is a different style" ("*no hem i stret, hem i wan string ya, defren stael ya*").[384] Later, other stringbands also employed a lead guitar, for example FATUANA MAHTUA or DAUSAKE, a group that features solo guitarist SAKA ("Love blong mama", Vanuata Productions, December 2003). The successful stringbands VATDORO and HUARERE from north Pentecost established a characteristic Pentecost style. Distinctive stylisic variants are also ascribed to stringbands from Aneityum. In addition to these regional styles, there are stylistic differences between the stringbands coming from the same region which account for their individual trademark. In the case of Erromango, a bigger island in the south of the archipelago, one single stringband

[383] One member, Allan Lafuki, went to a theological training centre in PNG and married a Papuan woman.

[384] In general, some ni-Vanuatu seem to be fond of developing particular 'styles'. Maybe this is also one way of making fun of the cultural diversity of the country. If, for example, someone does something in a special or unusual way, people say jokingly: "*hem i gat teknik blong hem*" ("he's got his own technique"). See also Crowley 1995: 244.

stands for the regional style: ERRO STRINGBAND. This is due to the lack of other 'serious' stringbands, as explained to me by Api. In Erromango, stringbands are formed when required for a celebration, but afterwards dissolve as quickly as they appeared.

Some musicians from the centre of the archipelago regard their style as superior to those from other parts of the country. They argue that the strong tradition of stringband music there produces stringbands of better quality, like SOUWIA, who toured around the islands and motivated and influenced groups on the other islands (for example Jeffrey Thomson, interview 2003, expressed this view). Further research into the different styles would be desirable and would hopefully contribute to a better idea of what the constituent parts of the various styles of stringband music in Vanuatu are.

The 'sound' of a stringband (as well as of any other ensemble of musicians) is dependent on various factors such as the technical qualities of musical instruments, the timbre of voices, techniques of singing and playing, and, in the case of recorded music, the choice of microphones, the size of the recording room in the studio, the recording hard- and software with its sound effects and so on. 'Sound', in this comprehensive sense, is sometimes understood as 'style', as Albrecht Schneider points out (Schneider 2002: 110 f.).

3.3 Instrumentation

The sonic impact of a stringband performance depends greatly on the musical instruments used. In this text, it has often been pronounced that *pop miusik* and stringband music are separated spheres, which is particularly apparent when one sees which musical instruments are used. Even where electricity is available, young people normally do not have the financial means at their disposal to buy the instruments. The equipment that can be bought in Vanuatu is usually of poor quality or at best, mediocre, yet expensive. The Fung Kuei store in Vila downtown used to sell musical instruments; nowadays, the Sound Centre is the best (and for a while was the only) address where one could buy musical instruments and equipment. The Sound Centre sells foremost Yamaha products, which are expensive for local standards. Since September or October 2003, Microtech also sells Yamaha keyboards and equipment obtained from Singapore, thus bands now have the opportunity to start with a lower initial capital. A band needs about 1 million vt (7 143 €) for equipment from the Sound Centre, whereas they

can purchase the most important equipment for around 200 000 vt (1 429 €) at Microtech.[385] Good quality instruments and equipment have to be bought abroad and are often in use for decades. Consequently, pop musicians constantly discuss their inadequate equipment.

To run a pop group in rural settings involves transportation issues. Moreover, traditionally built houses are not ideal for storing electronic equipment in the face of dust, water and insects. Besides, the availability of electricity is an important precondition for *pop miusik* groups.[386] In the following, attention will be turned to the material culture of stringband music, its instruments, and how they are made. Another area of inquiry is the way in which these instruments are played.

Differing preferences in sound are among the most important characteristics in making musical genres stand out against each other. When listening to stringband music, one soon gets the impression that there is little range in variety of sound. If a new stringband song is presented, there is usually no surprise in terms of sound. Of course this is also true for other genres – experienced listeners know what to expect. But in stringband music the variation is particularly restricted, when compared to popular music. On the other hand, a stringband creates an outstanding timbre because musicians build many of their acoustic instruments themselves. Stringbands may use more electronic equipment in the future if they have more access to it – recent examples are the employment of a keyboard by the YOUNG WESTERN BOYS and of sound effects for vocals by SHAKURA. Up to now, musicians do not substitute the *busbes* with an electric bass guitar (which is far easier to intonate). In stringbands, those instruments which are also used in other music, namely the guitars, are modified and played in a special way, and the quality of the soprano voice typically has a timbre which distinguishes it from the sound of the voice in other music.

Stringbands use hybrid instrumentations: part of the instruments are self-built while others are imported from overseas. Most instruments can be made by the musicians themselves or by people around them. The groups usually have two to four guitars, a *yukalele* (ukulele), a *busbes* (tea chest bass), and various percussion instruments (*seka*, *bongo*, *rasras*). The ensembles vary in size and instrumentation, with some groups having even more guitars. A

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[385] Personal communication with the manager of Microtech. According to Francis Clement from the Sound Centre, the price is always the first criterion for the customers – the cheap products sell better than the more expensive ones. Deductibles are granted for good customers. On application, church communities are allowed a duty free exemption because they do not do business (in contrast to other bands which perform outside the church context).

[386] For Information on electricity supply in Vanuatu see the Statistical Yearbook 2002 (page 151) and the National Population Housing Census 2009 (pages 181-184).

few large stringbands have two *yukalele* players.[387] Some groups incorporate their local percussion instruments. However, Vanuatu's impressive log idiophones are completely absent in stringband music. If slit drums are used within stringband music, then these are small instruments made from bamboo. Anthropologist Sabine Hess told me about a stringband's performance on a beach in the Banks Islands. The group was joined by women standing in the sea who clapped rhythmically on the water.[388]

Depending on the preferences and style of the individual group (*tim*, *ban*, *stringban* or *grup* in Bislama), it has an optimum size which might vary due to the availability of musicians. There are a number of reasons why a group cannot perform with its proper line-up. An example would be at a concert of LAURUA STRINGBAND in the lounge of hotel Le Méridien: the group normally has eight members, but this time there were only about half because the others had already gone to the home island for Christmas. Nevertheless, the band had to perform to fulfil its contract. For a period of time, SOUWIA played in the smallest stringband line-up I came across, namely only four musicians. They recorded a cassette, only with a *busbes*, a ukulele and two guitars. One member, Lui Philip, told me that this was possible because the musicians were of a very professional level and "sounded like more members playing". At the time they also played concerts in this line-up (interview with Lui Philip 2003).

The line-up of many stringbands is rather loose, for reasons I touch upon in Chapter 7. Most of the performers play an instrument as well as sing. During a performance some instrumentalists switch instruments from song to song, especially those playing *seka* (a kind of tambourine, see below) and *busbes* because it is exhausting to play one of these instruments all the time during a long live performance. Sometimes individual musicians even leave the group and others jump in. In studio productions, those instrumentalists are chosen who are particularly good in their part but even then there are occasional changes. As musical instruments are scarce, musicians often use other people's instruments. Some musicians ascribe the lack of success to their lack of own instruments. Often, the instruments do not belong to individual members but are rather the possessions of the group as a whole. The instruments are usually stored at the

[387] For example, NAAHU TRIBES which have nine members, or the joint venture "Best of the Best" of MAGAWIARUA and SARATOKOWIA with even more members playing at a time. In the 1970s, VATDORO played with five to eight members, using up to five guitarists and sometimes two ukulele players. In the case of NAAHU TRIBES, the two *yukalele* players both play different patterns.

[388] According to Ammann, this practice can be found on many islands in north Vanuatu (see Ammann for photos taken by D. Becker, Ammann 2012: 117).

house of one of the members or at a hotel, where successful stringbands regularly perform and rehearse.

3.3.1 *busbes*

Technically, the *busbes* is a chordophone, however its 'neck' is not fixed but movable.[389] The soundbox consists of a tea chest (hence its other name, *kona bokis*, 'corner box'), with the bottom broken out. A short stick is put on one corner of the box. Stringbands buy empty Lipton tea chests at the general store in town (in Luganville they cost about 300 vt), however during my fieldwork this became difficult as the tea exporters had changed to using cardboard boxes instead. The VUSI BOYS use a segment of hollow stem of the sago palm, on which they have nailed a piece of plywood. A long stick is placed on the ground next to it. A thick cord is fastened at the upper end of the stick and in the midst of the plywood top.

The player is sitting on the chest or resting on it with one knee, while plucking the string with the thumb and one or two fingers. He varies the tension of the cord with the other arm through pushing the upper end of the stick that is put on one corner of the box, more or less away. I saw *busbes* players plucking the string with the right hand and holding the stick with the left hand, as well as the other way around. Often a corner of the box is raised using a flip-flop or a piece of wood to increase the volume.

It requires training to be able to hit the right pitch because any little variation of tension means variation in pitch. The player needs to develop a feeling for the strength with which he pushes the stick away as well as how far he needs to move it back when playing a low tone. Some groups pointed out excellent players to me and called them *jampion blong hem*, "it's [the *busbes*'] champion" or such. Members of the band NAAHU TRIBES said that one of them can play the *busbes* just like a guitar. This implies that playing a guitar with fixed frets is easy in comparison to playing the stringbands' bass instrument. The musicians explained to me that a bass player must also know how to play the guitar. Otherwise he would not be able to follow the arrangement properly and would not know how to play his bass part. A good *busbes* player can easily find his way into a new stringband arrangement.[390] However, this presupposes that

[389] Hornbostel and Sachs (1914) define chordophones as those instruments with strings that are stretched between fixed points. Even though the neck of the *busbes* can be positioned and removed from the resonance chamber, I find it reasonable to classify the instrument as a chordophone.

[390] Concerning spontaneous participation of a *busbes* player a musician said: "*Yu lisen nomo, afta yu mekem han blong yu i folem*" – "You just listen and then your hand follows [the arrangement]".

the player is familiar with the overall style. A stringband musician from Efate may find it difficult to join a stringband from Ambae which uses traditional *bolo* and *sawagoro* rhythms.

Many of these instruments are painted in shining colours. The four sides of the box are often painted with various writings. The name of the group is mostly displayed in the form of an oval band. Other writings exhibit the name of a hotel (where the group regularly performs), the island or area of origin, the year of an important competition, or other short writings. Some additionally show a picture of a flower and other decorative motifs. Figure 12 shows the *busbes* of the stringband VATDORO. Some sticks on which the cord is fastened have a head at their end which is purely ornamental.[391] Most sticks are quite straight; however some also use crooked ones, taken straight from the tree.

Even if an electric bass guitar is available, a stringband prefers its *busbes*. When MAKURA TOKOLAU and the BLACK BROTHERS experimented with modern instruments in stringband music (in 1986) they additionally used a keyboard and drums but acoustic guitars and *busbes* were not substituted by electric guitars and electric bass guitars.[392]

In Wuro (Craig Cove, West Ambrym) I met children building their own bass instruments. The first type corresponded to a *tin kerosin*, with a plastic bucket as a resonating body. The second consisted of a wooden board covering a hole in the ground and a stick connected to the board by a cord. Of course, this construction cannot be removed from its spot.

Typically, a stringband's smaller instruments – the *yukalele*, small percussion instruments and maybe a guitar – are stored in an upended *busbes*. Although many ni-Vanuatu and many visitors of Vanuatu regard the *busbes* as an 'endemic' instrument to the archipelago, the tea chest bass also appears in other parts of the world.[393]

[391] The shape of these extensions I saw here and there (for example with the band FUTUNA FATUANA), reminds one of the point of an ice hockey club or the head of the type of electric guitars used predominantly in heavy metal music.

[392] There are a few exceptions. Musician Henry Toka told me of an incident when both an electric bass guitar and an electric guitar were used within stringband music at a party. NANA STRING BAN (see Figure 10) apparently also used electric equipment in the 1970s.

[393] I saw an instrument from Mali, similar to the *busbes*, at the deposit of the Department of Ethnomusicology of the Ethnological Museum in Berlin (my colleague Maurice Mengel brought this to my attention). I also found an older man playing a tea chest bass in Germany, however he hardly reached the degree of sophistication in comparison to a *busbes* player because the different tones were badly intonated. Klaus Näumann reported of a similar bass instrument from Trinidad (personal communication).

3.3.2 *yukalele*

The ukulele first appeared in Hawaii around the year 1880 and was developed from the braguinha, a string instrument from the Island of Madeira (Portugal).[394] During the 1940s, ukuleles were introduced to the island communities in Vanuatu. The ukulele spread to the islands faster than the guitar, supposedly because it was smaller, cheaper and easier to handle. Instruments from China were purchased until the 1980s; however, these are nowadays rare and regarded as inferior, compared to instruments, which are carved from one piece of wood. Tahitian instruments were the template for hand-carved ukuleles (*yukalele* or short *yuka*; also referred to as *lokol wan*). According to musician Jesse Temar, the first instrument of this type was used in 1980 by SOUWIA STRINGBAND. A woman from Tahiti, who was living in Vanuatu at the time, sold another one to TOKOTAKIA and Temar's stringband LONWOLWOL in 1981, costing 6 000 New Hebrides francs.[395] When people saw SOUWIA's instrument, they started to build ukuleles themselves (interview with Jesse Temar 2003). These instruments, if carved by a skilled person, are considerably better suited to the needs of a stringband than the usual ukuleles in guitar-shape.

In Port Vila a good *yukalele* costs 5 000 or 6 000 vt, (about 36 to 43 €) and is usually bought directly from the carver. Single instruments are occasionally offered in the market hall in downtown Port Vila. An instrument from Tahiti with eight strings was purchased by a stringband for 20 000 vt (143 €).

The usual, guitar-shaped ukulele is technically a composite chordophone; a necked box lute with a fretted fingerboard (following the categorization of musical instruments of Hornbostel and Sachs, 1914). The *yukalele*'s construction is very different as body, neck, fingerboard and head are carved from a single piece of wood. Carvers use hardwoods such as New Guinea rosewood (*bluwota*), and, occasionally, the wood of the coconut tree (Figure 14).[396] An indentation in the middle of the body is covered with a round piece of masonite or with another material, thus building a soundbox. A wooden bridge rests loosely on the top, held in place by the tension of the strings. These are fixed at the lower end of the body where two extensions jut out (Figures 13 - 18); either straight as prongs of a fork, or bent, as are horns. A

[394] According to Axel Richter the first braguinha was brought to Hawaii on 23th August 1879 by the musician Joao Fernandez. Three other emigrants, Manuel Nunes, José do Espirito Santo and Augusto Dias began to build such instruments in Hawaii. See Richter for a discussion of the instrument's name, ukulele (Richter 2000: 5). See also Kaeppler 1973: 328.

[395] The New Hebrides franc was replaced by the Vatu in 1982.

[396] Blue sap drips out of the wood when cut, hence the Bislama name ("blue water").

yuka can be held and played very comfortably while standing, with the crook of the player's right arm resting between these extensions. The player is thus able to hold the instrument securely and to strike the strings in a lively manner at the same time. When played in this way, the soundhole on the back of the instrument (Figures 14, 17 & 18) is left open or covered by the player's chest. Through the movements of the instrument's body, the soundhole is left open or partly covered by the player's chest. This produces the typical sound of the *yuka* – remotely reminding one of the effect of a wah-wah pedal or of a rotating speaker of a Leslie amplification system. The differences between a carved *yukalele* and a guitar-shaped instrument are the sound, the playing technique, and the weight – the solid *yukalele* being much heavier (see also Notation Example 4).

When designing the instrument's shape, carver Pakoa Alick, originally from Matangi (Tongoa), first establishes the length of the vibrating strings (the distance between nut and bridge). The design of the instrument is based on this length. Alick strings the instrument with fishing line, trying out the chords and marking the position of the semitones with a pen before finally attaching the frets to the neck. If available, machine-made tuning pegs (*ki blong waet man / ki blong gita*) are used. Otherwise, string winders (*ki*) are carved from wood (Figures 17 & 18); however, accuracy is necessary in order to ensure enough friction between the peghead and the tuning key, which is crucial to hold the string under tension.

Most instruments are fretted with only three or four frets, enough to play the basic chords used in stringband music, while better instruments have more. As a test, Pakoa Alick plays a D-major chord in the third position (Notation Example 1). The frets of bamboo, wood or plastic are attached directly to the neck with glue Some *yukalele* makers craft metal frets made from flattened brass-wire (*stil*) or affix machine-made frets, which last longer than those glued on.[397]

The knowledge of the right way to design an instrument is not necessarily passed on from carver to carver, but is often the result of experimentation.

Although some of the high-quality instruments have double-strings (Figures 17 & 18), often only four of the eight tuning pegs are used.[398] One of the musicians I spoke with, Kalo Daniel of the group LUMBUKUTI BEACH BOYS, knew of a ukulele variety, the banjo ukulele, and

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[397] As mentioned above, the *yukalele* has no extra fingerboard attached to the neck, but the wood of the neck itself forms the fingerboard; the frets are attached directly to the neck.

[398] The (YANG) SOUWIA STRINGBAND's yukalele player uses an eight-string instrument from Tahiti. Even though some tuning pegs are broken and the neck has been repaired with a screw and glue, the instrument is considered to be of a high-class.

discussed the differences to the banjo mandolin. It is possible that a banjo ukulele could occasionally be found in Vanuatu in the past; however, at the time of fieldwork it was not common.

Ni-Vanuatu use the intervals of the soprano ukulele tuning, a', d', f#', b' (or correspondingly a' a', d' d', f#' f#', b' b' for the double-stringed ukuelele, see Notation Example 1). Occasionally, *yukalele* players tune the lowest string, d', an octave higher to d'', thus it becomes the highests; a prominent example is the *yuka* as used by the group MAKURA TOKOLAU. I did not come across other tuning systems in Vanuatu such as the otherwise common g-c-e-a-tuning, despite the fact that the *yukalele*'s scale length is often similar to that of a tenor ukulele, which is frequently tuned in this way in America and Europe. However, *yukalele* players tune their instrument according to the soprano singer of the group, who establishes the standard by singing a song at a key which best suits his voice.[399]

In Vanuatu, *yukalele* players strike their instruments, that is, they hit all the strings at once with their right hand, using downstrokes (mostly with the fingers of the right hand) and upstrokes (using the thumb and occasionally the index finger of the right hand). I have never seen a *yuka* player picking his instrument's strings in arpeggio (one after the other) or playing a melody of single notes. Fishing line, as used for big game fishing, is used as material for the strings. The quality of the fishing line is better than the available strings from China, so that also professional groups use it. Players do not use different strengths of strings in one set but rather the same strength for every string. As a result, the tension of the strings is varied, the lowest for the lowest tuned string and the highest for the highest string. These differing tensions of the strings make it difficult to play single note lines. The player's right hand needs to adjust every time it moves from one string to another. As perfect as a *yukalele* (of good quality) is suited to the needs of a stringband, it is not suited for some other techniques.

Most *yukalele* players are only familiar with a small selection of basic chords, usually those in the first position which include empty strings.[400] Some players refer to the chords with their Western names: D-major, G-major, A-major (in accordance with the a-d-f#-b-tuning). Most players, though, name them as follows; (see Notation Example 1):

nambawan – D, as well as D6 (open position) and D7

nambatu – G, as well as Gadd9

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[399] Thus, no absolute pitch is used (see 3.4).

[400] In the first position the fingers of the left hand are used for fingerings within the first four frets. Many chords in the first position feature empty strings (without any fingers).

nambatri – A7

Players often vary these chords, especially by leaving away the position of one of the fingers. For example, an A7 is changed to an A7sus2 (by lifting the annulary and allowing the empty B-string to ring) and back to A7, or a G is changed to Gadd9 (by leaving away the long finger which is usually used to fret on the a-string).

On occasion another chord is used, E6, usually played with the index finger of the left hand across all four strings in the second fret (barré). This chord is called *flat* by most stringband musicians, others call it *nambafo*, and some sweepingly call it "minor" (it can, in fact, be regarded as a Dbminor7 chord).[401] The same is true for a C-major, which was also called "minor" (without further indication of pitch) by some musicians I met.

Just as the *busbes*, the *yukalele* is an instrument which signalises stringband music. It is seldom used in Vanuatu's *pop miusik*. Ukuleles can be heard in popular music that is played on the radio, but these songs are often from Polynesia. In these songs, the instrument is used to play a fast pattern, often as triplets, which fill in between the otherwise slower (halftime) heavy beats (see also Diettrich, Moulin & Webb 2011: 112). In pop music the ukulele is used to add a 'Pacific flavour'. Often it is not an essential musical component as it is in stringband music.

3.3.3 Guitar

In contrast to the other musical instruments used in stringbands, the guitar (*gita* in Bislama) is the one instrument that occurs more than once within a group. Most stringbands have at least three, often four or even five guitarists (playing at the same time). In a live performance, a stringband's guitarists usually play all the same rhythmical pattern and the same fingerings. In studio recordings, groups sometimes reduce the number of guitarists to ensure that the guitar parts are played synchronously.[402]

The guitars used in stringband music are usually cheap instruments, imported from China. These shiny blue, red, yellow or green instruments can be bought in the Chinese general stores in Vila and Luganville.[403] Guitarists who can afford a better acoustic guitar than those available at the 'Chinese' general stores can opt between instruments at 31 600 vt and those

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[401] Adding the second finger in the third fret on the highest string, the fingering yields a E7 chord which would also be called *flat*.

[402] For example, LUKUNAEFA from Emua village (Efate) use only three guitarists while they have four or sometimes five in live performances (interview with Tony Alvos 2003).

[403] A brand name which appears on many of these instruments is 'Madwang'.

for up to 165 000 vt (225 – 1 180 €). Such better quality instruments are available at the Sound Centre in Port Vila and at the John Lum Store in Luganville.[404]

Guitars are usually the most expensive instruments in stringband music (apart from a high quality *yukalele*). This means that the musicians need to raise funds to buy them. Newly-founded groups need to work in the community, harvest and sell kava or other such produce. Members of the TOTAS LOCAL STRINGBAND cleaned public areas in Luganville and were paid for their work by the municipality.

Guitars are also comparably costly in their maintenance. Guitar strings need to be bought at the Sound Centre (Port Vila), the John Lum Store or in one of the Chinese general stores where single strings are sold for 45 or 50 vt in Luganville and 60 or 70 vt in Vila (thus 32 - 50 euro cents).[405]

A few stringbands garnish their guitars with painted pictures, with writing or with stickers. The vast majority of stringband guitarists modify their instrument by removing the two lowest strings (that is the E- and the A-strings; see Figure 19). As mentioned before, guitarists and *yukalele* players tune their instruments according to the voice of the soprano singer and not according to the 'a' concert pitch. Contemporary stringband musicians are not necessarily aware of the fact, but the two lowest strings were originally removed to avoid harm to the instrument.[406] The change in singing style has also resulted in a change of performance practice: stringband guitarists always perform while standing these days.

In stringband music, the musicians make no special distinction between guitars stringed with steel strings (western guitar) and those stringed with nylon strings (concert classical guitar). The guitarists seem to use the guitar that is at hand and I have often seen instruments constructed as a nylon string guitar but stringed with steel strings. Well-off groups with better instruments however, tend to only use western guitars. FUTUNA FATUANA even use a twelve-string guitar.

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[404] It is hard to say whether stringband guitarists would use more elaborate fingerings if they had instruments of better quality (it is more difficult to play in higher positions on inferior instruments). What can be said, however, is that if any music can be played on a cheap guitar, it is stringband music.

[405] At the Chinese general store in the part of Vila known as Olen, one string (all diameters) was sold for 60 vt in 2002 and for 70 vt in 2003. In contrast to the general stores, the Sound Centre sells guitar strings only as a full set and not separately.

[406] Another advantage of the usage of only four strings is the fact that there are two spare tuning pegs: in the case of a broken tuning peg (which often occurs with these poor quality instruments), guitarists use another position for the string (if, for example, the key of the highest string (e) is broken, the e-string is fastened at the key for the b-string and the other strings are moved 'downwards' accordingly).

When musicians start to play the guitar, most can immediately play the basic chords because the fingerings correspond to those used with the *yukalele* – although in a different key.[407] The guitar's part in a stringband song is to strum the basic chords. As with the *yukalele*, many guitarists number the chords consecutively (from *nambawan* to *nambafo* / *flat*).

During my research, I came across some Bislama vocabulary concerning the guitar and its playing techniques. Musicians refer to the instrument's neck as the *handel*. The bass strings are called *hevi string* by some. The player's fingers of the right and of the left hand have no special names; guitarists refer to them as *nambawan fingga* (index finger), *nambatri fingga* (ring finger) and so on. The small finger is also called *smol wan*. A barré (a finger pressing down several strings) is called *flat*; the verb is *flatem*. Chord is *ki* in Bislama (not to be confused with 'string winder'). Playing the guitar is generally called *kilim gita*[408] or *plei gita*; some also use *nokem gita*. Up- and downstrokes are called *stram* in Bislama; playing the guitar in this way is called *stramem*. Some musicians refer to a stroke as *nok*. To pick single strings when playing a melody is called *pikim string*. To lower the tension of the string in order to tune it down is called *slakem string*.

Guitarists strum the strings with their fingers (fingernails) or with a plectrum. If guitarists do not have a proper plectrum, they use other materials. When he was young, TIMTEO KALMET (and others) used matches when playing melodies on a guitar. He needed many of them because they broke easily (interview with Timteo Kalmet 2003). Bob Kuao uses tortoise shell (*skin blong totel*), which he cooks until it is soft (*sopsop*). He then trims it as needed and finally puts it into cold water to harden (interview with Bob Kuao 2003).

In studio recordings, some stringbands additionally record a lead guitar track with short melodies and solo-fill-ins. In Bislama, musicians refer to this sort of ornament as *flasem* (to decorate) or *lid*. It occurs particularly in the beginning and in the ending of songs. Not even the guitars used for solo playing necessarily have all the strings, but guitarists playing the parts tend to be skilled guitarists who are also capable of playing other kinds of music than stringband music. For example, SAKA was a guest musician in a production of the stringband DAUSAKE. Sarabera 'SAKA' Sakaria, former member of the TUKI IMERE stringband, was a wanted lead guitarist and had played electric guitar in several bands before he got himself an

[407] Often, the *yuka* is the first string instrument learned by beginners. A simple fingering of the C-major chord, played on the four higher strings of a guitar, corresponds to a G-major chord on the *yukalele*. This also works for other chords – the same fingerings realized on a *yuka* yield chords which are shifed upward by a fifth: G on a guitar corresponds to D on a *yuka*, D > A, A > E.

[408] The Bislama term "*kilim*" has many meanings, amongst them "to beat" or "to strike".

acoustic guitar which was equipped with a pick-up system from the Fung Kuei store.[409] Few guitarists have acoustic guitars with a built-in pick-up.[410] Stringbands exclusively use acoustic guitars, electric guitars in stringband music being a rare exception (see Figure 10).

Various aspects of playing techniques that are important for guitarists who play *pop miusik* are insignificant for stringband guitarists.[411] Even the lead guitarists use quite basic playing techniques. No pitch-bending is performed; sliding, however, is common. Some guitarists use a capo to shorten the length of the vibrating strings and thus alter the pitch (*leftemap saon*). Self-built capos are made of a piece of wood that is fixed to the chosen position of the fret by wrapping it with fishing line around the instrument's neck (see Figure 19).

I recorded two cases in which left-handers played a usual guitar upside down, with the neck facing the right but without changing the strings.[412] I was told that this is due to the fact that it is hard for a beginner without their own instrument to learn it any other way.

3.3.4 Percussion Instruments

The remaining instrumentation of a typical stringband, apart from the already discussed chordophones *busbes*, *yukalele* and guitar, is made up of various percussion instruments.

3.3.4.1 *seka*

The *seka* (also *tamborin*)[413] is a shaken idiophone, which is present in every group (Figures 20 & 21). It is made of wood, with one part shaped as a handle and several flattened crown caps (*lid blong botel*) or bottoms of big batteries (*lid blong batri*) fixed on the remaining part with nails. The instrument is held in one hand and is played by rattling (*saksakem*). On pronounced beats it is struck against the palm of the other hand. Members from the stringband NAHUU TRIBES reported of a sophisticated variation of this instrument they had made from the headstock of a guitar (*en blong gita*), with a part of the guitar's neck serving as a handle (Figure 22 shows my reconstruction of this instrument).

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[409] He found the instrument, stringed with nylon, suited to play the kind of music he became interested in such as the GYPSY KINGS, TONY EMMANUEL and ERIC CLAPTON (interview with Sarabera 'Saka' Sakaria 2003).

[410] For example guitarist BOB KUAO has a semi-acoustic guitar which was given to him as a present by a man from England who bought the instrument at the Fung Kuei store in Port Vila (interview with Bob Kuao 2003).

[411] In evaluations amongst guitarists, the speed of a lead guitarist is an important parameter. Another is 'clarity' or 'brightness'. For example, a guitarist attributed this to the lead guitarist of the band THE BLACK BROTHERS ("The guy who plays the solos plays clear" – "*Man i lid i klia*"). In contrast to guitar playing in stringbands, a few electric guitar players experiment with alternative tunings, for example tuning down the E-string to 'D' (*slakem namba sikis string*).

[412] These are Moses Stevens' brother Richard (interview with Moses Stevens 2004) and TIM KALMET.

[413] Crowley also gives the term *boteltop* for this instrument (1995: 211).

Joel Kaltang, the *yukalele* player of the original Souwia, claims that his stringband originally introduced this instrument to stringband music. These days, many stringbands in Port Vila use louder sounding store-bought tambourines. The *seka* player can, as the *yuka* player or one of the guitarists, be the lead singer at the same time. This is, however, not very common. Judging from my observations, the *seka* is more important in an arrangement than the so-called *bongo* (see below). If there were both instruments but only one player left, he would probably play the *seka*. If there are two percussionists, the combination of *seka* and *bongo* seems to be favoured over the combination of *seka* and *rasras* (see 3.3.4.2 and 3.3.4.3).

3.3.4.2 *bongo*

Most stringbands nowadays, at least in town, use a single conga drum. However, I was told at the Sound Centre that they had not sold such instruments since over three years due to a lack of supply.[414] Although it was created in Cuba and made in Asia (at least the instruments used in Vanuatu), it is commonly considered an African instrument and generally called a *bongo*. A few groups use two congas or, instead, real bongo drums. As did the carved ukulele, these instruments apparently found their way to Vanuatu via Polynesia, namely Tahiti.

The playing technique of the *bongo* in Vanuatu is only rudimentary compared to the various techniques of a conga player in Latin music. Most players use only one sound, an open tone, which is produced by beating the hand or often only the side of the thumb against the head (the sound thus produced, often in a restrained manner, is less loud than the usual open tone played on the edge of the head in latin music). Fill-ins (*rol*) are also played on the *bongo*. A stringband's *bongo* is tuned (for example to the key note), when considered as out of tune to the pitch of the guitars and *yukalele*.

'*Bongo*' does not necessarily refer to the instrument conga, but rather denotes a musical function. Therefore, the term is also applied to self-made drums, built, for example from a big waterpipe or a bamboo cane with the inner tube from a car tire (*pikinini blong wil*) serving as the membrane. Another possibility is to hit a bamboo cane (with penetrated nodes) with a flip-flop, resulting in a loud, low tone (see also 3.3.4.3 and Figure 23). LAURUA STRINGBAND uses a conga-stand built from a table with a big hole in the middle. FUTUNA FATUANA use a machine-made glass fibre djembe drum. The membranophone *timiatwos* from the Banks and

[414] Maybe Fung Kuei sold such instruments during that period.

Torres Islands – the only membranophone in southern Melanesia (Ammann 2012: 146) – is not used in stringband music.[415]

3.3.4.3 *bambu*

There are three different types of idiophones made from bamboo in stringband music. The first type is a small hand-held slit-drum, which the player strikes with a stick. It is also used in *kastom miusik* in many places. For use in stringbands, the instrument is often modified and combined with notches along the sides of the slit, which can be rubbed with a thin stick to produce a ratchet sound. This instrument is called *rasras* or simply *bambu* (Figure 24). The variation on Futuna Island is called *sorora*.[416] Charlie Nimoho, the musical innovator, added the saw-part, however the stick is moved back and forth within the slit.

The second bamboo idiophone consists of a tube mounted horizontally on a one-legged stand made from wood or bamboo. A stand from canes or pieces of squared timber, arranged to two 'X's, is built for bigger instruments with the bamboo lying horizontally in between. Thus, the bamboo cane can be struck with two sticks. In South East Ambae, for example, this idiophone was introduced by touring stringbands from neighbouring Pentecost.

A third type of idiophone made from bamboo is simply called *piano* in Bislama, and *koumagira* in the language of Futuna Island.[417] This instrument consists of an assorted set of eleven vertically mounted bamboo tubes of different lengths with closed nodes at the bottom. The tubes are tuned by filling water inside. The player uses flip-flops as mallets (sometimes cut to shape to give him a better grip) to strike the open ends of the bamboo canes. In this way he plays a quite fast percussive melody, sometimes similar to a boogie-woogie bass line.

3.3.4.4 Other Percussion Instruments and Sound Effects

While observing a recording session of (YANG) SOUWIA, I witnessed the use of rhythm sticks which looked and sounded similar to the claves used in Cuban music: one of the musicians held a short stick with one hand while he struck it with the other. I was told by Lui Philip (member of the 'old' SOUWIA) the next day that the pattern played on these sticks was the same as usually played on the *bambu* and that the boys used hard wood to carve them.

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[415] This is at least true for stringbands from these islands which perform in Vila. I have never heard of a group using it; however, I also did not travel through the region. For more information and for images, see Ammann (2012: 146-151).

[416] Graham Nimoho suspects that it was introduced in Futuna as a small copy of the big wooden *tamtam* of Ambrym (interview with Graham Nimoho 2004).

[417] Musicians on Aneityum also play this instrument; however, I do not know whether there are stringbands which use it.

According to Philip, the idea to use the rhythm sticks was new; they were not used when he was young. FUTUNA FATUANA also use rhythm sticks which they call *rangopa* (interview with David Taforua 2003). Some stringbands (like the VUSI BOYS) use traditional leg anklets to produce a rattling sound when stamping the feet, and FUTUNA FATUANA use rattles called *ruruia* in Futunese. Stringbands in Vila also use machine-made percussion instruments such as the cabasa, particularly for studio recordings.[418] The cabasa, another instrument introduced by SOUWIA according to Joel Kaltang, produces a sharp, scraping sound.

During one of my stays in Wuro, west Ambrym, old men told me that stringbands in West Ambrym used spoons as a percussion instrument in the past (like in American Folk music). Long ago, musicians in SHEFA-Province produced percussive sounds on flat tins (called *tin seven seven*, interview with Jean-Baptiste Kalo 2003).

The stringbands of the island of Futuna are special in terms of rthe instruments used. One deviation from the standard stringband line-up is the use of an instrument called *voiwai* piano (in the vernacular, *voiwai* designates anything to carry water with; interview with Graham N. Nimoho 2004).[419] The instrument consists of eleven bottles which are filled with water to tune them, and which are hit with sticks. According to one of the stories about Charlie Nimoho, Futunas instrument inventor (see 2.2.3), he once heard the rain drop from a thatched roof into bottles and thus had the idea to build the instrument. Despite the fact that the *voiwai* piano is played quite fast, any member of a stringband from Futuna is able to play it (interview with David Taforua 2003).[420]

In 1976, musicians from Futuna adopted an instrument from Erromango, which they call *beluso* ("saw" in the vernacular of Futuna).[421] The European bumbass (a noisemaker used in European carnival traditions) may have been a template for this instrument: a thick, taut wire is fastened along a stick (without touching it), which is held upright while standing. At the lower end of the stick crown caps are fastened, which can be set in motion whether by rhythmically stamping the stick on the ground, or by bowing a second stick with carved saw teeth across over the wire. The sound of the *beluso* is described as similar to the grunt of a pig.

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[418] For example in several songs on SARATOKOWIA`s album "Operation Lagoon", Vanuata Productions 1999.

[419] Ni-Vanuatu from other places refer to the instrument as *botel* or *borel* (bottle; there is no other name for the instrument in Bislama).

[420] Nimoho initially blew the bottles instead of hitting them with a stick. If the instrument in fact traces back to Charlie Nimoho, its invention dates back to the 1950s and is thus not a recent development in stringband music, as suggested by Stern (2007: 170).

[421] According to several interlocutors from both Futuna and Erromango.

Some instruments are used to produce a sound effect, sometimes only once or twice in a song. Among these is the vibra-slap (the modern, machine-made version of the jawbone)[422], used for example in the intro and outro of 'Awo Simix' on SARATOKOWIA's album "Operation Lagoon". A crash cymbal used various times in the song 'Island Dress' on DAUSAKE's album "Dawn of February", or on MAGAWIARUA's album "17th Anniversary" can also be considered as an auxiliary percussion instrument.

3.3.5 Unusual Instruments

A few stringbands also use other, more unusual musical instruments than those listed in this chapter so far. As has been mentioned in Chapter 2, there was a bigger variety of instruments in stringband music in previous decades. Some groups used a mandoline (the LUMBUKUTI BEACH BOYS still do) or even a banjo mandolin.

The use of unusual instruments is the unique characteristic of only a few groups. TUKI IMERE used an accordion, while Tim Kalmet ornamented the instrumental parts of the songs of SOUWIA with his piano. Common to these experiments and peculiarities was or is that the 'exotic' instruments were or are used for ornamentation, that is, mainly for small solo parts at the beginning and ending, as well as between stanzas (a practice called *flasem*).

There have been experiments with stringband music and a keyboard in the 1980s, produced by the BLACK BROTHERS. More recently, DAUSAKE used a keyboard in the song 'Dawn of February 14'. In this case, the keyboard is used to create a synth pad for background harmony. I encountered only two cases in which aerophones were used in a stringband: the first is the album "Amazing Vanuatu" from the NOISY BOYS and the second a performance of FUTUNA FATUANA. The latter use several bamboo flutes, called *ruesu*, which means cicada (interview with David Taforua 2003). These flutes sound similar to a kazoo and are sometimes struck by the player on his other hand. Such specialities do, however, not change the core of the genre.

Kalo Daniel enjoyed playing his eight-string banjo mandolin in the 1970s and wished he could obtain another such instrument to record a stringband album with it, bringing more variety into Vanuatu stringband music. Stringband veteran Joel Kaltang even likes the idea of introducing new acoustic instruments into stringband music; he particularly envisions the use of a violin. If stringbands were extended through other instruments for ornamentation, they would become

[422] The vibra-slap is a rattling ideophone. Metal pins vibrate in a resonator of wood and/or plastic and produce a rattling sound.

even more attractive to tourists at the hotels, he imagines.[423]

If a particular stringband makes use of a new instrument, it is not very likely that others immediately follow its example. This is for two reasons: (1) musicians jealously guard their inventions, and (2) at the same time most musicians strike to make their own inventions, rather than just imitating others.

3.4 Pitch, Tuning and Key

In Western discourse about music we use the metaphors ‘high’ and ‘low’ to describe the relative pitch of a tone. Of course this metaphor is arbitrary, as can be seen from the fact that some people in Germany, especially children, use ‘bright’ (“hell” for high) and ‘dark’ (“dunkel” for low) instead – which works perfectly as well. It is worth noting that another metaphor is used in Bislama to express the same idea. Here the contrast is expressed by ‘small’ (*saon i smol* = high) and ‘big’ (*saon i bigwan* = low).[424]

As non-traditional instruments are used, it is necessary to tune (*tiunem* in Bislama) the guitars, the *yuka*, the *bongo* and, in the case of the stringbands from Futuna, also other instruments according to the Western tuning system.[425] However, stringband musicians are not oriented towards A440 concert pitch, but rather towards the voice of the lead singer. The instruments are tuned to the pitch level that the singer feels comfortable with. However, the musicians also have to orientate the pitch towards the other voices. The alto voice, which is the lowest in stringband vocal arrangements, must not get too low. If the perception is that the pitch level indeed is too high, then the musicians adjust and tune down their instruments (*loem* in Bislama). A stringband veteran explains the proceedings:

> “The ukulele goes first, then the guitars, but first of all the one who sings lead vocals has to sing. Sometimes all of us singers start together, start all at once. We try out a sequence. When they play this first sequence and notice that the [alto and tenor] voices do not get through properly, we have to change the tuning. The tuning has to get higher, or, if it is too high, it has

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[423] At the occasion of a concert with Souwia in Melbourne in 1981, he played together with a Canadian harp player, something he enjoyed very much.

[424] Many musicians use the English ‘high’ (or correspondingly *saon i antap*) and ‘low’. Crowley writes in his Bislama dictionary that ‘high-pitched’ translates as “(saon i) antap mo i krae olsem moskito”. I did not find this expression commonly used.

[425] The *busbes* is not tuned for every performance but the length of the stick and of the string have to be roughly adjusted when it is built to ensure that the required range of tones can be played.

to get a bit lower."[426]

Henry Tari, member of the COOL SHADOW STRINGBAND, reports that his group starts a rehearsal or performance by establishing quite a high pitch. If it is too high for the singers, the musicians tune their instruments down. Their aim is to find the highest possible tuning to create dynamic vocals.

Only a few stringbands, such as NAAHU TRIBES, change to a different key if the tune becomes too high or too low for the *soprano* singer. Instead of changing the tuning of the instruments, they use different chords (that is, they transpose).[427] For the majority of stringbands the fingering of the D major chord (or the open strings of the *yukalele*, which represent a D6 chord in standard tuning d-a-f#-b) is the basic tonic triad and a change in pitch level results from a change of tuning rather than a change of key. Most groups play all of their songs in the same key.

As far as stringband albums are concerned, it can be said that (1) in the overwhelming majority of cases the groups use only one and the same fundamental note in all the songs on the album[428]; (2) the root is the same, no matter what rhythmic pattern is used (*tu step*, *tri step* or else); (3) from the cases in which more than one album of a stringband were investigated, it can be said that the variance between the fundamentals of the different albums amounts to only a semitone or even less. From these findings, two conclusions can be drawn. First, it suggests that stringbands do not record in different sessions but that the 'pitch-defining' recordings take place at once (for example the *yukalele*-track of each song is recorded in one day). This has been confirmed by musicians and studio technicians. In one case a stringband was recorded live – 'in the field' so to say (in their home village) – without overdubbing within a timespan of two years. The deviation between the fundamental notes of the different

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[426] "*Yuka i go festaem, gita i go, be man we i lid vokal i mas sing festaem. Be samtaem olgeta we yumi save singsing oli mas singsing wantaem, oli tekof wantaem. Yumi traem mekem wan* run. *Taem oli plei long fes* run *ya, bae oli harem se tufala ya* [alto and tenor voices], *voes i no kam klia gud long hem nao mifala i mas jenem tiun nao. Ki i mas go antap, o maet sapos i go antap tumas i mas go daon smol*" (Jeffrey Thomson, interview 20013).

[427] For example, instead of playing a song using the fingering pattern of the 'D' cadenza (the chord 'D' does not necessarily have the actual pitch of 'D' for reasons explained above), they change to 'G' (thus using G, C and D7).

[428] In one case, there was a difference of less than a semitone between the fundamental of the songs on the A side and those of the B side of the cassette. I assume that this deviation might be a result of the bad quality of the tape (if the cassette is drawn out from being overplayed). The fact that I had to be content with many worn-out tapes on my search for stringband music recordings qualifies my measurements. The album "Wind Of Change" from SHAKURA however, is indeed an exception: different keys are clearly used. This case is discussed below. There are few other cases (namely recordings of VATDORO and the STONEY BOYS).

tracks on the CD was only about one semitone.[429] The groups keep their instruments in stable tuning, that is to say, the tuning does not vary from song to song, once an absolute pitch level is established. The second conclusion is that stringbands do use modern recording facilities but do not accommodate themselves in every respect to the Western process (Western musicians usually set great value on tuning their instruments with an instrument tuner). The tuning of a stringband's instruments is usually not considered a task for someone with special knowledge. However, of course, some musicians manage better than others.

On the whole, the use of keyboards is a principal difference between stringbands and pop groups – not just regarding the overall sound of the group but also with respect to the tuning of the instruments. In pop groups, the musicians playing string instruments have to orientate themselves towards the keyboard (with its default tuning) instead towards the singers, as in stringbands.[430]

3.5 Form and Arrangement

It is evident that the use of the song form in stringband music followed Western examples.[431] Just as with Western songs, stringband songs are composed in a song format using symmetry and recapitulation. However, the genre developed discrete characteristics, such as the excessive length of verse endings ('excessive' from a Western perspective). Static form is a crucial feature of stringband music.[432] The arrangement is one aspect contributing to the uniformity of the genre. The fixed formal structures of stringband songs seem to have evolved over the decades. One part follows the other, which leaves few possibilities for variation and often no room for improvisation.

Stringband songs are very much obliged to the characteristics of the genre, so in this sense, formal variation in stringband music is less free or elastic than in *pop miusik*. The

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[429] This album from the LAEF KASTOM STRINGBAN was not produced in the typical fashion but the process was part of a bigger project by anthropologists from abroad. Normally the recordings for a stringband album would not drag on for so long in Vanuatu.

[430] Some keyboarders only know the finger patterns of a basic cadenza and then use the transpose-button on their keyboard to adjust the key for different songs (*pijim* or *transposem* in Bislama).

[431] The song format, a tendency in European music since the Renaissance, has been contrasted with non-Western music traditions. "[S]ectionally structured, closed, goal-oriented song forms" (Manuel 1985: 163) were related to European capitalism and have been interpreted as "expressions of the bourgeois worldview" (Manuel 1988: 23).

[432] I heard a musician referring to the form as 'measure *blong singsing*'. However, I do not know whether the usage of 'measure' in this sense is common or whether this is rather an individual case.

arrangements of stringband songs from different regions differ slightly because of the local traditions and local percussion instruments used but generally speaking, form and instrumentation are comparable throughout the country (with the exception of stringbands from Futuna); innovations occur only within the recognised genre or local style. Also, the arrangements neither differ according to the language used, nor according to the topics of lyrics.

Arranging songs (*arenjem singsing*) is either conducted in team work or, as not all members of a stringband are usually equally capable of arranging songs, it is done by one member alone.[433] For example, for SOUWIA it was Lui Philip's job to be a *tija blong miusik*, literally a teacher of music, the meaning of which being more an arranger or musical director.[434] This function does not necessarily merge with the function of the composer. As Lui Philip explained, the songs composed by his band colleague, David, were arranged by him (and sung by Joel Kaltang). Once the melody and the song text are established, it is comparatively easy to arrange a song because of the high degree of standardisation. The word *lidim* translates as leading one's co-musicians through an arrangement.[435]

The basic structure of stringband songs is a verse-chorus alternation, often with a transitionary part between the two. Musicians refer to the single parts of a stringband song with the following terms: *introdaksen* (introduction), *fes* (verse, stanza) and *kores* (chorus, refrain). The closure of a song is generally called 'ending'. Instrumental interludes are not very common but sometimes do occur; instrumental parts are found at the beginning and at the end of songs, particularly that of the *tri step* type (see 3.6). In these cases, the *introdaksen* usually appears again at the end as a repetition. Some musicians use the word 'bridge'/'*brij*' for interim parts leading from stanza to chorus but others say that they use no special term to refer to it although they are aware of the concept.

A climax, created through melody, harmonies, and intensity can be found in most refrains. It is important to note that these highlights appear with every chorus; there is not one single climax

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[433] In the realm of music *arenjem* can mean two different things: to arrange a piece of music, make an arrangement; or to arrange a concert (booking).

[434] Lui Philip (father of YANG SOUWIA's Philip Louis) had played instrumental pop music in the 'Peter Posa style' before founding SOUWIA. His experience in the former group qualified him to lead the stringband in all musical respects (apart from composition). He is known for his abilities beyond his group. Recently, MAGAWIARUA approached him for advice.

[435] It also means solo playing. In stringband music the short and rare solo passages are played by a guitar. In the past they were played by a mandolin (LUMBUKUTI BEACH BOYS & YANG BEACH BOYS), an accordion (TUKI IMERE) and a piano (SOUWIA).

to a stringband song. Sometimes the bridge is the most dramatic part of a song and it is the chorus thereafter which brings 'relief'.

Most of the songs, especially those from groups of the central part of Vanuatu (Efate, Shepherds), begin with an introduction played by a single *yukalele*. As already mentioned in 2.2.5.1, George Pakoa is commonly credited to have invented the *introdaksen* in the 1970s.[436] The *yukalele* beginnings of his group MAKURA TOKOLAU are rhymically unique and he maintains that no other stringband was able to copy that style apart from the WESTERN BOYS. Many songs at a performance or on a recording have the same beginning. The *yuka introdaksen* used on MAKURA TOKOLAU's cassette "No mani" are a remarkable example – the beginnings of the various songs are not only identical in key/pitch and phrasing but some also in tempo.

Some *yukalele* players develop their own *introdaksen* but the majority copies one of the popular introductions used by the most successful stringbands. A *yukalele* player often has his favourite intro or intros, so the *introdaksen* of a song might change when a different player takes over. When groups copy a song they might not use the original *introdaksen* (as, for example recorded and released on the original cassette) but use their own or make their choice out of a corpus of standard patterns. Thus, the realisation of this part of the song depends more on the musician than on the original composition as it is the part of the song where individual specialities of the *yukalele* player are most effective. At the same time, the *introdaksen* serves as a distinguishing marker of the whole group, with local particularities coming into effect.[437] Even if a musician invents a new *introdaksen*, the structure of the song as such is maintained as nearly all stringband songs have an *introdaksen* forming their beginning. This is only one aspect which illustrates that stringband music is a static genre in terms of formal structure.

In a typical beginning of a stringband song, the *yukalele* begins by itself with a pattern of two or four measures duration, after which the rest of the instruments join in for another four measures before the beginning of the first stanza. The *busbes* player usually pronounces the third measure after joining in (so the fifth or seventh from the beginning – depending on the duration of the *yukalele introdaksen*), playing a note on every beat of the 4/4 measure. Before and after (measures 1, 2 and 4) he only plays on the first and third beat of each 4/4 measure.

[436] In the 1980s he was asked in a radio interview about what he – *papa blong stringban* – had contributed to the development of stringband music. He replied that he invented the principle that a ukulele begins the song with the rest of the group joining in and that he is happy that so many people use it (interview with Moses Stevens 2004).

[437] Notation Example 3 compiles two *yukalele* introductions by singer and yuka-player David Boe (VUSI BOYS).

This bass line takes the function of a cue for the rest of the band, especially for the singer who has to set in with the verse. In general, the sequence of chords is most dense in the *introdaksen* of a stringband song.

In the *tri step*-type of stringband songs (see 3.6) the full group begins with an instrumental introduction (Notation Example 2). *Tri step*-songs also usually end with an instrumental part, this outro being in perfect symmetry with the *introdaksen*.[438] The group NAAHU TRIBES is an exception because it has two *yukalele* players. However, the *introdaksen* is only played by one of them, while the other joins in with the rest of the group.[439]

In rare cases, small percussion instruments are used for the *introdaksen*. For example, a rattle sets the rhythm before the *yuka* joins, in some songs of the album "1986 Tanna Inta Distrik Gems" of the NOISY BOYS. On their album "Amazing Vanuatu" one or two guitars start most of the songs. I witnessed a couple of unusual song beginnings at a live performance of the VUSI BOYS (Ambae).

Variation in form primarily amounts from the number of stanzas. Usually there are at least two and not more than four. There are some stringband songs which actually are church hymns. 'Supe tea dodomi ngami' from DAUSAKE is an example of a song without a clear distinction into stanza and chorus. One melody that extends over 16 bars is repeated over and over with changing lyrics. Songs of this type are often sung by several singers all along. In most other stringband songs, however, the stanza is sung by the *soprano* singer alone.

Apart from the chorus (*kores*)[440] as such, there is no identifiable climax in most stringband songs. There are some examples, however, where the chorus is sung acapella towards the end of the song. This, as well as the effect when the instruments join in again, could be regarded as the climax of these particular songs. The examples I have in mind here, 'Hey Nono' by DAUSAKE and 'Ammona' by LUKUNAEFA, are very successful in Vanuatu.

The fact that the instruments play at the same dynamic level all the time means that a refrain stands out against the rest of the song simply because the additional singing voices are then set in.[441] Moreover, the chords often change their order in the chorus, or even a new, fourth chord

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[438] Examples are 'Moskito' and 'Awo Simix' from SARATOKOWIA ("Operation Lagoon", Vanuata Productions 1999). ERRO STRINGBAND carried this principle to an extreme in some of their studio recordings (also in other songs than the *tri step*-type).

[439] 'To join in' in Bislama is expressed through *kam insaed* (*gita i kam insaed* = the guitar joins in).

[440] According to Crowley, *kores* can also mean "verse"; probably especially in the realm of ecclesiastical music (see Crowley 1995: 125).

[441] The instrumentation and arrangement of the instruments does not differ between stanza and chorus, a special characteristic of stringband songs in contrast to many pop songs (in particular in studio productions).

appears but there are also songs in which the melody of the chorus is sung along to the same chords as in the stanzas.

To end a song is called *klosem* or *endem singsing* in Bislama. Many stringband songs just end without any special conclusion. Usually the last sung syllable is held for at least one bar and up to three bars, and the instruments play a final kick. There are also songs with a smart but simple chord sequence as its ending. As has been mentioned above, there are many *tri step* songs with outros which mirror the song's *introdaksen*. Some song endings are compiled in Notation Example 5. Very few recorded stringband songs are faded out.[442]

3.6 Rhythm, Tempo and Duration

There is, in principle, a range of possible rhythms to be used in stringband music. However, many groups confine themselves to the so-called *tu step*, which accounts for the great majority of songs, and the *tri step*, a rhythm that is used in what might be called 'stringband ballads'.

There is no switching between rhythms within a song. Rhythms are always in regular meter.

The *tu step* is one of the first rhythms used in stringband music in the past (interview with George Pakoa 2004). Its name probably dates back to the days of American influence in the 1940s. On album recordings, most of the average twelve songs are arranged in *tu step* along with about two *tri step* songs. The *tu step*, in 4/4 measures, can be played at quite a fast tempo and is played with a more or less strong shuffle feeling. The *tu step* is responsible for the lively charisma most listeners associate with stringband music. Nowadays, most *tu step* songs are played in the style of the stringbands from the islands from the centre of the archipelago (Efate with its off-shore islands and the Shepherds Group). In these the *yukalele* player mainly plays the three strokes (highlighted in bold and underlined): **<u>1</u>** + 2 **<u>+</u>** 3 **<u>+</u>** 4 + (Notation Example 5).

Tu step songs usually last between 1.20 minutes and 3 minutes. The *tri step* is generally slower, may last over six minutes and thus, on average, is clearly longer than a *tu step* song. As mentioned in 2.2.5 the *tri step* was allegedly created by MAKURA TOKOLAU in the late 1970s. Apparently this new rhythm was simply numbered consecutively without any musical

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[442] The only such endings I came across are in the songs 'Cynthia' by (YANG) SOUWIA and 'Juliet' by MAGARUAWIA & SARATOKOWIA, both *trip step* songs.

logic behind it: *tu* (two) *step*, *tri* (three) *step*.[443] The patterns strummed on guitars and the *yukalele* are different in *tu* and *tri step* (cf. Tracks 25, 28 & 32, *tri step*, and Tracks 26, 29 & 30, *tu step*). The stressed beats of a *tri step* often correspond to the so-called bossa nova clave, a rhythmical pattern used in Brazilian music. Beside the different strumming, the *seka* is played differently according to the 'step'. From a lead guitarist's perspective (who is present in a few stringbands or at least their studio recordings), long, slow songs give the opportunity for *flasem*; that is to ornament the arrangement with short solo parts.

Sometimes stringbands also use the *wan step*. Judging from song recordings, this is an accentuation of every beat (sometimes the first and sometimes the second a bit stronger) in 2/4 measures with a strong shuffle feel.[444] Interlocutors made contradictory statements about what a *wan step* is and, I would imagine, sometimes mixed it up with a *tu step*. The *wan step* also seems to be an old rhythm, although I was told that it had been played differently in the past.

Apparently the *step*-rhythms originated in and around Efate and spread from there to the rest of the country. During my fieldwork, I gathered that there is some confusion or disagreement amongst young stringband musicians about the *step*-system and consistent naming, although all naturally play the rhythms correctly. There is more consent among stringband musicians about the *tri step*.[445] The song 'Moskito' from SOUWIA[446] is in a 6/8 rhythm – declared by some young stringband musicians as *tri step*, while others categorise it as *tu step*. A few *pop miusik* musicians who have never played stringband do not even know about the 'steps'.

Apart from these three 'steps' – *wan*, *tu*, and *tri step* – ni-Vanuatu occasionally also use other rhythms in stringband music. These are in most cases bound to the place the musicians come from. George Pakoa from MAKURA TOKOLAU told me that there are vernacular names (in his language *Kira*) for certain rhythms in stringband music on Makira Island, which are different from the 'steps'. One of them, played in a high tempo ("*yu plei hariap, yu plei spid"*) is called *ono tavar*. *Ono tavar* refers to the sound of a broken wave at the reef ("*solwota we i brok*").

More research should be undertaken in the field of the various rhythms in local stringband styles of Vanuatu. Traditional musics mix with stringband music with respect to the element

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[443] When I unsuspectingly asked if there was something like a *fo* (four) *step* at the beginning of my fieldwork, the boys I was talking to laughed and replied: "*Tumas nao*!" ("That's too much!").

[444] In this case, a beat/crotchet is subdivided into triplets. In order to create a shuffle feel, the first and third triplets are stressed while the second rings through.

[445] However, the musicians of DAUSAKE, for example, classify their song 'Grassroot laef' as *tu step* (and the most of their other songs as *wan step*). The same is true for LUKUNAEFA and their song 'Maeva'. Spatial proximity of the places of origin of these groups may be a reason for the similar conceptualisation.

[446] This is also the opener on the album "Operation Lagoon" by SARATOKOWIA, Vanuata Productions, July 1999.

of rhythm.[447] The generation of Pakoa's father already used *ono tavar*, but this style was altered by MAKURA TOKOLAU. It is probably already too late to identify the original *ono tavar*. Another, slow rhythm is called *derum* (meaning 'slow' with reference to music in *Kira*). It is a straight rhythm, similar to the *wan step*, but played slowly. The strings of the guitar are muted after the second down-stroke. In *ono tavar* and *derum* guitars and yukalele strum the same pattern. The rhythms of Makira and the 'step system' co-exist without mixing. People also danced *teksas* when MAKURA TOKOLAU played *ono tavar* or *derum* songs (see also 4.3.2).

Traditional rhythms differ with respect to their applicability; for example, musicians from Ambae indicated that a song of the traditional category of *bolo* is easier to transfer to another music genre than songs from the *sawagoro*-type which are tricky because of their rhythm.[448] The VUSI BOYS use both types of rhythms in their stringband music and occasionally also make changes of measure lengths by inserting a measure of only two beats into a pattern with otherwise four beats to the measure.

Usually stringband musicians do play chiefly faster songs to keep a good atmosphere and the audience's attention. John Apei sees a connection between the tempo of the ERRO STRINGBAND's songs and the unsuccess of his stringband. The musicians chose a slow tempo to give space to the solo guitar and in favour of the comprehensibility of the lyrics. However, he holds ERRO's slow songs responsible for the bad sales figures of the group's albums (interview with John Apei 2004).

As far as song duration is concerned, my older interlocutors agreed that songs tended to be longer in the past. Besides, it seems that at least some rhythms like the *wan step* are played faster than some decades before. Apparently, the notion about what tempo is appropriate for what kind of rhythm has changed. A detailed study about the relations between rhythm, tempo and duration of songs might reveal interesting findings about the development of stringband music in the past decades.

[447] For example, Raymond Ammann, who did extensive research on traditional musics of Vanuatu, told me that he had found a characteristic pause in the *yukalele* pattern of some stringbands which correlates with a pause in the traditional rhythms of the same people.

[448] If someone manages to 'straighten' a *sawagoro*, it might be possible too, the musicians said – it depends on the ability of the arranger ("*Hem i dipen long man we i mekem nomo*"). The difficulty lies in the requirement that the rhythm corresponds with the associated dancing movements (interview with UPB 2004).

3.7 Harmony, Melodics and Singing

A stringband song's melody (*tiun*), with voices in three- or four-part harmony, as well as the chord progression as executed on the string instruments, is derived from Western functional harmony.[449] However, the arrangement of the parts is unmistakably typical for stringband music. Complexity with respect to harmonies plays an insignificant role in stringband music, to say the least. In most songs only three major and seventh chords (I-IV-V harmonies) are used, although the *yukalele* player usually varies the chords and the ways in which the chords are put together more than the guitar players do.[450]

Stringband musicians distinguish between soprano, alto and tenor parts in singing. The tenor (*tena*, *hae pat* or *nambatri* in Bislama) is the highest part, often sung in falsetto (*smol voes* or *giaman voes* in contrast to *big voes*), and therefore lies above the lead voice (*soprano*, *lid* or *nambawan*). Hence, the lowest voice is usually the alto (*alto* or *nambatu*).[451] John Apei from the ERRO STRINGBAND also distinguishes between a high and a low soprano. Sometimes two or more lead singers take turns during a stringband's performance. Singers might change parts from song to song but most specialise in either one or two. Some acquire such expertise that colleagues jokingly refer to them as *jif blong tena* (chief of the tenor) and the like. There is a bass part (*bes*) in the sphere of religious music. Some stringband songs also have four voices, for example "Ammona" by LUKUNAEFA (Track 30). With the exception of the all-female MAUNA STRINGBAND, SARAVANUA (see Stern 2007: 170) and DAUSAKE who also feature a female voice in a few songs, there are only male voices.

In some songs of the TOTAS LOCAL STRINGBAND two boys sing the stanzas together, both *soprano* in unison. If there are two different voices to a verse or, which is more often the case, to an intermediate part (bridge), the members of SOUWIA call this a duet. Parts sung by only one singer are referred to as *solo* or *singsing wanwan*. The soprano part is doubled (the voice is sung twice on differnt tracks) in studio recordings of DAUSAKE.

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[449] This is in stark contrast to the traditional musics in Vanuatu: "[I]n Vanuatu, choral polyphony is conspicuous by its virtual absence" (Crowe 1981: 419).

[450] When changing, for example, from the tonic to the subdominant, the *yukalele* player may play a seventh chord in between (D > D7 > G), while the guitar players stay on the tonic and then change directly to the subdominant (D > G). Moreover, the *yuka* part often adds a sixth, which is easy to play on the instrument as the empty strings create a sixth chord (D6).

[451] Most interlocutors depicted the setting of the voices in this way, although others named the alto part as being the highest (for example George Pakoa, Lui Philip, John Apei and the boys of LUKUNAEFA).

In studio recordings, the three parts are sometimes doubled (*dabolem pat* in Bislama) or even tripled in the chorus to get the effect of a broader sound; so in the end we hear for example nine voices in the chorus of the song.

In stringband music the aesthetics of singing require that the musicians use their voices differently than at other occasions, such as hymn singing at church or singing in a *pop miusik* group. However, in this respect there is a spectrum from relatively naturally used voices as in the music of stringbands from Futuna to extremely distinctive vocal style as in songs sung by groups from North Efate. An analysis of the melodies that leaves out this central fact would miss one of the most important sound characteristics of most popular stringband songs.

One of the characteristics of the vocal style of much stringband music seems to be the maxim that the melody, once established, has to be sung no matter how high it goes up during the song. Some singers frequently change their registers to sing the higher parts in the head voice (*smol voes* in Bislama), and then switching back to chest voice (*big voes*). The realisation of melodic contour seems to be more important than the comfortable arrangement of the voices. The singers of the soprano part in particular often seem to reach their limits, both in live performances as well as in studio recordings. They sing with a tense throat and sometimes the voice even cracks. Hendry Tari from the COOL SHADOW STRINGBAND pointed out to me:

> "We practise at a very high key. Okay, while practising we consider our voices. If there is one who cannot sing, who says that it is too high, we make it a bit lower. If we are just practising, we sing very loud, we give the very best we can. If we can manage this […] that's the key. We learn it like this, but we do not adjust the voices, no. We just prove ourselves in open space" (Hendry Tari 2003).[452]

Despite the vocal tension, the singers do not sound over-strained; they clearly sing higher than the normal speaking tone. While singing, the musicians stand still in the same spot with their heads thrown far back, as if aiming to sing towards a point at a distance which lies higher than their own mouths. Many sing with closed or half-closed eyes, often with contracted eyebrows and a concentrated, intense facial expression, showing the agony of forcing a high tone.

Singing technique differs regionally. In Ambae, for example, stringbands usually do not use the head voice – in contrast to the stringbands in SHEFA province. Some old men from Wuro

[452] "[…] *mifala i tren long wan hae ki, wan ki we i hae. Okei, taem we mifala i stap tren nao mifala i harem se voes blong mifala hem i olsem wanem. Sapos i wan we i no save sing hem i se se i hae tumas mifala i loem lelebet i go go. Sapos mifala i tren nomo mifala i sing* very *laod* with the very best *we mifala i save mekem. Sapos mifala i save manej blong mekem hemia* […] *ki hemia* […]. *Mifala i lanem olsem ya, be i no gat wan samting blong bambae ajajem ol* voices *blong mifala, no. Mifala nomo i jes pruvum mifala long* open space" (Hendry Tari 2003).

(Craig Cove, West Ambrym) pointed out that, as in traditional singing, no head voice was used in their stringbands.[453] In this particular case, tunes of *kastom* songs were taken over into the stringband-repertoire. The melodies were sung in the original, traditional way (with the chest voice) but with new lyrics. The *kastom* songs I recorded in Malekula were all sung at the same pitch. As we have seen, the same is normally true for a sequence of stringband songs, whether at a live performance or on a studio album. Detailed research about the relation between singing in *kastom miusik* and singing in stringband music might be rewarding, especially with respect to local particularities. Yodelling is an obsolete singing technique which was used in early stringband music in a similar way as in country music.[454]

Stringband music seems perfect to illustrate Charles Keil's point: to be personally involving, "[music] must be 'out of time' and 'out of tune'" (Keil 1987: 275). In George Pakoa's view, there is a way to sing a song straight. A good singer, though, would deviate a bit (*yu katem lelebet*). There are songs, he argues, that are sung throughout SHEFA Province: in Makira, North Efate, Tongoa, Emae and so on. Because of this competition, each singer aims to find his own, pleasing style of singing to convince the audience of his version.[455]

At the end of a stanza or chorus the last syllable of the last word is often prolonged without any vibrato and then falls down in a glissando. Thus, the line is often longer than a 'European ear' might expect or would perceive as being balanced. This very common vocal technique is not found in Vanuatu's *pop miusik*. Many stringband singers make use of a high degree of nasalisation which becomes especially evident with the prolonged endings with the vowels 'e' and 'i'. The vowel 'u' sounds in these line endings like a mixture of 'u' and the German Umlaut 'ü' [Y], to make it easier to sing at a high pitch.[456]

On nearly all occasions (with the exception of Fest'Nalega), stringbands perform without any amplification. When stringband music was at the height of its popularity around independence and groups started to perform while standing, the new singing posture contributed to the increase of volume that could be produced with the voices. In fact, they had to sing loud to assert themselves against the instrumentation of the groups. Singers usually sing at full volume. Producing even more volume is realised by singing the tune higher and/or by adding more singers. The fact that pop groups amplify their vocals makes a huge difference compared

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[453] They literally said: *Voes i stap daon nomo. I folem kastom singsing – voes i semak nomo* (interview with Samuel Mansop, Davide Dahkon, John Bela & Saki Fred 2003).

[454] Yodelling can be found, for example, in the repertoire of SLIM DUSTY, an Australian country musician who is quite popular in Vanuatu.

[455] Pakoa holds the view that many of the contemporary young stringband singers sing too straight.

[456] There are countless examples for this line ending with the word "Vanuatu".

to the singing in stringbands. Pop singers can modify their way of singing and work with dynamic (vary in loudness), whereas stringband singers above all have to be able to create great volume. To me, this difference became evident when I observed the soundcheck and performance of stringbands on a big stage at Fest'Nalega. The singers kept their distance from the microphone and on the whole acted as if the microphone was not there.

The features of articulation of vocal timbre described above do not occur equally in all variations of Vanuatu stringband music but on the whole they contribute to the unique characteristics of stringband music as opposed to singing in *pop miusik* and *kastom miusik*. Vocal techniques from these two realms and, especially, hymn singing are formative for stringband singers, yet the latter cut their own path. This is evident when compared to singers of *rege* or other popular music, who adopt and copy vocal styles of their idols. The singers who are involved in both *stringban* and *pop miusik* change their way of singing according to the genre. Twenty-year-old Julian Ligo, anglophone and himself a singer, objects to the practice of many *rege* singers to disguise their voices, assuming that they are not content with their own. Ligo complains that the lyrics are barely comprehensible because of the disguise of the voice. For example, he blames Ben Siro (HUARERE): "It is not comprehensible. The music is good. But the vocals – what is the message he tries to deliver? […] They copy the sound of the voice of a different person. […] You remodel yourself to become like this other person. […] You are not identical with him/her."[457]

Interlocutors called attention to the fact that the *soprano* singer has the responsibility within the band: he needs to know all the lyrics and especially the beginnings of every song. He has to sing articulately (*klia* in Bislama) and also has to know the song's structure, so as to be able to take the others along.[458]

[457] "*I no klia. Miusik i gud. Be ol vokal – wanem mesej nao hem i traem blong givim long yu*? […] *Oli kopim saon blong voes blong wan defren man*. […] *Yu staelem yu blong kam olsem hem. Yu yu no semak olsem hem"* (interview with Julian Ligo 2002).

[458] A musician told me that the *soprano* singer has to sing in a way that enables the others to follow – I did not fully understand how that works out in practice until I experienced it with my own stringband (in the singer's role).

3.8 Composing

Stringband music is a purely oral (and aural)[459] tradition. If musicians 'write down' a song (*raetem singsing*) during the process of composition, they usually write down its lyrics. Some musicians compose without writing down any words, while others do it because they find it much easier that way.

A stringband's repertoire usually consists of old songs, composed by the musician's fathers, uncles, cousins or *tawian*, as well as of new songs which have recently been composed. Although in live performances groups cover popular songs by other stringbands, they only record original songs by their own composers of the current or the previous generation in studio productions.

Often, musicians take on more than one role and for example, compose, arrange, lead the band, sing the lead vocals (*soprano*) and play the *yukalele*. Usually the melody and the lyrics of a song are devised by the same person. Some boys start to compose songs on their own as soon as they master the essentials on the *yukalele*. The composer (*komposa*, *man blong komposem singsing*) of a stringband is not necessarily an active member in performances. Quite often the composers are senior members who act in the background, sometimes staying on the island, while the stringband lives and performs in Vila. George Pakoa suggested composing songs for his children to improve the standard of their stringband. There are many other examples of senior members composing songs for the younger generation. However, some older musicians who have been successful in the past, regard their way of composing, arranging and playing as the better, the timeless way. They ignore different tastes and new fashions.

Jerry Samson, the composer of DAUSAKE, is not a performing member. When he finishes a new song, he sings and plays it to the group with a guitar. Samson composed most of the band's songs except for their most successful piece, 'Island Dress'. DAUSAKE bought this song from Alphongs Jack[460] for a small amount of money and Samson also obtained the permission to alter the lyrics a bit. 'Island Dress' became a 'stringband smash hit' after DAUSAKE published it on their album "Dawn of February" in 2001.

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[459] I add 'aural' here to stress that listening is as important as talking or singing in so-called 'oral traditions'.

[460] Jack is not from the same community as the stringband. He lives on Efate (mainland), while Dausake come from the off-shore island Nguna.

Usually, the relationship amongst various stringbands is characterised by strong competition. However, groups occasionally seek advice from other stringband's recognised composers or arrangers (as is the case with MAGAWIARUA and SOUWIA's Lui Philip).

Often, a stringband has two or three composers. Two male composers compose songs exclusively for the all-female MAUNA STRINGBAND. They receive a small payment at the end of every year. Otherwise, composers often do not get any extra money for their efforts. Most composers display their talents or compose for their personal satisfaction. People do recognise a composer's work but there is no 'star cult' surrounding even those who composed very popular songs. An example is David, the composer of the popular and influential stringband SOUWIA. A generation of stringband musicians (and other people) grew up listening to his songs. These days, he works for the stringband YANG SOUWIA. However, he does not write songs for them but drives the mini-bus, which the band was able to afford.[461]

Stringband composers have their individual approaches. Some composers conceive a melody first ("*mas faenem tiun festaem"*) and later devise the fitting lyrics ("*fitim ol* words *insaed, fitim tiun ya nao"*). While John Peter, composer of the COOL SHADOW STRINGBAND, proceeds in this way, his band-colleague Hendry Tari first writes a song text: "I write the story of the song through to the end and then I set the melody to it; I subtract or add some words to make the wordings fit to the tune of the song".[462]

Some bands compose their songs as a group. The members of TOTAS LOCAL STRINGBAND from Luganville, for example, first discuss proposals concerning the lyrics. When there is a body of text, they try to find a fitting melody. Each boy may make suggestions about how to sing the words.

The boys of young SOUWIA work with a mixed model; the composer (at the time Joe Gibson) holds a pen and makes a start with the composition. Three or four others sit around him, give advice and make suggestions about the wordings and the melody. The composer writes the words down and then makes a suggestion about the melody himself.

> "He [the main composer] sings the melody, okay, then we fit in a few words. […] like this song about Club Vanuatu, they wrote "Since 1964…" […] Okay, for example, if I feel that

[461] It is used as a taxi and thus contributes to the band's revenue (see 7.5).

[462] "*Mi raetem stori blong hem go finis nao, ale, taem mi putum tiun blong hem, ale mi subtrak o mi adem sam* words *insaed. Mekem se ol* wordings *oli fitim tiun blong singsing*" (interview with Hendry Tari 2003).

> something is not good […] I will say "take out 'since' and just write '1964'". Something like that, it is an example" (interview with Philip Louis 2003).[463]

After the melody (the soprano voice of a song) is established, the alto and tenor singers derive their parts.

Stringband songs are often produced by order of someone from the community who writes down their story in a letter, that is, something that happened to them, for example a love affair, and hands it to the group. Sometimes a buyer commissions the local stringband with the composition of a song to commemorate a deceased relative. Musicians also receive orders from institutions, for example for the inauguration of a new building. The composer then creates a song. In these cases he receives a payment for his work which may consist of money, mats (a traditional currency in parts of Vanuatu), fowls or pigs.[464]

Members of the COOL SHADOW STRINGBAND (Southeast Ambae) reported that the purchaser of a song has the right to request it whenever the group performs. Beyond this right, singling him out towards the other listeners, he has no further claims (such as copyright). If someone orders a song (*pem singsing*) the stringband can still freely decide whether to publish it or not. If such a song is recorded, the stringband delivers a specimen copy to the purchaser. Often purchasers come and copy 'their' songs to their cassette tape (*tepemaot* or *kopi singsing*) to listen to it at home. As it is self-evident that the composer tries his best when creating a song, the buyer would usually not utter dissatisfaction or give suggestions about how the song should be altered. Commissioners do not express their discontent towards the composers as they respect the musician's efforts. However, someone might complain about a song, with the result that the song is no longer played. If there is, for example, a song about a man who fell into a creek as a result of excessive kava drinking, he might stop the band from playing it at functions. As the protagonist of the song he is a subject of ridicule, while he is not able to laugh about the fact that he lost everything on his person, as well as nearly also his life in the accident. Tari comments: "If he likes [the song], it is kept but if he does not like it, if he is

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[463] *"Hem i singsing long tiun finis, okei, naoia mifala i fitim smolsmol* words. […] *olsem singsing blong Club Vanuatu ya, oli putum "*Since *long 1964..."* […] *Okei, eksampol, sapos mi harem se wan samting i nogud,* […] *bae mi se "karemaot* 'since' *putum nomo '1964'". Samting olsem, hem i wan eksampol".*

[464] The practice of composing songs on commission is long established within the realm of traditional musics in Vanuatu. Ammann writes: "If a man needs a new song for one or another reason, he can order a song from a specialist. The specialist will provide the new song, which, after the payment, belongs to the person who ordered it. Songs may also be traded across language boundaries and even between islands" (Ammann 2012: 23).

angry, you stop [playing it]" ("*Sapos hem i laekem, bae i stap, be sapos hem i no laekem, i kros, yu stop"*).[465]

How musical creativity is actually performed during the process of composition is hard to grasp and is surely highly dependent on the individual composer. It is difficult to study a creative process such as composing a song; to trace where the inspiration comes from – especially when the composer claims to draw on unconscious or even supernatural sources.[466]

In the following, I portray two different instances of composing a song, both songs made by the same musician, George Pakoa from MAKURA TOKOLAU.

When Pakoa went around Luganville with his child, he started singing quietly about what he saw and what was happening in that very moment (although singing in the past tense):

Mi bin go long northern *taon*	I went to the northern town
Nao mi go long maket ples	And then I went to the market place
Nao mi wokabaot kasem long Sarakata riva	And then I strolled as far as Sarakata river

I observed the practice of singing spontaneously while strolling around also with many others.

Pakoa wrote his verses down when he came home and kept the melody in his mind. Then he 'felt' the second stanza and the chorus coming (*mi jes stap harem nambatu fes i kam nao, kores i kam nao*). Several musicians in Vanuatu told me that the music 'came' to them in this way (*mi harem singsing i kam* – I feel the song coming).[467] This reminds one of the visions of traditional songs and dances people have (or had in the past) after drinking kava (see Ammann 2012: 25 & MacClancy 2002: 26).[468] Then Pakoa arranged his new song: he grabbed his guitar and found the fitting chords. As Pakoa said, the rhythm (see 3.6) comes of itself while the new song is played.

The issue of 'songs coming' to their creator is well addressed with a term coined by Raymond Ammann. Accounting for the fact that "the creation of songs by a specialist is not a purely intellectual procedure but rather a spiritual act that demands the intervention of ancestor spirits", Ammann avoids using the term 'composer' which "suggests the intellectual work of putting together invented elements such as rhythms, melodies, timbres and words to form a

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[465] I objected that in such a case the composer would have had much work in vain. In Hendry Tari's view this would not be a grave setback to a composer. In the end, the whole thing is just for fun (he said literally: *Hemia blong fan nomo. Olsem se hem i no wan samting we hem i impoten tumas long komposa*).

[466] 'Inspiration' was often mentioned by interlocutors, apparently it is an important aspect to many composers.

[467] The ambiguity of the verb *harem* is especially interesting for this context: it means 'to feel' but can also mean 'to hear' (see also Crowley 1995: 95).

[468] Some musicians report to have composed songs under the influence of kava; an example being the song 'Yumi go' by Henry Toka (see 7.4; interview with Henry Toka 2006).

piece of music" and therefore introduces "the term 'song receiver' to refer to such a specialist" (Ammann 2012: 23). Much as this may be valid for traditional songs (to which Ammann relates here) and some stringband songs, I prefer 'composer' for the domain of stringband music as musicians themselves refer to the creators of songs as *komposa* in Bislama.

In this first example, Pakoa made use of the things he saw around him during his leisure time. In the second example, he had to work under time pressure. A former member of MAKURA TOKOLAU wanted to take part at the official stringband competition in 1990 and announced his group as MAKURA TOKOLAU. However, apart from him no other original member was there; the only connection to the original group being that the band consisted of *man Makira* (people from Makira). In the night before the event was staged, he felt that the songs they had been practising for the past two or three months were not good enough to win the competition. So he asked George Pakoa, the former guitarist and lead singer of the group, to compose two songs for the boys, something he did in the early morning hours. It was the period around Independence Day and Pakoa had already heard people celebrating, leading him to sing: "*Yumi stap long bigfala lafet raon long Vanuatu…*" ("Around Vanuatu we [inclusive] are celebrating"). After he finished the first song, he wrote the second one. The next morning, when the band came to pick up the songs, they found Pakoa asleep over the piece of paper where he had written down the lyrics of the two songs. He taught them the songs and when they performed altogether, everyone found the first chorus so touching that they sat down and cried. They persuaded Pakoa to sing the songs himself at the competition, which started at 3 pm. He duly did, and 'MAKURA TOKOLAU' again became the winner of the 1990 contest.

Indeed one main motivation of the production of new songs is stringband competitions. The guidelines of a stringband competition hosted by Club Vanuatu included the rule that the groups should present a song about the Club. (YANG) SOUWIA accordingly narrated a boy-meets-girl story taking place at the Club in a new song (interview with Philip Louis 2003).

Other occasions for live performances also require new songs. Usually the song lyrics relate to these occasions. In the perception of ni-Vanuatu stringband musicians the writing of the lyrics is an integral part, and for many the most important, of composing a song. My interlocutors consequently soon began talking about lyrics and the songs' messages when I asked them about composing.[469] Many stringband musicians have their ideas about the ingredients needed to create and produce a good and/or (commercially) successful song. Most of the musicians I

[469] I examine lyrics in detail in Chapter 6, although this implies the artificial separation of lyrics and music.

spoke to hold the opinion that good lyrics make good songs. At the same time, John Apei, former member of ERRO STRINGBAND, reported that the fact that his group put emphasis on substantial song messages is one reason for the bad sales figures of their cassettes.

The second important ingredient for a successful song is the right *bit* (rhythm). Usually this means a danceable, lively rhythm like a fast *tu step*. While some stringband musicians aim to please a wide audience (in respect to different ages, places of origins and else), usually with up-tempo pieces, Apei framed his band's principles of composition like this: "The music must be slow enough to enable you to ornament and these decorations have to shine out. The guitar picking has to stand out. And the second thing is the message of the song. […] Because of this we sold badly).[470] ERRO STRINGBAND used not only the established rhythms (*wan step*, *tu step* and *tri step*) but first and foremost their own original rhythm which is, as Apei said, not suitable for dancing because of its slow tempo which however leaves enough space for improvised guitar parts. In this rather untypical case, new and different ways of playing stringband music make good songs in the view of the composer, albeit these songs proved to be less successful commercially. Within the interviews, I perceived another quality feature for songs: musicians tend to appreciate songs that evoke sadness and being touched.[471]

The composers I spoke with often claimed to have composed many songs. Especially some older composers told me that they have created hundreds of songs – stringband and pop musicians alike. Bob Kuao for example, aged 53 at the time of the interview, said that he had composed nearly 1000 songs (interview with Bob Kuao 2003). Although Kuao is not a stringband musician, his ideas reflect and summarise procedures and attitudes I often came across with stringband composers. He listed his songs with the title and the key (the latter given in capital letters, such as 'E'). Kuao even outlined a concept of how to teach others how to write a new song. An excerpt of his anglophone draft reads:

> How to compose a new song (Bob K.)
> 1) Have your own "aim"
> 2) Choose a "topic"
> 3) Give your "feeling"
> 4) Understand other "feeling" [sic]

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[470] "*Miusik i mas slo naf blong bae yu save flasem, mo flasem ya i mas kamaot. Olsem, gita i mas kamaot, pikim ya. Mo namba tu hem i mesej blong* song. […] *Mekem se mifala i no sel plante*"; interview with John Apei 2004). Of course that is not to say that most composers are success-oriented in financial terms.

[471] Musician Bob Kuao composed a song about his mother when she passed away in 1974. His family asked him not to perform it ever again because everybody had to cry so much. The sadness invoked, attested to the song's intensity (interview with Bob Kuao 2003).

5) Choose easy “language”
6) Use understanding “words”
7) Write your “song”
8) Give your own “tune”
9) Choose your own “style”
10) Play your new “song” (draft by Bob Kuao, accessed at his home in 2003).

Kuao’s first step corresponds with the often-voiced demand for a reasonable message; many stringband musicians urge that a song’s lyrics should be ‘meaningful’. There seems to be a contradiction with respect to those cases quoted above when songs are ‘received’ in a rather passive way.

Kuao recommends writing songs from the heart (“give your feeling”), however not just for one’s own purposes but also for others (“understand other[’s] feeling[s]”). I often came across the attitude amongst musicians in Vanuatu that songs should first and foremost be pleasing to the audience. This is especially put into practice by stringbands performing at competitions and when entertaining tourists.

All variations considered, it attests to the clear contours of the genre and its continuity that individual composers broadly submit to the typical structures of stringband songs. Composing for a stringband is not creating in a free, independent, artistic sphere but of course, as is the case with all genre-bound music, is dependent on the acceptance of the co-musicians and the audience. Thus, it is subject to “the processes of stability and change” (Merriam 1964: 184), and, as such, contributes to the formation and representation of identities.

4 Performance and Reception

> "Our musical choices contribute to our sense of self" (Storey 1996: 93).

As this work is a first extensive account of stringband music in Vanuatu, my focus is on the production of music. However, for a thorough understanding of stringband music it is important to also study its reception (see 4.1). Reception is the first step towards the acquisition of music. Ni-Vanuatu musicians act as 'musical brokers' when picking up foreign styles of playing and singing and then using them in their own music productions. According to the context of performance, stringband music in Vanuatu can represent anything in the range of "a highly participatory art form or a passive consumption experience" (Connell & Gibson 2003: 3).

In 4.2, the focus lies on music discourse. As identities emerge from social interactions, I view music and dance as participatory activities which play an important role for the sociability of urban and rural nightlife. Both the nightlife in Port Vila and the dancing events on the islands are important arenas of the performance and the reception of stringband music as well as *pop miusik* (see 4.3). While most studies concentrate on the public performances of music, I also focus on the rehearsals (see 4.4) which are important for the exchange between the musicians and which are also the sites where songs are arranged. In 4.5 I take a look at live performances and their public reactions. The various occasions where stringbands perform are examined; among these are stringband competitions (4.5.1), tourism-related performances (4.5.2), festivals (4.5.3) and concerts of ni-Vanuatu stringbands overseas (4.5.4).

4.1 Musical Preferences

I remember well having thought during fieldwork that the media cannot have much power over consumers in a place like Vanuatu, for the simple reason that there is not enough exposure to the media for a great proportion of the population. Media consumption is tied to technical preconditions and it is the field of technical development, namely that of mobile communication and the internet, where Vanuatu has seen crucial change in the past years. In stark contrast to the situation at the time of fieldwork, young people in Vila nowadays often listen with one ear to music played on their mobile phones on the side while hanging around

with (and talking to) their peers.[472] Many sources of musical influence for ni-Vanuatu musicians are mentioned throughout Chapter 2 and especially in 2.1.2. In this subchapter, some examples for less popular musics amongst most ni-Vanuatu are also given. It is about the musical preferences of the population, in particular that of young people.[473]

In the 1960s, people listened to the music of PETER POSA, THE BEATLES and ELVIS, as well as to country music by SKEETER DAVIS, JIM REEVES, CHARLEY PRIDE and Australian country star SLIM DUSTY.[474] The above-mentioned interpreters continued to be popular throughout the 1970s when, in addition, Pacific musics (*pasifik miusik*, that is Fijian, Tahitian, Samoan and Hawaiian musics), were important foreign musical influences.[475] In 1977, the pop group SAS TRIO was founded, with members coming from the island of Paama. SAS TRIO had a broad repertoire of *Pasifik miusik*, original compositions and also cover versions of songs from THE ROLLING STONES, BEE GEES, STEVIE WONDER, TOM JONES, ELTON JOHN, CHUCK BERRY, FATS DOMINO, CLIFF RICHARDS and CREEDENCE CLEARWATER REVIVAL (interview with Samson Andrews 'Fender' 2004).[476] Songs of THE BEATLES[477] as well as blues, chachacha, waltz, march music and rock'n'roll made up the usual repertoire of a 1970s' pop group in Vanuatu.

Toward the end of the 1970s and in the beginning of the 1980s, young people listened to THE BEATLES and JIMI HENDRIX, to PINK FLOYD, LED ZEPPELIN and BLACK SABBATH. Musician Henry Toka told me that people were very open towards international popular music at the time.[478] He had even listened to music from India and China and copied a cassette with Indonesian music which was brought to Vanuatu by his cousin. Since musical taste changes according to fashion, some interpreters seem to sink into oblivion and are rarely mentioned nowadays, such as MADNESS or other "New Wave rock bands" (these were noticed by MacClancy in 1980, as they were played on the secessionist radio station Vemarana in Santo, see MacClancy 2002: 156). In the 1980s, music from PNG started to become distributed to

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[472] Personal communication with the Canadian anthropologist Daniela Kraemer who worked in a Port Vila settlement.

[473] See Kraemer for a discussion of the concepts 'young' and 'youth' for the context of urban youth and young adults in Vanuatu (Kraemer 2013: 28 f.).

[474] The fact that older people enjoy the first three interpreters mentioned here has already been mentioned in the preceding chapters. However, I also met a 20-year old musician who said that he was greatly influenced by ELVIS PRESLEY (interview with Julian Ligo 2002).

[475] Some interlocutors also named music from the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea, while others told me that the popular music of these Melanesian countries became popular only after independence.

[476] After a fourth member, Timothy Maki, had joined in 1979, they changed their name to NEGATIVES.

[477] Musicians told me that they covered the songs 'Here Comes the Sun', 'I wanna hold your hand', 'Yesterday' and 'The long and winding road' amongst others.

[478] He said verbatim: „*Hed i open plante blong ol miusik blong aotsaed*" (interview with Henry Toka 2006).

Vanuatu. Webb reports that CHM, the most successful studio in PNG, issued cassettes of the band DEEJAYS also in Vanuatu in the mid-80s.[479]

It is safe to say that ni-Vanuatu of all generations are receptive to music from overseas. Most males over 40 years of age (at the time of fieldwork) have a taste for country music, often of Australian origin (in particular THE BELLAMY BROTHERS and SLIM DUSTY).[480] Some excluded explicitly current dance music (*miusik blong disko*). As expected, I found that ni-Vanuatu of different age groups have different musical preferences. However, I never heard any statements like "I do not listen to…" (this or that). On the contrary, people are generally open-minded towards different kinds of music. Ni-Vanuatu pop musicians try to reach a public as wide as possible and do not focus on a specifically intended audience; the market for music in Vanuatu is too small for them to be choosy. There are, however, occasionally target groups for single songs, for example the supporters of a particular football club or tourists. I did not detect any difference in reception preferences between musicians and non-musicians, except for the fact that people who make music themselves tend to be interested in a wider spectrum of different musics. I do not determine between different types of listeners[481] in this chapter but rather focus mainly on young people who were the target group of my structured interviews.[482]

The music available in Vanuatu through radio, television (music clips), nightclubs and sound carriers (tapes and CDs) can be classified as belonging to three different geographical areas: (1) international popular music, (2) regional popular music from Melanesia and the Pacific, and (3) local interpreters from Vanuatu. Songs of each of the afore-mentioned can be very

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[479] This group was "clearly indebted to Fijian and other Polynesian guitar-based styles" (Webb 1998: 155). Groups from PNG continued to tour to Vanuatu. In 1993, for example, BARIKE BAND from Rabaul (PNG), came to Vanuatu on the occasion of the South Pacific Mini Games (interview with David Andrew Iaukou Ruben Holden 2004).

[480] This preference might well be shared by women of this age-group but I do not have enough data for this group of recipients to support the assumption.

[481] For example, the often-quoted sociomusicologist, Adorno, identified different types of music listeners in a cynical and rather questionable manner (Adorno 1962: 14-34).

[482] A questionnaire was designed (in Bislama) to collect information about which interpreters are popular with young people in Vanuatu. The objective was to record the individual preferences by non-musicians (or amateurs at best). It could not always be prevented, however, that, when a questionnaire was handed to a youth, a crowd gathered around him or her, answering the questions collectively. In the end, this was not a serious constraint, as the main purpose was to learn which songs are popular among the youth. Although they were asked to give spontaneous answers, some youths, not used to filling in questionnaires, needed much time, as they were afraid of making mistakes. It was found that if they could discuss the answers within the group, the results were more fruitful than they would have been if the youth had filled in the questionnaire alone. In some cases, shyness and illiteracy were limiting factors; also, the survey was astonishingly time-consuming. It was for these reasons that only 47 questionnaires were filled in by young people of both sexes between 13 and 28 years of age. The results are nevertheless useful as they confirm my findings from qualitative interviews. Beside this, a few unexpected songs were also listed.

popular and people find it hard to tell which has the greatest impact on them. O-SHEN's 'Meri Lewa' for example – a slow reggae-like song from a musician based in Honolulu with roots in PNG – is as popular as the stringband top hit 'Island Dress' from DAUSAKE even amongst children (equally in town and villages).[483]

Soul or R & B ballads are popular especially amongst young girls. During the time span of fieldwork the most popular foreign female interpreters were, according to my data from the questionnaires, my experience from conversations, and participant observation, BRITNEY SPEARS, CÉLINE DION, SHAKIRA, MADONNA and SELENA.[484] Popular girl groups were THE SPICE GIRLS ('If you want to be my lover'), ATOMIC KITTEN and the South African groups BY 4 and DALOM KIDS. Boygroups are very popular amongst the youth, in particular WESTLIFE, the BACKSTREET BOYS and O-ZONE, a boygroup trio from Moldova.

It is conspicuous that African musicians are particularly popular: the Christian-oriented MAKOMA ('Natamboli', 'Napesi' and 'Moto Oyo' from the album "Nzambe Na Bomoyi" being played over and over on the radio, in stores and on privately-owned stereos), OYABA (e.g. 'Crazy Love'),[485] LUCKY DUBE, ALPHA BLONDIE, BRENDA FASSIE, BY 4 and DALOM KIDS. A study of the influence of church affiliation with respect to musical taste in Vanuatu may prove rewarding.

At the time of fieldwork only a few music listeners in urban Vanuatu had a wider choice of music to listen to through internet access. The supply of international music followed only a few different paths into the country, these coming particularly from Australia and through pirated CDs from Asia. Ni-Vanuatu's taste for zouk, a syncretic music from the French West Indies, probably owes to the strong French influence. The song 'Wind of Change' by the German hard rock band THE SCORPIONS is popular throughout the world and Vanuatu is no exception. However, apart from this, hard rock music is not very popular amongst ni-Vanuatu.

Young respondents also indicated regional stars from Melanesia, e.g. BASIL GREG, HENRY KUSKUS, KANAI PINERI and QUAKES (PNG) and O-SHEN (PNG/Hawaii), SHARZY (Solomon Islands), BLACK ROSE (Fiji), as well as DICK BUAMA and SEREDRIDR (New Caledonia). When answering the questionnaire, very few young people mentioned any music of Polynesian or

[483] Some children know the text of 'Meri Lewa' in all its detail, although it is in English and mostly in Tok Pisin.

[484] The most popular songs amongst my interlocutors being BRITNEY SPEARS: 'I'm not a girl, not yet a woman', CÉLINE DION: 'Sous le vent', 'A new day has come' & 'I'm Alive', SHAKIRA: 'No Matter', MADONNA: 'Die Another Day' and SELENA: 'Como la Flor'. Individuals named VANESSA AORASI ('Absolutely Everybody') and LUTRICIA MCNEIL ('365 Days').

[485] George Lapi organised concerts of OYABA and MAKOMA (interview with George Lapi 2004).

Micronesian origin. This is striking, as cassettes with such music are available in Port Vila and these musics are also played on the radio.

The most mentioned songs in the completed questionnaires are: 'Napesi' by MAKOMA (mentioned by ten youth), 'One Love' by BOB MARLEY AND THE WAILERS and 'Same Old Cap' by the popular ni-Vanuatu *rege*-band NAIO (each mentioned by nine). There are three international artists from different parts of the world among the twelve most frequently mentioned interpreters and their songs[486], and it is striking that being up-to-date seems to play no role in the preferences of the listeners (release dates in brackets): MAKOMA (Afrika/1999), BOB MARLEY & THE WAILERS (Caribbean/1977) and UB40 (Europe/1983).[487] The other nine songs are all from musicians from Vanuatu (see Table 3). Four of them are from the most popular pop interpreters at the time of fieldwork (NAIO, VANESSA QUAI, HUARERE and KROS ROD), another by a 'classic' of Vanuatu's pop history, VATDORO. Three songs come from the currently most popular stringband, DAUSAKE.

In many places, individual musical identity is attached to or evolves from the support of musical scenes which often transcend national boundaries – there are metal fans in Canada, as well as in Germany, and both might appraise the same bands. The realm of reggae is an example of how this works for many young ni-Vanuatu as well – even if more or less distinctive local varieties exist or are just about to evolve.[488] Stringband music with its purely national alignment, in contrast, is unable to produce a greater following of enthusiasts beyond the domestic market.

People in Vanuatu are aware that they are living in a remote place when it comes to accessibility to modern media and international music trends. Fiji, by comparison, is rated as more advanced and is regarded as a place where novelties arrive earlier than in the rest of Melanesia.[489] Sometimes there is music played on Radio Vanuatu that was not listed by any of my interlocutors, most likely due to the individual taste of the radio announcer. The most outstanding example that immediately comes to mind is an album of the German electropop pioneers KRAFTWERK that was played in full length during the lunch break of a broadcasted

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[486] Or song versions: UB40 covered the song 'Red Red Wine' by NEIL DIAMOND.

[487] These preferences remained constant over the period of the survey.

[488] However, because of the small 'field' (in terms of people involved) musicians and listeners in Vanuatu do not break down to a multitude of music related groups.

[489] Charlie Tari who spent some time in Fiji told me: "*Oli gat* access *long evri* single *niufala wev blong miusik*" ("They have access to every single new wave of music"). He observed that people are not as mad on reggae as are ni-Vanuatu (interview with Charlie Tari 2002). Hayward & Morrow point to the advantages of "Vanessa's isolated geographical location" when assessing the situation of VANESSA QUAI and her father/manager Nigel Quai (2008: 89).

parliament session.

Ni-Vanuatu more often have the opportunity to listen to live stringbands than to experience the concerts of pop groups. Stringbands generally rehearse outdoors in their neighbourhood, with live stringband music thus constituting an everyday experience for many people. Many of the questionnaire respondents stated their local stringband as one of their favourite interpreters. The groups clearly have much support among the people of their community.

4.2 Music Discourse

Discourse about music has consequences for the production of music.[490] Statements from the musicians themselves are scattered throughout this work. In this sub-chapter, I comment on music verbalizations mainly from the point of view of the listeners. However, this is a broad topic which can only be touched upon here in an introductory way.

Stringband music has listeners of all ages, and in many places, it is an obvious part of life to such an extent that the question whether one (generally) likes stringband music simply does not arise. When talking about music, people often voice criticism in the most general terms in statements such as "*mi harem se ol singsing ya oli no gat paoa nating*" ("I have the feeling that these songs have no power at all"). Music listeners would typically comment on pleasant or interesting songs with statements like *hem i naes we i naes* ("it is very nice"), *mi laekem* ("I like it") or simply: *namba wan!* Researching sound is a difficult undertaking because the subjective dimension of taste often comes into play. When asking why a technique, sound effect or something other was preferred over another, interlocutors sometimes simply answered: "*hem i* fit *moa gud long sora*" – "it sounds better". Positive properties of stringband music are described as relaxing and emotionally moving. Stringbands are appreciated as entertainment and for providing the music for dancing at functions and occasions of various kinds. People also value their function as reminders to important persons and events by means of the lyrics.

On the one hand, many young people name reggae/*rege* as their favourite music; while on the other hand, I often heard the expression "*mi les long rege*" ("I am tired of reggae/*rege*"). This criticism is illustrated in a cartoon that was published on the children's page ('Pikinini Pej') of

[490] I use the term 'discourse' to refer to verbalizations about music, for "any instance of actual language use" (Horner 1999: 18).

The Independent/L'Indépendant at the Fest'Napuan weekend in 2003 (see Figure 25).[491] As mentioned before, there is a discrepancy between the music liked by young people in Vanuatu and their own musical production. Some musicians complain that audiences in Vanuatu are too conservative and focused too much on the types of music they already know (that is, especially, *rege*). Julian Ligo from the group BRATAZ VIBRATION, a group that entertained audiences at Club Vanuatu every Friday and Saturday night, would like to play other music but finds people at the club not receptive to musical novelties.

Authenticity also plays a role for ni-Vanuatu listeners. There is clearly a notion of what is appropriate in what kind of music (e.g. what image or which guitar-playing technique suits a stringband), as well as what kind of music is appropriate for whom. More than once I heard people criticise VANESSA QUAI, Vanuatu's most popular female singer, for her supposed pretension of being able to play all kinds of music.

Despite the phenomenon known as *aelandism* ("islandism"), that is a 'nationalism on the local level' (an ideology that super-elevates attributes like the culture of one's ethnic community), people do support music groups coming from the same island, although not from the same community. This is the case with groups that come together on the island, as well as with groups which form in Vila or Luganville but whose members originate on a particular island. For example, UPB (UNEMPLOYED PEOPLES' BAND) originally come from East Ambae. In town, someone from Ambae, even if he or she is not from the same part of the island, might proudly support UPB when this band is performing; especially at an event where they play in addition to groups coming from other islands.[492]

Musicians often stress that a good stringband song has to have good lyrics, has to be 'meaningful'. However, the success of a stringband song of course also depends on musical aspects. Rhythm and tempo are important factors, as stringband music is foremost dance music for parties (*lafet*, *danis*). If a stringband wants to sell many cassettes before Christmas, it should not record too many slow songs with religious lyrics because the Christmas and New Year celebrations are used as a time to party on the islands. However, slow songs also have their advantages. As long, slow *tri step* songs are often danced in pairs, some male ni-Vanuatu pointed out to me that such pieces lend themselves for tight dancing (*holem taet woman*) and talking to the female partner (see also 4.3.2).

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[491] In contrast to the cartoon, criticism is always only verbal (musicians are not pelted).

[492] This might be different if the different (cultural) areas in the islands all had a *pop miusik* band of their own to be proud of.

In previous decades many expatriates apparently regarded stringband music as being monotonous and boring, or even shabby. Paul Gardissat, who founded Vanuata Productions, told me that Europeans were not interested in buying his cassettes. He had encountered ongoing opposition within the expatriate society of the country which knew too little about stringband music (interview with Paul Gardissat 2003). On the other hand, it is clear that stringbands are a welcome sight for many visitors of Vanuatu. My personal impression is that the image of stringband music has surely improved within the expatriate community since the days of Paul Gardissat's pioneering, although no systematic research has been conducted into this group as recipients.

A few musicians involved in *pop miusik* criticise the genre boundaries of stringband music. Henry Toka from TROPIC TEMPO, for example, shared with me that "I cannot say that I do not like stringband music but let me put it this way: The stringband does not allow people to express themselves. You end up with two or three cords".[493]

As far as the popular music of the neighbouring countries is concerned, many ni-Vanuatu assign certain styles to each country, although many have difficulties in putting the distinctive characteristics of these musics, as compared to others, into words.[494] Against this backdrop, it is interesting to see that people often mix up the geographical assignments of foreign music styles from outside the Pacific region. For example, many ni-Vanuatu (in fact most I talked to about this) hold the opinion that the styles reggae and zouk originated in Africa.[495]

4.3 Dancing and Nightlife

4.3.1 Nightclubs, Bars and Nightlife

At the end of the 1960s, there were three nightclubs in the capital. The clients of the 'Tahiti-Nui' and 'Le Melanesien' were expatriates and part-Europeans. 'Le Melanesien' had a band that played waltz and paso doble and was also oriented toward the taste of the (French)

[493] "*Mi no save talem se stringban mi no laekem, be bae mi talem olsem se stringban hem i no letem man i ekpresem hem. Yu kamaot long tu ki, kamaot long tri ki*" (interview with Henry Toka 2006). However, he likes to listen to the stringbands from Pentecost and Ambae and he also likes FUTUNA FATUANA who have their distinctive style and extended arsenal of instruments.

[494] For example, *kaneka* is ascribed to New Caledonia, and Tolai rock, "an electric-guitar based genre, which blended indigenous styles and standard rock" (Webb 1998: 154) to PNG.

[495] This situation has apparently changed in recent years, at least with respect to reggae (personal communication with the Daniela Kraemer). This is probably because young people in Port Vila meanwhile have better opportunities of obtaining information on the internet.

expatriate community. The clients of the third club, the 'Tei Tiki' were exclusively ni-Vanuatu (interview with Clement Martinez 2003). In Isangel, Tanna, Bob Kuao opened the 'Tukuasmera Mountain Club' in 1969. The building of the club was made from local materials but had a raised stage and a foundation of cement which is still there. People paid an entrance fee and consumed Australian beer. The club was not only visited by locals but also by French and English expatriates who worked as teachers, administrators or nurses in Tanna.[496]

In the 1970s, the 'Tei Tiki' in Tebakor and the 'Tahiti Nui' at Malapoa Point continued their business. The 'Saratokora Club' in Manples (Vila) was operated by a man from Tongoa.[497] Soon the nightclub scene in Vila was dominated by a French man by the name of Clement Martinez. In 1973, he opened his first nightclub, the 'L'Houstalet' (in Namba Tu) which was, as he said, the first 'real' nightclub in Vila with 'real' disco music[498]. At first, he had only expatriate customers but by and by also ni-Vanuatu came to the club and, with the place becoming very popular it also became rough.[499] For this reason, he opened another nightclub, the 'Privé Club' in Namba Tri where French waltz and chanson music was played. It was for selected customers, and he had a system with card members. In 1979, he took over the 'Tahiti Nui' and opened the 'Solwota Klub' there. This club was designed for the ni-Vanuatu.

Martinez followed a strategy of (racial) separation for different clients: a high-class establishment for the better-off European and half-European customers, and one for the "natives". The 'Solwota Klub' was very popular. Each Friday and Saturday night there were hundreds of people. Kalo Daniel, member of the LUMBUKUTI BEACH BOYS, worked during the day for the public works, road section, and every weekend for five years as a security guard in the 'Solwota Klub'. If fights were going on, he hurried also to the 'Privée' and 'L'Houstalet'. Roughly at the same time, Martinez opened 'Le Iaorana' nightclub, near the Erakor Bridge to "secure the market" and prevent others from opening nightclubs.[500] Western music cassettes or vinyl records were played in all of these clubs – *miusik blong waet man nomo* ("only white man's music"), as Daniel remembers. But there was one exception: in the 'Solwota Club'

[496] The 'Tukuasmera Mountain Club' in Lenakel, Tanna, was closed in 1975 despite its success. BOB KUAO left the island for his teaching obligations and unfortunately found no one suitable to replace him in managing his band and the club (interview with Bob Kuao 2003).

[497] It was popular among ni-Vanuatu and there was a band which provided entertainment, but occasionally other groups (as for example NEW RAINBOW) played there too (interview with John 'Beri' Willie 2004).

[498] In 1973, the 'L'Houstalet' was a restaurant and a nightclub in two separate buildings. The draft of the Constitution was celebrated there. Clement Martinez came to the country in 1969 from Tahiti to work at the Hotel 'Le Lagoon' (Crown Plaza at the time of fieldwork).

[499] He originally wanted to open the nightclub for expatriates but it "had been taken over by the natives".

[500] This club was originally called 'Le Melanisien' after which it was taken over by a Tahitian man and renamed 'Le Iaorana'. When Martinez bought up the place, he left the Tahitian name.

stringband concerts also took place. The LUMBUKUTI BEACH BOYS rented the club several times to stage events with stringband music, food and boxing.[501] For about 15 years, Martinez had a monopoly of nightclubs in the capital of the country. He thinks that the variety of music played at the different locations and the focus on different clients was the reason why he lasted so long.

Those men who liked a rough place went to the famous ‘Cookie Bar’ in Vila, which was operated by a Chinese man.[502] In 1986, the WESTERN BOYS called their album “Cookie Bar” after one of the songs which sings of the bar. On 27 December 1973, there was a demonstration held by the NP in Vila to protest the arrest of the Rarua brothers, namely two men from Tongoa who operated a successful nightclub in Santo (Van Trease 1995: 26). Luganville had the ‘Seven Star Night Club’ and the ‘Asia Club’ (which later became ‘Asia Motel’), where pop groups played live music.

In the 1980s, live music was performed at ‘Club Vanuatu’ and at ‘Le Iaorana’. Cyclon Uma destroyed the ‘Solwota Club’ in 1987, as well as all the other clubs operated by Martinez. After this setback, he left it to others to open nightclubs again and confined himself mainly to the ‘L’Houstalet’.[503] Martinez complained that cheap alcohol could be bought at every corner (black markets). The people were already drunk when they came to L’Houstalet and destroyed the fittings. He had security, but what, he asks, can five security guards do against 30 drunken men? It became too rough again, and when Martinez could not control the situation anymore, in 2000, he closed the nightclub, only maintaining L’Houstalet as a restaurant.[504] The stringband VANRUWO mentions “L’Houstalet naetklab” in their song ‘Army Hat’.

At the time of fieldwork, expatriates, tourists and some ni-Vanuatu visit the ‘Flaming Bull’ (which had been the ‘Office Pub’ before) located at Lini Highway at the Fatumaru Bay. Tourists, especially ‘yachties’ (yachtswomen and yachtsmen), go to the Waterfront Bar.

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[501] Interestingly, there were only stringbands performing – no pop groups – while popular music was played from cassettes (and stringband music was not).

[502] Moses Stevens said about the ‘Cookie Bar’, which was situated in the area where ‘Club Vanuatu’ and the UNELCO (Union Electrique du Vanuatu) are nowadays: “A men’s bar. If you know, you’re strong, you go there. A Cowboy-bar” (*“Ba blong ol man. Sapos yu save se yu strong yu go.* Cowboy-*ba ya*”). The Bar was closed in the late 1970s (interview with Moses Stevens 2004).

[503] However, in 1987, he first re-opened the ‘Privé Club’ (as a restaurant), because this club was the least destroyed of all. After only three or four months he re-opened ‘L’Houstalet’ and moved the restaurant there to reduce costs. The ‘Privé Club’ was closed at the end of the decade, as the place ‘got rough’, as Martinez said.

[504] In 2003, Martinez was in business for 30 years. To celebrate this, he staged dancing nights on Saturdays with live music for people over 40. A band led by Jean-François Petersen, who is half French, is specialised in the music required, namely French songs and waltz. At the time of the interview, he also planned to invite entertainers from the last 30 years to perform (interview with Clement Martinez 2003).

On the islands, club-like dance events are held, usually called *disko*. *Disko* in Bislama refers to the disco dance, to dancing disco (*danis wanwan* means to dance alone) and to the club-like gatherings (especially when people dance to the music played by a disc jockey rather than by a band).[505] In the villages I visited, these are not staged regularly but only at festive occasions like the time around Christmas and New Year. A generator is organised to produce power for stereo equipment and lighting. A special house (either concrete or built from wood, bamboo, and palm leaves) might serve the purpose; otherwise people would stake out an area in the village with palm leaves. The dancing takes place within this compound (see Figure 26). Home-brew (called *yis*, *draebam* or *melek blong yumi* in Bislama), made from yeast and the juice of tropical fruits like mangoes, pawpaw or fresh coconuts, often plays a part in these events. This cheap substitute for beer can be very strong and often has fatal effects, as some young men lose control and become violent.

The consumption of alcohol, namely beer, is part of the club experience, with quarrels and fights tending to increase already in the late evening or early morning hours at Club Vanuatu, for example. Musician Leonard Willie, as a representative of the group BRATAZ VIBRATION, repeatedly complained of the poor performance of the Club's security, which failed to protect the band and its equipment.

Young people who belong to the SDA community are not allowed to go the club. The AMBASSADORS, a religous a cappella group, told me that they would probably be excluded from church if they were caught dancing at a club. Drinking alcohol and kava is prohibited, as is smoking cigarettes. However, a few SDA youth told me that some drink kava and also secretly go to Club Vanuatu every now and then.

4.3.2 Dancing

A particular form of music reception and body response to music is dance.[506] Dancing to stringband music corresponds to Western dancing for entertainment. It is not meant to tell stories through formalised body movement or symbolic gestures, as in traditional Melanesian dances (*kastom danis*). In its early days, one of the sensations of stringband music was that people could dance in pairs (*teksas*), which had not been practised in Vanuatu before.

The genre might very well owe much initial enthusiasm to this fact. The length of the

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[505] As I report, a dancing event can also be called *disko*. This meaning of the word is not listed by Crowley (1995: 63) in his dictionary; maybe it is derived from the French term 'discothèque'.

[506] As dancing is not one of the main topics in this study, also not having been a major focus in my field research, the following remarks are meant as a first and general introduction.

stringband songs used to be longer and older interlocutors hinted at the advantage of this gaving them more time to dance and to talk to their dancing partners. Body contact also plays a major role in dancing to slow songs. I heard countless statements from the male perspective like "*danis slo blong holem gud woman*" ("dance slowly to hold the women tight"). Pakoa fondly remembers the days when he played for a dance on the island: "*Derum* is [a] slow [rhythm], the people danced tightly [literally 'glued']. When I played a slow piece… e! The men felt that they have to hold the women, you know?".[507] These reminiscences probably mostly refer to dancing to *tri step* songs in which people generally move closely with each other.

If people start to dance at a live performance of a stringband this is taken as an expression of appreciation. When George Pakoa (MAKURA TOKOLAU) spent Christmas on his home island Makira in 2000, he attended the celebration of a child's circumcision, and was urged to spontaneously join in with the local stringband as a way of encouraging the guests to start dancing (interview with George Pakoa 2004).

The dancing style that is called *tu step*, like the corresponding rhythm in stringband music, is danced on the spot without taking up much space when moving around. The feet are put a step forward and back again alternately, with one foot always remaining in the initial standing position. When danced with a partner, the man and woman face each other, loosely holding the other's hands.

On occasion, people dance *teksas* to stringband music, especially to songs set in the *tri step* rhythm but young people often prefer dancing without a partner, that is *danis wanwan* or *danis nating*. This applies especially to local and international popular music. I often saw girls and young women applying the *tu step* dancing style without a partner to other popular music at the club (*naetklab*). On the contrary, boys and young men tend to dance in a lively manner, making gestures with their arms, jumping about and shaking or throwing back their heads. Dancing in this way becomes wilder when their alcohol-intake increases. Songs that are perceived as *slo* (whether a slow *tri step* in stringband music, a *pasifik slo* or a pop ballad), still tempt people to dance closely with a partner, also at the club. Sometimes four people gather together in a cross-shaped position and dance facing each other.

Dancing is crucial in Western music clips, and local productions are clearly influenced by this.

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[507] "*Hemia, derum i slo, man i glu ya. Mi, taem mi plei long slo ya, ...e! Ol man oli harem oli mas holem woman, yu save...*".

Interlocutors from different parts of Vanuatu mentioned that traditional dance styles are similar to the way reggae music is danced to.[508] At the time of fieldwork, Scandales, Club Vanuatu and Cub Imperial were the most popular places for dancing in Port Vila.[509]

Occasionally, ni-Vanuatu musicians use male or female dancers in their shows on stage. This is rarely the case with stringbands; DAUSAKE used male dancers at special gigs as their concert at Fest'Nalega in 2003. More often, pop groups use dancers, for example TROPIC TEMPO or the TUKUASMERA MOUNTAIN BAND, who performed with twelve female dancers at a *pop miusik* competition in 1984 but also regularly at their club gigs.[510]

Although ni-Vanuatu use the term 'DJ' (*dije* in Bislama) to relate to someone who selects and plays music in a club (such as Maraki Samuel, DJ at Club Imperial) or is in charge of playing music at parties, DJ-ing techniques as cutting, scratching, looping and the use of vocal samples are not at all an issue because no vinyl records are used, and most people lack detailed knowledge of hip-hop culture. Even if some listen to it and like it, hip-hop is far less internalised by young ni-Vanuatu than is international reggae. However, hip-hop culture finds its expression in the domain of dance. A novelty of the 1990s was the appearance of dance groups, for example 6 TO 8 (Port Vila), ICE MC (Luganville) and VAKE (Tanna). In 1994, the dance group VAKE was formed by boys from three or four villages around Isangel.[511] ICE MC originated among young unemployed Banks Islanders living in Mango Stesen, part of Luganville in the same year.[512] This was the point of departure for other similar groups who were founded by members of ICE MC. One of these is NOUVELLE ALLIANCE, who formed in 1999 and is based in Port Vila.[513]

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[508] Or rather, more specifically, that it is similar to the way people dance to reggae music in Vanuatu.

[509] Le Flamingo Night Club was closed most of the time during my stays in Port Vila.

[510] The dancers were given the function of inciting the male club audience to dance. They were dressed in green (to resemble Tukuasmera Mountain), blue (like the sky and the sea) and red (like the flowers of a certain tree and to symbolise the volcano).

[511] Sam Hetukai altered break dance movements he had learnt from another boy, a student of Malapoa College, by adding *kastom danis* elements and developed what was then called the *vake danis*. Other boys became interested in dancing in this way, thus providing the basis for the group's foundation (interview with Charlie Iawantak & Jack Malia 2002). At the time of fieldwork, VAKE made a tour to Port Vila and presented their show, for example, in Club Imperial.

[512] Having no financial means to obtain equipment in order to play music, the youth started to dance to the music of the British rapper, Ian Colin Campbell (aka ICE MC). The dancers were born in Luganville, but the members' families originate from different islands of the Banks Group. At the time of fieldwork, the group had seven members, the oldest being 21 years old, the others 18 and younger (interview with Fenet Francis Marak & Yankee Blecka Solong 2004).

[513] NOUVELLE ALLIANCE also has members of other islands like Pentecost (interview with Stephan Donald & Richie Lonsdale 2003). ICE MC's trainer Yankee Blecka Solong has an older brother; this man trains NOUVELLE ALLIANCE (interview with Fenet Francis Marak & Yankee Blecka Solong 2004).

A good example for the change of meaning of imported elements of popular culture in a local context is the dance group VAKE from Tanna. The ten boys have created a unique fusion of break-dance and movements from *kastom danis*. The way they do this exemplifies the selective appropriation of foreign influences. Gestures that could be understood as sexual allusions are *tabu*. The public nature of this street art has been changed: the group's training now takes place in a secret bush location and when people want to see the group, they have to pay to do so. When VAKE came to Vila, they trained secretly at night, dressed in black tracksuits, thus protecting the unique style that they regard as theirs. When the group danced at the Club Imperial as well as at other places in Port Vila around Christmas, the show was announced as presenting a new dance style from Tanna. In Vanuatu, innovations like this are quickly claimed by the whole community. Instead of leaving it to the youth, their *jif* accompanied them to the capital to make sure that they behaved decently and also to collect the money the boys earned with their shows. Just as traditional culture is put on display for tourists, the VAKE dance that could be something like the nucleus of an independent youth culture, serves as a source of income.

4.4 Rehearsing

The main function of rehearsals is to prepare for performances and to develop new material.[514] Some young stringbands are coached by an experienced musician. Once a successful stringband has a contract with a hotel in the capital, they spend so many hours playing on the job that additional practices are not common. If necessary, members practise for themselves at their homes. Still, there are phases that require intensive rehearsing. Before a group goes to the studio to record an album it usually practises the songs it is going to record for some days. The same goes for when preparing to take part in a competition or for live performances on the radio (see 5.3.1.1).

Stringbands usually rehearse in the afternoons after their work is done. In town, at least some members of the groups may have a job that requires working late hours, so rehearsals are often

[514] It is difficult to capture the actual rehearsal work of the musicians in the field, as they sometimes switch to 'presentation modus' as soon as an outsider comes to witness their rehearsals, and rather present completed songs, while giving some background information as they would in an interview. I found it easier with pop groups, maybe because rehearsals are costly and the musicians have to focus. Another reason might be that several of my friends were pop musicians and more used to my presence. I twice had to jam with the group before they agreed to be interviewed (with NAIO and with some musicians around Ben Ratonel in Luganville).

on Saturdays and Sundays. Some groups rehearse at least once a week. In Bislama, musicians refer to the process as *trening* or *praktis*; to rehearse is (to) *tren* or (to) *praktis*.

Bands practise outside when there is no rain. In the aftermath of the 'Operation Klinim Not', a police operation against youth gangs in Santo (see 6.2.2.1), the municipality of Luganville forbade any noise after 9 pm, with the result that the stringbands there can no longer rehearse in the later evening hours. The boys of TOTAS LOCAL STRINGBAND rehearse in their yard nearly every afternoon with no fixed time. In most cases I recorded, practising musicians had no problems with complaining neighbours; this is especially so with stringbands, whose rehearsals are quieter than those of pop groups. However, there are also other cases: the group NOISY BOYS derived its name from the fact that people called the members just that. MAKURA TOKOLAU even rented a room for practising.

Pop groups cannot practise outside but need a dry room and electricity. Pop groups in island settings without a power grid connection face even more costs: for each rehearsal they need a generator. UPB from Ambae, for example, hire a generator for 1000 vt (7 €) per day and have to spend another 600 vt (4.30 €) for four litres of fuel. If the generator has to be fetched from another village, they also have to bear these costs. Two days of rehearsing means that over 3000 vt (21.50 €) are deducted from their fee.

Stringband musician George Pakoa (MAKURA TOKOLAU) bought a small tape recorder with a belt at the Fungkwei store. When rehearsing, he made recordings with this device. Although these recordings were made for use amongst the band members only, they quickly spread to a bigger audience.

When young musicians come together, the atmosphere is generally unconstrained and cheerful. When interviewed, the older musicians complained that the younger band members were not focused enough and that they goofed around too much. Too much kava consumption was named as a constraint to dedicated rehearsing.

Bands from other islands which stay in Port Vila often pause for the time from around Christmas until March because their members then go on holiday to their home communities. Such breaks from practising are more common with pop groups than with stringbands because the latter are more often from the same community anyway (where they are busy playing around Christmas and New Year).

Aside from composing – a process hard to grasp through participant observation – rehearsing is the most interesting part for those interested in the creation of music. Public performances

are merely the product of what musicians develop during their practices; at least in genres where improvisation is reduced to a minimum, as in stringband music. The rehearsal is the arena for the negotiations with respect to musical details in the arrangement of songs but is also an important field in which musicians discuss and thus actively shape their characters and their concepts of collegiality and friendship.

I listened to musicians' accounts on occasion about performances they had had to face in public without having had the necessary time to rehearse. These stories were naturally always about important appearances, for example at the festival Fest'Nalega or at stringband competitions (less important concerts would not have put the musicians concerned in the same distress and thus would not be worth telling). The narratives reflect the thrill musicians experience when spontaneously forced to play in a new line-up, or when having to end songs collectively through unpractised cues, and so on. Usually the reports end in stating that the gig was successful despite the awkward circumstances, and the narrator looks back with a feeling of relief and amusement. At this point in interviews, I was tempted to think that I had finally detected a cultural universal.

4.5 Live Performance and Public Response

Although the media in Vanuatu help in distributing stringband music, live performance is particularly important. It is comparatively cheap to hire a stringband and the groups do not need any electronical equipment, meaning that they can play everywhere and no PA system needs to be organised.[515]

In many cases, structures of the community are behind the staging of events where stringbands perform. The bands perform at a wide spectrum of occasions: marriages, fundraisings, on the occasion of the birth of a new child in the village, circumcision celebrations, kava nights, stringband competitions, or just for the fun of it in the afternoons when the garden work is finished.[516]

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[515] To request (a band) is *rikwestem* (*stringban*) in Bislama. I found that live music in general is quite common in Vanuatu, whereas in German bars and hotels, for example, recorded music is most often chosen.

[516] However, as already mentioned, some religious communities, such as the Church of Christ, do not encourage their members to play any music that encourages dancing. In such cases, stringbands are not allowed to perform within the village, having to go to neighbouring communities to play at dance events.

Stringband concerts take place quite often in Vila, even during the week. There are two annual live performance peaks. The first is during the Christmas and New Year celebrations, with the more successful groups releasing their new albums and promoting them with gigs already before Christmas. The second peak is in July, around the Independence Day celebrations, when many stringband competitions take place. These are also popular times for getting married and stringbands are needed for entertainment at weddings.

In the town, there are two peaks in concert density every month around the government pay days (*gavman* payday) on the Fridays in the middle and at the end of the month, when one finds stringband entertainment in the *nakamal* (kava bars). The whole weekend after a pay day in fact tends to be busier as far as the nightlife in town is concerned. Kava nights (in the form of a fundraising event called *kava naet* or *fanresing*) are also staged on these two monthly dates. Kava and food[517] is sold and consumed on the spot. Fundrasising events of this kind can be found in town as well as in the villages. At a kava night or fundraising event, stringband music is a form of entertainment which accompanies kava drinking, eating and chatting but not necessarily dancing. Most of the people present usually know the group anyway and since it gets dark early and there is no extra light for the band, it is not necessary to smarten up. Often, the musicians stand in a circle around the *busbes*-player, with their backs to the public, just as they do when rehearsing. At other occasions the members pay a lot more attention to their outward apparance. At competitions and in hotel performances for tourists they dress in uniform aloha shirts and garlands, and face their audience.

Stringbands compile their programmes according to their audience. When young SOUWIA perform in a village with elderly people present, they play old stringband classics which the audience appreciates. During town performances they make sure they incorporate enough favourites, for example the latest popular songs like ‘Island Dress’ from DAUSAKE which regain the attention of the listeners and get them dancing (interview with Philip Louis 2003). Individuals from the audience also make their own requests for songs, meaning that stringbands that want to remain in demand have to be able to play a huge repertoire.

If the atmosphere is good, the impact of a stringband can be thrilling. Everybody, from the very young to the elderly, gets carried away by the music and starts to dance. Playing rousing music is called *faerap*, or *laetem* (*wan singsing*), and the audience is not passive but responds

[517] For the most part *laplap*, which consists of a dough of grated vegetables (yams, wild yam, taro, cassava or banana) with coconut milk, *aelan kabis* (*Abelmoschus manihot*) and chicken, fish or flying fox. *Laplap* is wrapped in leaves and then cooked for hours in a ground oven. It is Vanuatu’s national dish.

to the music in a lively way. There is an interesting contrast between the physical behaviour of the audience and the characteristic performance postures of the musicians. Usually, there is a more serious, concentrated atmosphere among the stringband members, with the musicians doing their thing without paying much attention to audience reactions. A delighted audience cheers and people throw in short calls like "*Laetem!*". Stringband musicians, in contrast, are usually not very talkative while performing; announcements in between the songs are not common. While pop musicians speak to their audience more often, the biggest share of talking at Fest'Napuan is done by the funny and popular announcer Timothy.

In Ambae, I witnessed a stringband performing in the usual position, that is, standing close in a crowd and facing each other, with the audience dancing around the group, circling them just as in the *kastom danis* performances in this area. Stringband musicians never walk around – whether they perform on a stage or not. This is in stark contrast to some pop singers who move around the stage (for example John Kapala from KROS ROD).[518] Strikingly, the behaviour of the audience is often very different at *pop miusik* events. At a *konset* or *so* (concert, show) as is staged at Club Vanuatu, people sit and listen in a very concentrated way (in contrast to the event called *danis*, a dancing event with live music as described in 4.3.2). Even at Fest'Napuan, most people listen to the performances by sitting on the ground at some distance from the stage.

4.5.1 *stringban kompetisen*

As in other Pacific countries, music competitions are frequently staged in Vanuatu,[519] occasionally within *pop miusik* yet, more often between choirs.[520] The most common and popular contests, however, are stringband competitions. The stringband usually has to pay a participation fee when enrolling for a competition (*putum nem* = to give in one's name) and the events are often combined with fundraising, consisting of the disposal of home-made food (especially *laplap*) and kava.

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[518] Some pop group performances offer more than usual. While TROPIC TEMPO put on a show with dancers, the NOISY BAND wears a special outfit, not common in pop music group performances. Such live shows resemble traditional dance displays in which dance, music and body paintings or masks form a whole.

[519] Competitions have been popular since decades. In the mid-70s TIM KALMET and FRANÇOIS VINCENT AISSAV both took part in Pacific-wide song contests in New Caledonia and Tahiti, each attaining a position in the top five. The latter also won the national song contest for the national anthem of Vanuatu (*Nasonal singsing blong Vanuatu*), which is published in Tryon (1999: xi) (interviews with Timteo Kalmet 2003 & with François Vincent Aissav 2003).

[520] For example the big Unelco competition "For a Brighter World". Unelco, the energy supplying company, organised this competition which took place from the 16th to the 19th December 2002 and had 16 choirs participating. The final show was broadcast live on radio.

Stringband competitions are often organised by governmental and non-governmental institutions, and the songs that are composed for these events carry messages that mirror the official lines, respectively positions which are acceptable for these institutions. In their lyrics, stringband musicians often approve of the status quo, serve as a confirmation of the circumstances and propagate instructions for socially desirable conduct. As a substantial part of their songs address common concerns like education, health programmes, agricultural produce, development, tourism and environment (see 6.2.2, in particular 6.2.2.6), there are many occasions for stringband competitions, the most outstanding being the celebrations around Independence Day. Competitions not only provide an occasion for countless compositions but also motivate musicians to improve their interplay as well as their stage appearance.

The competitions are appealing for stringband musicians; for one thing because of the awards a group can win, usually in the form of money. For example, LAURUA STRINGBAND was awarded the third prize in 2001 and received 15 000 vt (107 €). John Apei from ERRO STRINGBAND told me that the wish to take part in a particular stringband competition (*stringban kompetisen*) was the reason for the foundation of the band, and this is one among many other similar examples.

Competitions are often hosted by schools. Apart from film screenings (movies with Bruce Lee or John Wayne), stringband competitions were a popular leisure activity on Saturdays at Malapoa College in the beginning of the 1980s (interview with Moses Stevens 2004). Apart from the 'Talent Night', *kwaea* and *stringban kompetisen* are still organised by the students. Each year, normally in July, the Vanuatu Junia Jemba organises a music competition among primary school children in Port Vila. The themes follow the official themes of the years (for example '*Wota wan impoten sos blong laef*' – 'Water, an important source of life', '*Aelan kakae*' – 'Island/Local food', or 'Yia blong buluk' – 'Year of the cattle').[521] Rural schools also organise stringband competitions. For example, the STONEY BOYS won the first prize, a guitar, at a competition which was hosted by a school in the Ranon district (Ambrym); the motto as well as the occasion being Children's Day.[522]

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[521] Tony Ligo, page 16, *Tam Tam*, Issue 2, 17th November 2001. 2001 was the 'Year of Local Crops', 2002 the 'Year of Livestock', 2003 the 'Year of Re-Forestation' and 2004 the 'Year of Fisheries Resources'.

[522] In Vanuatu, Children's Day is an annually celebrated public holiday on the 24th July. 'Children Day' [sic], the first song on their album "Lake Siwi" (VKS Productions 2002) was composed for this occasion.

Although stringband competitions became increasingly important and popular in the late seventies, they had been held long before. According to stringband veteran Ephraim Bule, politicians invited musicians to compete with each other for a prize – not for the purpose of deciding which was the best group but rather to stimulate public interest in a form of genuine Melanesian music (in contrast to pop groups which were frequently cover bands at that time). Thus, stringband competitions were an important contribution to the popularity of stringband music in the course of the 1970s. Groups like VATDORO came all the way by ship from Pentecost to Vila to participate in competitions (interview with Ephraim Bule 2002). Competitions were and still are also staged in the island communities. The boys of the village Wuro, west Ambrym, call themselves LONHARO, a name chosen as early as 1979, when the local stringband registered for a competition.

According to stringband veterans like Kalo Daniel, Joel Kaltang and also Paul Gardissat, the competitions preceding independence were much bigger and had much more atmosphere and appeal than contemporary national competitions.[523] Compared with the 1970s, the coverage in newspapers of the day is meagre (in Gardissat's view). These competitions were staged at the FOL with thousands allegedly taking part[524] and with competitive rivalry not only between band members but also the supporters of the groups – a syndrome that has since vanished.[525]

Since independence on the 30th July 1980, big stringband competitions are held around the end of July each year. On Independence Day itself, MAKURA TOKOLAU won the contest again, which took place at the Seafront in the centre of Port Vila. SOUWIA also took part with only four band members. The participating stringbands were grouped into two categories: the already established senior bands like MAKURA TOKOLAU and SOUWIA in group A and the newcomers in group B. The first three of group B (HUARERE became first in this group) went to the final with the best of group A on Independence Day.

The Vanuatu National Pop Music Competition on the 30th July 1980 was organized in the same way as stringband competitions. 15 groups participated (interviews with Bob Kuao 2003).[526] According to John 'Beri' Willie, his group NEW RAINBOW shared first prize with TROPIC TEMPO. TROPIC TEMPO, as their prize, went on a trip to Melbourne with the pop group

[523] This brought Joel Kaltang to propose the event Fest'Nalega (see 4.5.3).
[524] Judging from the size of the venue, I would estimate rather hundreds instead of thousands.
[525] Paul Gardissat compares this rivalry with the competition between supporters of sports clubs.
[526] According to my interlocutors, each group had to perform three pieces, two of them self-written songs. The jury (which was composed of other jurors than the stringband competition's jury) rated the outfit and the lyrics which were to cover the topic of independence. Independence is now no longer a popular topic with pop groups.

NAGAVIKA and the stringbands SOUWIA and VATDORO in August 1981.[527] The groups took part as the Vanuatu delegation in the Australian Youth Music Festival and stayed for three weeks in Melbourne and its surroundings. In Melbourne, TROPIC TEMPO played at many different venues in shopping malls and on the streets. They were not paid for this but their flight and accommodation covered (interview with Jimmy Dummic 2003).

The official celebrations of the first anniversary of independence in 1981 started on 25th July with a stringband competition (group B) at the FOL from 2 pm to 2 am and ended on 2nd August with a choral singing competition. On the 29th a dance was staged at the waterfront, and on the 30th there were political speeches, church services, *kastom danis* displays, parades, the hoisting of the flag, and singing of the national anthem. At night, there was a public dance at the waterfront, the 'Solwota Club', Hotel 'Le Lagon', and 'Intercontinental Island Inn'. On 1st August, the national stringband competition (group A) took place from 2 pm to 1 am.[528]

In 1982 or 1983 five boys (the KUAE BOYS) without money to spend during the week of celebrations, spontaneously took two guitars, a ukulele and a tambourine from the music room of the Malapoa College, picked up a *busbes* somewhere and strolled through Anambrou towards the FOL hall, the competition's venue. They participated barefoot in their school uniforms and were so successful that they received the fourth prize of 5000 vt, meaning that each boy had 1000 vt to spend in the streets and that their photo came out in the 'Tamtam' magazine (interview with one of them, Moses Stevens 2004).

A stringband competition was staged at Club Vanuatu on the 28th July in 2002 with the aim of generating revenues, and the event was promoted via radio. Apart from the STONEY BOYS, stringbands from Efate took part in the event. Three original compositions were required; each group had to present a song about the Nation of Vanuatu, a song about Club Vanuatu as well as a love song.[529] Listeners had to pay an entrance fee of 400 vt (2.85 €) and then witnessed

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[527] Beri had recruited two male and two female students to complete the line-up for the contest and trained them within just two weeks. Shortly after the event the band broke up and the students joined NAGAVIKA who won the competition again in 1982 (interview with John 'Beri' Willie 2004).

[528] Accompanying these events, several sports contests took place in the disciplines of petanque, handball, volleyball, football, basketball, netball, cricket, squash, golf, tennis, rugby, boxing, and water sports like windsurfing and yachting (according to an original programme). In the background photographs of the programme-poster, sports activities and flag hoisting can be seen, as can two stringbands' musicians who are seated while playing.

[529] In order to fulfil the last prerequisite, (YANG) SOUWIA competed with a song about a girl and a boy who met at Club Vanuatu (this song, 'Cynthia', was later published on their album "Onesua Golden Jubilee", VKS Productions 2003).

the competition of six bands (the event was a comparatively small competition).[530] SOUWIA won the first prize (interviews with Philip Louis 2002 and with Robert Wola Tien 2003).

Stringban kompetisen is a standard occasion for stringband performances and are popular with musicians and audience alike. However, musician Moses Stevens reported that his brother Richard never wanted to record the songs he had composed for a competition because he objected to the very idea of competitions – the fact that the jury decides over others' ways of expressing themselves. In his view, all participants made precious contributions (interview with Moses Stevens 2004).

The juries usually consist of people who have some function or affiliation with the institution which stages the event, along with others who are accredited with experience in stringband music. Juries assess the compositions, the lyrics, the performance styles and the presentations (for example, the musicians' smiles). The outfit is an important aspect of stage appearance at competitions (see 5.2.1). TOTAS LOCAL STRINGBAND won a competition that was hosted by the FSP Yut Drop In Centre in Luganville. The guidelines included each group having to present three or four songs, with one composition for the competition having to be about unity and diversity. The FSP officer Lavinia Philemon kindly provided the evaluation sheet which clearly indicates how *kastom* outfit was to be best rated. The band members of TOTAS who did not know about this preference wore painted grass skirts from Tanna (although the members do not come from Tanna) and flowers (*burao*, *Hibiscus tiliaceus*). The first prize was a mobile phone (back then and at least for these boys this was less attractive than the second prize, a guitar, because only one member works and hence can afford a sim card).

4.5.2 Tourism-Related Performances

> "[…] Vanuatu's real beauty is its people, their warm smiles and friendly hellos and welcomes that normally hospitalities our visitors (Statistical Yearbook 2002: 95).

Vanuatu has much to offer for the different categories of tourists, as tourism is one of the main pillars of Vanuatu's economy.[531] The welfare of the country's tourism industry is determined

[530] The participation conditions were mentioned in the public notice on the radio and as only six bands applied, all of them were accepted. The jury consisted of four people, one of them being the manager of Club Vanuatu.

[531] According to the Statistical Yearbook 2002, 1300 people were employed at hotels and restaurants in the formal sector; 7.5% of the total employment in Vanuatu (Statistical Yearbook 2002: 43 f.). The National Statistics Office recorded 17 500 visitors in 1980 and 57 591 in 2000 (Statistical Yearbook 2002: 96).

by changes in the cruise ships' itineraries as well as by the national airline's contracts with Australian Airlines and their flights (Statistical Yearbook 2002: 94).[532]

In contrast to the *nanggol* custom (land diving) of South Pentecost, or Tanna's famous Toka celebrations, stringband music is a ubiquitous 'national attraction'. Live stringband performances accompany many tourist activities in Vanuatu, showing how the music is regarded as a tourist-related service industry which constructs images of Vanuatu and ni-Vanuatu life for outsiders. On the one hand, it is found in most places, while on the other, it can easily be brought to the tourists, whether on the quayside or the poolside.[533] The groups are employed at all the switch points of the industry, starting with the entry of the tourists (at the airport or the wharf) and their arrival at the hotel, right up to special occasions such as the popular weddings at the Erakor Lagoon. In 1972 the deep-sea wharf was completed, resulting in the trebling of cruise ship arrivals (MacClancy 2002: 148). Musicians from Tahiti and Fiji intitially greeted the incoming cruise ship passengers (interview with Joel Kalang 2002). In either 1975 or 1976, one of the managers of Burns Philp asked SOUWIA to take their place in playing for the tourists in front of the company's buildings. They were paid triple the amount of the usual fee for a stringband gig; in Joel Kaltang's words the "*praes blong ol waetman*" ("a European's pay").[534]

The tourism sector plays a major role for stringband music at the level of the most successful groups. The most popular stringbands have contracts (*gat kontrak*) with hotels in Port Vila – a sought-after job opportunity which can only be achieved in exceptions by comparatively unknown bands.[535] One example of the latter is the STAR PEAK STRINGBAND which entertains at The Melanesian Hotel as a poolside combo. Although the members of this group were

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[532] Air Vanuatu Ltd. was established in 1981 and commenced its own services from Melbourne, Brisbane and Auckland to Port Vila in 1989 (Statistical Yearbook 2002: 94). Another factor which influences the tourism industry is the cyclones which affect the country annually and to varying degrees between November and April at different places of the archipelago. There are yet other reasons for the fluctuations: in 2000, the crises in Fiji and the Solomon Islands led to a high increase in tourist arrivals in Vanuatu (Statistical Yearbook 2002: 96).

[533] According to John 'Beri' Willie, stringband music has only been accepted in hotels since the mid-80s, beforehand, musicians had to play "their music" ("*miusik blong olgeta*") [the music of the Europeans/Australians and so forth], for example chansons (interview with John 'Beri' Willie 2004).

[534] Kaltang worked at BP at the time.

[535] There is no division within stringbands, according to a target audience: those groups which are valued most by the locals are the same groups which are given contracts with hotels to entertain tourists. In general, the musicians do not specialise in the tourism sector. Henry Toka who became renowned for his innovative work as a member of TROPIC TEMPO had contracts with Le Méridien, Iririki, Hotel Lagon and the Waterfront Bar, performing with his new group BOE seven nights a week for about two months while he worked at Vanuata Productions in the daytime (interview with Henry Toka 2006).

originally taken on as a dancing group,[536] when the hotel management was looking for a stringband, they said that they could also play music.

The most important hotels are the Crowne Plaza/Warwick Le Lagon[537], the Iririki Resort, the Le Méridien (former Intercontinental) and The Melanesian Hotel. The daily musical entertainment at the big hotels is shared between groups performing *kastom* music and dance, stringbands and one-man-bands. All of the members of the well-known stringband FUTUNA FATUANA also perform *kastom danis*. Between the two performances the group's members have five minutes to change clothes (interview with David Taforua 2003). SOUWIA entertains at the Iririki Resort and, under the name of LAURUA, at Le Méridien. MAGAWIARUA play at Warwick Le Lagon in the morning (breakfast), in the afternoons (arrivals of new guests), or as a poolside combo, depending on the situation. They also perform at the 'torch light ceremony' as an opening of the dinner, as well as at weddings and birthdays (of hotel guests) and more generally at every hotel function.

The all-female MAUNA STRINGBAND went for a speculative application and audition to the big hotels in Vila. They failed at the Crowne Plaza but were accepted at Le Méridien. The group performs twice a week, on Mondays and Thursdays, and starts playing on a stage in the lounge at 6.30 pm.[538] MAUNA STRINGBAND has no written contract, just a verbal agreement. The musicians are catered for by the hotel restaurant and can use a shower. According to the leader of the band, Maria Mauna, many young girls are interested in the MAUNA STRINGBAND because it offers an unparalleled opportunity for them to perform in public, and for an audience of tourists.[539]

Some tourists ask the musicians for tapes or CDs with their music, and it is therefore an advantage for stringbands which perform in hotels to have sound carriers ready for sale. An important requirement for the entertainment at hotels is the ability to ensure that there are always enough members for the group to perform. The Iririki Resort, for example, requires a

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[536] Some members had accompanied TROPIC TEMPO on their tour to Florida in 2001 as dancers (interview with Stanley Wevales 2003).

[537] It used to be Le Lagon Parc Royal in the 1990s, it then changed to Crowne Plaza and became Warwick Le Lagon during my fieldwork. My interlocutors used both names, Le Lagon and Crowne Plaza, to refer to the hotel. It is situated at the Erakor Lagoon. Hotel Rossi no longer exists but it was frequently mentioned by older musicians.

[538] In the past, the stringband MAKAMBO BROTHERS used to entertain at the same hotel. They had a contract for a period of three years (interview with Leonard Willie 2002). In the 1990s, HUARERE entertained in three different Hotels in Vila until around 1997. In addition, they performed regularly at Club Vanuatu on the weekends as a pop group from 1995 for a period of six years (interview with Edgar Hinge & Ben Siro 2002).

[539] Globally considered, an all-female band is a rarity – according to the feedback of tourists (interview with Maria Manua 2002).

minimum number of twelve performers (see also 3.1). The YOUNG BEACH BOYS once had a contract with the hotel Le Lagon and performed there twice on each Sunday (11 am to 2 pm and 7 pm to 10 pm). This went on for about four years until some members started to prefer drinking kava than meeting their obligations, with the result that interest was lost on the part of the hotel and that the group dissolved in 1993.[540]

A fundamental difference between stringbands and pop musicians who entertain at hotels lies in the fact that stringbands cannot play songs impromptu which the hotel guests request. While the stringbands present a repertoire which is completely new to the average tourist, some pop musicians indeed respond to the wishes of the audience.[541] According to John 'Beri' Willie, it is not a coincidence that musicians of the old school like SAMSON ANDREWS 'FENDER' and TIM KALMET play at the big hotels.[542] The young musicians are not capable of playing the music in demand for hotel entertainment – *rege* is not required (interview with John 'Beri' Willie 2004).

In contrast to the 1990s, when tourism was primarily restricted to Port Vila (Efate), Tanna and Espiritu Santo, the government meanwhile promotes the development of tourism throughout the islands. Thus, as a side-effect, performance possibilities for stringbands might increase on the islands, especially in those places, where cruise ships stop. Stringbands also perform at tourism-related events outside the country, organised by the National Tourism Office (NTO; see 4.5.4). This is practically the only way for stringbands to give concerts overseas (in contrast to pop groups which might perform at festivals or clubs in Honiara, Port Moresby or Nouméa).

In some settings (within Oceania and beyond), the display of traditional music and dance plays an important role for the preservation of these practices. However, tourism-related

[540] Kalo Daniel reported literally: "They drank [kava] and were not interested anymore. If kava affects you, you haven't the power to turn up" ("[*O*]*li dring, oli nomo gat intres. Kava i kilim hem, bae i no save gat paoa blong* turn up"; interview with Kalo Daniel 2003).

[541] David Andrew, for example, entertains at the Waterfront Bar, a tavern directly located at Port Vila's marina. Some guests send him compiled CDs with the songs they recommend him to perform. In this way, he has already received many CDs and has got to know which interpreters are popular with yachties (in fact, they apparently love JIMMY BUFFET's song 'Margaritaville'; interview with David Andrew Iaukou Ruben Holden 2004).

[542] At the time of fieldwork, TIM KALMET entertained at the Hotel Le Lagon. He played there on Mondays from 6 pm to 9.30 pm on the seafood night. Sometimes he is substituted by MOSES STEVENS. REYNOLDS HERERA (a member of VATDORO) and ALBEA NALISA are the most popular solo entertainers, the latter being younger than the others mentioned. He performed at Le Lagon Parc Royal, then Iririki Resort and currently at the Warwick Le Lagon (interview with Albae Nalisa 2003). In the 1990s, Henry Toka entertained at various places and even NEW ETHNIC had contracts with the Waterfront Bar and Le Méridien, as their part-time work with the permission of the Commander of the VMF. The five performing members only received a small surcharge for overtime; their fee was paid to the VMF (interview with David Daniel 2003).

performances of stringbands are important only in terms of income. Culturally, they are not crucial because they do not have the function of preserving the art. Still, the 'tourist-songs' are part of the typical stringband repertoire. While these songs appear to be a response to the tourists' expectations as far as their (often English) lyrics are concerned, they do not differ in style from stringband songs with other textual contents (see 6.2.2.4 on lyrics of such songs). There is, however, a difference in the appearance of a stringband between a performance in a village context (or other local-oriented venue) and a performance for an audience of tourists. While band members stand in a circle with their backs towards the audience and with people dancing around them at village functions or a *kava naet*, they form a line or two rows, facing the public at the hotel; just as they do at a stringband competition or at Fest'Nalega (see 4.5.3). In some places, as at the Le Méridien there is a stage in the lobby for the groups to perform on. The musicians wear a uniform dress when playing for an audience of tourists (in contrast to a usual fundraising event). Still, as in most other performances (except for Fest'Nalega), stringbands at hotels perform without amplification.

In contrast to any kind of display involving the representation of *kastom*, stringband music has the advantage that questions about the authenticity of the representation do not arise.[543] Indeed, this is notable in consideration of the sector's focus on traditional artefacts and architecture, dance (involving headdresses and body painting), sand drawings and rituals. While all of these – although fostered and vivid in many cases – embody a traditional past for the visitors, stringband music helps to create an image of contemporary Vanuatu which represents the country and its people as hospitable, welcoming, friendly – and yet exotic. This latter aspect is important as the "global travelscapes of tourism are entirely dependent for their success on the production or finding of authentic cultural difference" (Tilley 1997). Stringband culture has not produced an equivalent to the material artefacts of 'the domain of *kastom*' which can be taken home by visitors in form of woven mats and fans or miniature slit gongs. However, tourists can buy cassettes instead. As far as the marketing of Vanuatu and its communities as a tourist destination is concerned, a general focus on *kastom* does not interfere with stringband music. Although people in Walarano (Malekula) theme their tourist shows and

[543] Tilley (1997) describes the reactions of Wala islanders to a show for an audience of tourists which was criticised by some for being inauthentic.

attractions as a representation of traditional life and *kastom*, a stringband greeting the cruise ship passengers is an inherent part of it as well.[544]

4.5.3 Festivals

There are various big music festivals in Oceania which pronounce local culture along with the cultural variety of the region.[545] Often, traditional dances and local music traditions are presented together with syncretic genres.[546] In Vanuatu, there is a variety of smaller and bigger events which one could regard as 'festivals'. In the rural island communities, live music is staged at events which are not exclusively meant as concerts, such as agricultural shows and so-called Mini-Arts Festivals. In Vila, there are plenty occasions for the presentation of live music in public: music nights at schools, the Fête de la Musique[547], choir competitions (*ol kwaea-kompetisen*), Nasonal Dei blong Kalja, Port Vila-Dei, and also open-air concerts of foreign artists.

Several schools stage music nights but the one at Malapoa College is particularly popular and successful. The first Malapoa music night took place in October 1979.[548] Each music night in Malapoa is opened by a *kastom danis* from Vanuatu.[549] In the beginning, the students employed popular groups, stringbands and pop groups alike – FUTUNA FATUANA, SOUWIA, TROPIC TEMPO, VATDORO and the VMF BAND – as crowd pullers. However, soon some college-bands evolved: NAGAVIKA (including teacher Charlie Pierce), BLACK REVIVAL and TRUMPS.[550] Initially, the PA and most instruments had to be hired but with each passing year,

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[544] Often, the stringband musicians are also the performers of a *kastom danis* presentation. When I visited the area, the community was preparing for the first arrival of the cruise ship Pacific Princess from Australia that was to bring 600 passengers. The opening of the tourist project was scheduled for 20th January 2004 and the arrival of altogether five visits in 2004 was expected (Vanuatu Daily Post, 10. 1. 2004). See also DeBlock 2019: 150 f. for an update.

[545] Among these are the South Pacific Festival of Arts which was first held in Suva (Fiji), in 1972, and the Hibiscus Festival which has been held annually in Suva since the 1960s (Saumaiwai 1994: 93).

[546] In contrast, many big Western music festivals target especially young people and present only a comparatively narrow spectrum of different music genres. Most of them are specialised in particular kinds of popular music, sometimes even concerning only one style within a genre. The scope is as international as possible. In Germany, for example, at many Festivals, the lack of any band of German origin would hardly be conceived as a shortcoming, but would attest to the international (that is to say high) standards of the line-up.

[547] On the 21th of June each year, musicians all over the world take part in this event (see https://fetedelamusique.culturecommunication.gouv.fr/L-evenement/Presentation-de-la-Fete, last accessed on 12 March 2020).

[548] Initially, it was planned as a one-time event to raise money for music equipment for the school. The revenues were used to buy a second-hand drum set, an amplifier and two electric guitars for the Music Club. The music night was well received and it thus became an annual event.

[549] Other traditional performances include foreign dances from Kiribas, Tonga, Fiji and India.

[550] There was also someone playing classical music on a piano, British and Australian folk music and a male choir of teachers. The BLACK BROTHERS also participated and sponsored the event with their equipment.

the equipment of the school increased, the quality of the college-bands improved and the number of professional guests from the outside declined. More than half of the school became involved in the Music Night – either on stage (partly in other locations like the Ex-FOL or Cine Hickson) or within the organisation. Gradually, the event was prolonged and now takes place on four nights, enticing thousands of visitors (among them Prime Minister Walter Lini in 1984). Since the 1990s, the annual 'Talent Night' was held at the end of Term One, a competition at the school. In 1995, over 75 different groups of students applied to take part in the Music Night; of these the committee chose 32. Once, in the middle of the Saturday night show, a stringband had to keep 800 spectators happy for half an hour in candlelight during an electricity cut. Charlie Pierce writes in a paper about the event: "'Malapoa Music Night' has become a College and also, probably a national institution".[551]

At the Fête de la Musique, concerts are staged in Port Vila and Luganville. Musicians do not participate for money (no fees are paid) but for their promotion and because some of the performances at the Fête de la Musique are examined by the organisers of the big festival Fest'Napuan (hence the musicians can use the opportunity to present themselves).[552] Under the auspices of the Alliance Française, Falau Jacob became the organiser of the Fête de la Musique in Luganville, provided premises for rehearsing and presented the groups on stage. The pop group REAL SURVIVORS is annually requested to provide their instruments, PA system and technician (interview with Mark Hensley 2004).

In 2004, Mark Hensley contemplated the idea of organising a festival of the Northern provinces (MALAMPA, SANMA, TORBA and PENAMA) in Luganville, because the second town of the country should also have a festival (similar to the Fest'Napuan). It was planned to take place from the 30th August to the 1st September on the stage (La Place) in Unity Parc, and organised by the REAL SURVIVORS. He planned to look for sponsors in town and had already approached the Telecom Vanuatu Limited (TVL).[553] The choice for the dates of the event is due to school holidays, since the school children and youth are to take part.[554]

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[551] Sources: A short text entitled 'Malapoa Music Night', written by Charlie Pierce & personal communication with Charlie Pierce).

[552] A similar contest seems to become established in the Solomon Islands where one group is selected to be sent to Fest'Napuan.

[553] The REAL SURVIVORS ordered new Yamaha speakers from the Sound Centre for 145 000 vt (1035 €) per piece. The Ministry for Youth and Sports sponsors them. The new speakers are meant to help make the event a success, and the musicians use them in combination with their 16-channel mixer. Even without the new speakers, their PA system is considered to be the best in Luganville. Hensley called the event provisionally 'Northern Islands Music Festival' (interview with Mark Hensley 2004).

[554] According to Mark Hensley, the Matevulu College has some good bands. They can practise with a drum set and other instruments at school.

Fest'Napuan plays a big part in the current cultural calendar of events in Vanuatu. Each year, the music festival takes place in Vanuatu's capital Port Vila – just opposite of the parliament building at the compound of the 'Cultural Complex' compound which includes the Vanuatu Cultural Centre and the National Museum.[555] The main idea of the Festival is to present national and international popular music groups to the public in Port Vila once a year and free of charge.[556] The Fest'Napuan is an event where ni-Vanuatu musicians have the opportunity to use professional sound equipment, the best available in Vanuatu. The Fest'Napuan committee makes no difference between professionals and amateurs in the selection of the participating groups and thus wants to provide young musicians a chance.

Annual Fest'Napuan is in terms of visitor numbers the biggest national event and also the most important occasion of the year for the local music scene of professional and amateur bands in the country. From 2000 onwards the VKS was the main driving force behind the organisation of the Fest'Napuan. It is organised by a committee, which consists for the most part of jobless young men, many of whom are musicians themselves.[557] One very important task is procurement of financial means, the search for sponsors willing to support the musicians. The organisation is a challenge for the youth and is also seen as training in office-management, administration, logistics and event organisation. Although the festival's success depends on these volunteers, the committee requires also some charismatic and sometimes quite differing personalities to reach its objectives. When Ralph Regenvanu was the director of the Vanuatu Kaljoral Senta, he ensured that the committee could use the facilities and time of the staff of the VKS, making it one of the major sponsors of the event. The success of Fest'Napuan in recent years therefore does owe him a lot, but there are also other volunteers who devote themselves, their time and their effort.[558]

The organisers encourage diversity in music – especially since the festival incorporated the 'Festival of Praise' for the first time in 2002 and then, in addition, the 'Fest'Nalega' from 2003 on. Now the event is a four-day spectacle: on the first day, usually a Thursday in October

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[555] In 1998, the festival took place at Independence Parc, without the involvement of the VKS. In 2000, the venue moved again up to Saralana.

[556] See also 2.2.7, 2.2.8, 7.4 and 7.6 on information about Fest'Napuan.

[557] One of the organisation committee's presidents, Ralph Regenvanu, was director of the VKS at the time of fieldwork. He is a musician himself (taking part on stage in Fest'Napuan 1997) and his focus on youth matters brought also popular music to the centre of attention.

[558] David Nalo, for example, strives for a better future for the musicians in Port Vila. He started 'Further Arts', an agency mainly for the development of popular music with many connections to regional and international organisations, networks and donors; one of them being the European Union.

or November when the weather is still cool and the cyclone season is yet to come,[559] the festival begins with the Fest'Nalega. *Nalega* means 'music' in a language spoken in North-Efate and its offshore-islands. This is the region from where most of the popular stringbands in Port Vila come.

On the following Friday and Saturday, the core of Fest'Napuan takes place: two nights of pop-music from both Vanuatu and overseas. Usually there are two groups from neighbouring New Caledonia, sometimes a group from the Solomons or Fiji, and two or more other groups from Australia or New Zealand. The aspect of musical diversity has great significance especially because the music scene in Vanuatu is – apart from stringband music and religious music – very much dominated by reggae. On Sunday, the 'Festival of Praise' with religious music is performed during the day. Here, the numerous Seventh Day Adventist choirs dominate the stage. Weeks and months before Fest'Napuan begins, the media are discussing the line-up of bands and other aspects of the festival. During the event, newspapers include the festival's programme and interviews with guest-musicians and the like. In 2003, the Saturday night performances were broadcasted live on television.

The technical equipment and the airfares for the musicians from abroad comprise the main expenses. One basic premise is the fact that the festival is free to the public. Financial means have to be obtained elsewhere. One source of income for the Fest'Napuan's committee is the renting of stalls for the people to sell food or kava during the festival, another is the organisation of a fundraising event at Club Vanuatu.[560] The committee also sells T-Shirts in various colours with the logo of the event, but here they usually earn very little. Therefore, the Festival depends on the generosity of its sponsors (see 7.6). Since the beginnings in 1996, the event has developed considerably with regard to the quality of the technical equipment and the stage. In 2000, a permanent stage with an accompanying rehearsal room was built. Traditionally, the area belongs to the people from Ifira, a small offshore island. Hence, honour was given to the Chief of Ifira in the opening ceremony to name the stage *Saralana*, the *kastom*-name of the area. In the same year, there was a lights team flown in from Nouméa, and in the following years a professional PA system was shipped to Vanuatu.[561]

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[559] 2002's Fest'Napuan was held in August to benefit from the fact that many people came to Vila for the Melanesian Arts Festival.

[560] The popular groups BRATAZ VIBRATION, HUARERE and KROS ROD performed at this event (Tam Tam, first issue, 7th November 2001, p. 16).

[561] In its first years, the organising committee had to fall back on the PA system and the backline (instruments and equipment such as a drum set and amplifiers) of Jean-Marc Wong. Since the festival has increased in size and after complains of musicians about the sound quality (Tam Tam, first issue, 7th November 2001, p. 16 &

While accompanying the preparations and witnessing the festival in 2001 and 2003, I was impressed by the commitment of the organisers and musicians alike. Their interest cannot be of financial nature, as all of the organisers are volunteers and the musicians – even the ones from overseas – play without receiving a fee. Groups from other islands of Vanuatu even have to pay themselves for their transport and the shipping of their equipment. They often stay in town until Christmas to get the opportunity to play at a club for money or at some fundraising events to compensate for their loss.

There are diverse connections between Fest'Napuan and a national level of identity. First, the festival's name indicates the national importance the organisers ascribe to the event. Its combination of either French or English and vernacular elements refers to the colonial past of the country and seeks to integrate everyone: French as well as English educated ni-Vanuatu. The use of the word *napuan* stands not so much for the island of Tanna where it comes from, or Tannese people, but more for Vanuatu as a Melanesian country in general. Moreover, Fest'Napuan is not just the biggest but also the only festival of its kind in the country, and it even attracts music groups from faraway islands within Vanuatu. The national importance of the event is increased by the fact that it is international: each year there are participants from abroad. There are different modes for the selection of the participating groups. The pop-groups from Australia and New Zealand find their way to Vanuatu through personal relations. The groups from New Caledonia are usually either selected and sponsored to come by Mangrove (a music label in Nouméa, for which participation in Fest'Napuan is a sort of promotion), or sent by one of the provinces of New Caledonia as part of a cultural exchange.

One of the aims of the organisers in the beginning was to develop a kind of representative national music, a characteristic style, people around the Pacific and the world would recognise as being from Vanuatu. Although the committee nowadays has no ambitions to follow that track, many musicians still do. The main emphasis is placed on the demonstration of national unity also in the lyrics of songs. In Bislama, phrases like "*bildimap*", "*leftemap*" or "*divelopem kantri blong yumi*" are uttered in many public discourse contexts. Just as people should try hard to improve living conditions in general, there seems to be consensus in believing that the situation of the musicians and Vanuatu's music scene can improve if everyone does their best. Here, popular music is an important force in the construction of national identity. At the same time, there is no national identity without a local identity in

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interview with Leonard Willie 2002), a sound and lighting system was shipped in from Australia. Not only the quality of the equipment has improved over the years but also the musical skills and abilities of the performances.

Vanuatu, and musicians from different island communities proudly display their cultural characteristics. Traditional culture, *kastom*, is generally strongly pronounced in various aspects of life in Vanuatu. Melanesian traditional culture and popular culture are not understood as strictly divided spheres, but there are many mixtures, particularly within the realm of music. For many, the ‘traditional Melanesian’ elements in their music are important even if they use electric guitars and keyboards. In this way, they join the two – national and local – or more levels of identity. In 2002, the festival was part of the Second Melanesian Arts Festival taking place in Port Vila. The mere fact that the first Fest’Napuan was staged on the occasion of the anniversary of the National Museum and its strong bond to the Vanuatu Cultural Centre shows that popular music is received as an important part of the culture of Vanuatu.

The exchange among ni-Vanuatu musicians among each other and guests at Fest’Napuan is important in shaping the contemporary popular music of Vanuatu. However, the festival’s significance is not restricted to the musicians alone, and in fact the whole of Port Vila town is affected in one way or another. Many companies and private persons from Port Vila contribute to the festival’s success as sponsors. Other people are involved because they rent a stall at the venue to make a small profit and others again bring their families and sit down on mats in the afternoon for eating, chatting and listening. Finally, all of the citizens are affected by changes to the law, such as in 2004 when there was a prohibition of the sale of liquor during the Fest’ Napuan period. Since the concrete stage was built, Fest’Napuan also found its place in the townscape of Port Vila. Though certainly associated with the festival in the first place, the Saralana stage is used throughout the year on various occasions by schools, churches and others and the accompanying fully equipped rehearsal room is rented to young bands at hourly intervals.

4.5.4 Ni-Vanuatu Musicians Overseas

Apart from contracts with hotels, the best source of income for stringbands are tourism-related trips to overseas. Keeping the permanent lack of cash as well as the remoteness of island settings in sight, it is amazing that at least some musicians travel quite a lot in order to perform overseas. After independence in 1980, stringbands were used on promotion tours in both

Australia and New Zealand. The National Tourism Office (NTO) plays an important role, being the institution which chooses bands for the representation of Vanuatu overseas.[562]

When ni-Vanuatu musicians perform in other countries, whether near or far, many understand their tours as a mission in service of their country and themselves as cultural ambassadors. One apparent reason for this self-understanding is grounded in the fact that most of the occasions that involve stringband performances overseas are organised by the NTO and funded by the government. The participation at expos and similar events in Australia, New Zealand or even beyond is organised as a promotion of Vanuatu as a holiday destination. Whereas *kastom* groups and stringbands generally tour as part of such official missions, bands playing *pop miusik* perform in these contexts only occasionally.[563] However, they travel abroad for concerts which are organised by other institutions. Pop musicians and promoters in Vanuatu work together with their counterparts in other Melanesian countries, particularly the Solomon Islands and New Caledonia.

Some brief accounts of such trips may serve as examples of how stringband musicians remember their experience of touring outside Vanuatu. A cassette released in 1989 by the stringband YOUNG BEACH BOYS sold very well. The NTO became aware of the group and asked them to perform at a promotion tour to Australia. The Government of Vanuatu paid for the fare to get the YOUNG BEACH BOYS to Vila by ship and to Australia by plane. The group went to Sydney where they played at a tourist fair in Darling Harbour. All expenses were paid by the government and the group received a good salary, 24 000 vt per musician and week. The YOUNG BEACH BOYS are probably the only stringband to date that played above the clouds: on the aeroplane, the pilot spontaneously announced their performance, and someone collected money from the other passengers for the band. This payment for their on-board-session was handsome. Daniel distributed the money to the boys and each band member went shopping with his share in Sydney, so that they could spare their official salary. The group's performance at the fair was remarkable too: each of the Pacific countries present had a music group as its representative. When Daniel's stringband, representing Vanuatu, played on the stage, Australian women came by to put money in the pockets of the musicians' uniforms.

[562] The NTO was set up in 1983 and maintains offices in Australia and New Zealand (Statistical Yearbook 2002: 95).

[563] To name a few: members of HUARERE travelled to Vancouver (Canada) to perform *kastom miusik*; TIM KALMET spent seven months in Hannover (Germany) to play all three – *kastom*, *stringban* and pop – at the Expo; TROPIC TEMPO performed their *kastom*-inspired *pop miusik* in Florida (USA); FUTUNA FATUANA performed a *kastom danis* in France (see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PT3154gu2ps for a YouTube video about their performance, last accessed on 15 March 2020).

Something like this had never happened to the boys before (and probably also never afterwards). The musicians were very nervous because they were amplified with a PA system for the first time.[564] The group received another good payment when the boys tried out performing as street musicians. Policemen came, but instead of chasing the group away, they invited them to play in the Parliament buildings where a meeting with many foreign guests was taking place.[565] When they had finished, Daniel's mandolin case was well-stuffed. Kalo Daniel returned home with two extra bags with new clothes for his wife and his children, and he still had Australian money left to change at the bank.

In 1990, the YOUNG BEACH BOYS went to New Zealand. Again, the trip was organised by the NTO and the stringband went as the company of representatives of Vanuatu's major tourist resorts. The group played in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and at some other places, one of them being a Maori village in Taranaki. Kalo Daniel was quite impressed by the Maoris' traditional welcome. They requested the stringband to put on a *kastom danis* on display and to sing songs in their own language. After performing a twenty-minute *kastom danis* along with the corresponding dress, which consists of fowl feathers, *parpar* (a piece of mat wrapped around the waist), *nalaklak* and a bamboo-drum, the YOUNG BEACH BOYS grabbed their stringband instruments.

The stringband which travelled around the most is probably FATUANA MAHTUA. This band went on promotion tours to China, Japan, Spain, USA, New Zealand and to Australia. According to ALBEA NALISA, the popular solo interpreter and former member of FATUANA MAHTUA, the NTO often fell back upon this group because they knew best how to represent Vanuatu (interview with Albea Nalisa 2003). FUTUNA FATUANA, their competing fellows from Futuna Island, also travelled a lot.[566]

Some pop musicians go abroad as an entire group or also alone. Charlie Tari (member of BRATAZ VIBRATION), for example, went to Nadi and Lautoka in Fiji, where he played his solo repertoire at three concerts with a group of Fijian musicians and sold all his cassettes during the first evening (interview with Charlie Tari 2002). In this case, as in others, ni-Vanuatu musicians overseas lose no time performing in the new surroundings. Henry Toka (TROPIK TEMPO), for example, lived in Troyes (France) for a couple of years. He arrived in November

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[564] Until then, the stringband had always played unplugged ("*Mifala i plei drae ban nomo*").

[565] Daniel described how the police-men tried to convince them, by announcing that they could win a lot of money because some rich Arabs would be there ("*Man Arab i stap insaed, bae i gat mane*").

[566] Despite the fact that the musicians experienced their foreign travels as interesting and inspiring, I seldom heard stories of a real exchange on a musical level. When Joel Kaltang went to Melbourne in 1981, SOUWIA spontaneously played two songs with a Canadian harp player, which he enjoyed very much.

2000 and already gave his first concert in February 2001.[567] Sometimes, ni-Vanuatu communities in overseas are ports of call for touring pop bands, as for example a community from Mere Lava (northern Vanuatu) who lives in New Caledonia (interview with Henry Toka 2006). Henry Toka was also one of the founding members of the Association Angadaru (pronounced Anga<u>nd</u>aru)[568] in 2004; a registered association for the encounter of French people and ni-Vanuatu.[569] An important figure for the overseas tours of ni-Vanuatu pop musicians is David Nalo, founder of the agency Further Arts.[570]

In an article published in the *Cahiers d'ethnomusicologie* (2007), Monika Stern describes a concert of several musicians from Vanuatu that took place in June 2006 in Paris. The opening act that evening was PACIFIC BOE, alias name of musician Henry Toka.[571] The occasion for their appearance was the first concert of the SUNSHINERS, a group that is comprised of members from various groups: some members of the French reggae bands TRYO and MISTER GANG as well as four singers, each from one of the most prominent bands playing *pop miusik* in Vanuatu: Jake Moses, one of the members of XX SQUAD (probably least known of all)[572], Gero Iavinau (NAIO), Benjamin Siro (HUARERE) and John Kapala (KROS ROD). There are several interesting aspects concerning this group and their performance in Paris. Their uniforms, white suits (Stern 2007: 166) are extremely untypical – whether for stringband or pop musicians in Vanuatu. The fact that they played stringband music is also remarkable – four people from different islands and, at least as far as I know, only one of them with much experience in stringband music (Ben Siro). The most peculiar aspect of the project, however, is the SUNSHINERS' repertoire: cover versions of songs by DAVID BOWIE, SUPERTRAMP, U2, THE CURE, ROD STEWARD and others, without any connection to Vanuatu and/or the musical

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[567] Since 2002, he calls himself (and his backing band) PACIFIC BOE and had a first concert as an opening act in a bar in Paris in the same year (interview with Henry Toka 2006).

[568] 'Angadaru' means 'our canoe' (literally 'canoe of you and me/us two') in his language, the language of Nduindui (Ambae). Toka gave me the translation in Bislama (*kenu blong yumitu*).

[569] On 30 July 2006, a meeting of Angadaru took place in Paris on the occasion of the declaration of solidarity with another cultural association which was forced to leave its premises by the SNCF (French railway company). In his capacity as the musical director of the drama group Wan Smolbag, as well as being the technician at Vanuata Productions, Henry Toka recorded bands for the soundtrack of the film "Democracy Dreams". When I met him for an interview at his home in France, I told him that my own stringband in Germany covers the song 'Bred I No Inaf' which is one of these songs. Toka had planned to screen the film and thus invited us to perform at the association's meeting in Paris which took place on the 30th July 2006.

[570] Nalo attended the event of Angadaru Asosiesen in Paris in July 2006 and accompanied the tour of the group SUNSHINERS to France (see below).

[571] After disappointing collaborations with some musicians in France, he prefers to play alone, only accompanied by his companion Julie Dupré (two voices and an acoustic guitar). Toka received no payment for his performance; he intended it as a welcome for his younger fellow musician and did not even claim the petrol costs for driving from Troyes to Paris and back (interview with Henry Toka 2006).

[572] At the time of fieldwork, Mars Melto was the lead singer and main composer of the group.

oeuvre of the musicians involved. An important impetus for *pop miusik* is the 'Melanesian music scene', that is, musics from the neighbouring Melanesian countries (such as Tolai rock or *kaneka*). Compared to the exchange between pop musicians from PNG, Solomon Islands, New Caledonia, Fiji and Vanuatu, stringband musicians remain among themselves.[573]

Musicians of the Vanuatu Mobile Force travelled overseas as well. Apart from the brass band, Major Bale Villiam founded a *danis ban* (dance band), as John Martin, member of the music corps since 1982, called it. This group, which started around 1984, played cover versions of rock songs, ballads, and reggae songs (e.g. by Jamaican reggae musician JIMMY CLIFF). They also copied songs by ni-Vanuatu musicians (e.g. compositions by Charles Bice, member of TROPIC TEMPO) and by the BLACK BROTHERS in the usual pop band line-up.[574] In 1986, then with a brass section, the band went around Australia on a tourism promotional tour for one month. On this tour, the band members also played brass music, as well as stringband music (copying the popular songs of the time, for example 'Island in the Sunshine' by MAKURA TOKOLAU). In 1988, the VMF band performed at the World Expo in Brisbane under the leadership of Major Bali Villiam. The group had 32 members (interview with John Martin 2004).

Ni-Vanuatu pop musicians toured to PNG (VANESSA QUAI[575]), the Solomon Islands (VANESSA QUAI , NAIO, HUARERE) and to New Caldedonia (VANESSA QUAI , NAIO, HUARERE, NEW ETHNIC and KROS ROD), as well as to Australia (VANESSA QUAI, NAIO and HUARERE) and New Zealand (NAIO and HUARERE). The SDA-affiliated group MONUMENT SINGERS likewise toured to New Caledonia and to the Solomon Islands (interview with Ellen Issachar 2003). Several musicians also made recordings in studios in PNG (VANESSA QUAI, VATDORO, TIM KALMET, DAVID ANDREW) and New Caledonia (NEW ETHNIC, HUARERE and others).

Jimmy Dummic acquired exceptionally much international experience following his first overseas concert in Melbourne in 1981. In 1992, he performed at the Expo in Sevilla; in 1995, he took part in a tour around Europe with a *kastom danis* group from the Banks Islands and

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[573] Here, I deliberately frame a juxtaposition of the genres. Of course, many pop musicians are or used to play stringband music as well.

[574] John Martin – electric guitar, George Pamma – keyboard, Eddie Kalorisu – drums, and William Hillary – bass. The members originated from different islands.

[575] At the end of 2003, VANESSA QUAI, accompanied by her father and manager Nigel Quai, toured the Solomon Islands. From there, she went to PNG, where she performed live concerts and recorded three albums in Port Moresby. Evelyne Toa writes: "She turned 15 in July […]. She has visited many countries including Romania, Egypt, New Caledonia and Canada. The freedom tour was sponsored by CHM Supersound studios, Security Organisational Services and Hits and Memories FM 100, among others. Vanessa and her father will spend another two to three weeks in PNG" ("Vanessa takes PNG by storm", in The Independent, L'Indépendant, Issue No. 11, 10 January 2004).

then spent two weeks in France at an exhibition.[576] In 1997, he went to Nouméa, New Caledonia, as a band member of the group TROPIC TEMPO; in 1998, he went to Spain and France through the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (as some kind of business ambassador and dancer in personal union). In 2001, TROPIC TEMPO had an engagement at Walt Disney World in Florida, USA, for three weeks. The group of eight musicians and six male dancers performed eight times a day, each time for 30 minutes (interview with Jimmy Dummic 2003).[577]

There are, of course, also cases of failed attempts to tour abroad. When the BLUE CYCLE BAND wanted to record their first album at CHM in PNG, the consulate of PNG objected to their entry because several band members had served time in prison.[578] Only band member David Andrew went to Port Moresby (see 5.1.1.5) where he recorded two solo albums (and a Christmas album, as he said) and also performed with his backing band (see 7.2.2; interview with David Andrew 2004).

[576] Based in Barcelona, he travelled to various cities in France and Germany, as well as to the Canary Islands, Morocco, Cyprus and Gibraltar.

[577] Interestingly they were mistaken for Africans by some Afro-Americans.

[578] BLUE CYCLE was rejected with the words "*Hemia wan raskol grup*" ("This is a group of criminals") (interview with John 'Beri' Willie 2004). Bandleader John 'Beri' Willie let other musicians from overseas use his equipment, worth over 2 million vt, as he said, without charge (assuming that he would be treated the same if he once played overseas). He worked together with popular musicians from PNG, such as BASIL GREG.

5 Music Industry, Marketing and Representation in the Media

Access to the internet in Vanuatu is limited, and at the time of fieldwork, most ni-Vanuatu did not have the opportunity of listening to music on YouTube or even to purchase it.[579] Against this backdrop, it seems natural to regard ni-Vanuatu audiences not as passive victims of the 'Culture Industries' but rather as active users and interpreters of whatever material is available. The music industry of Vanuatu exists worlds apart from the big multinational companies. The project SUNSHINERS is, to my knowledge, a unique exception of co-operation between ni-Vanuatu and a major record label.[580]

So far, the recent music genres of Vanuatu have escaped the notice of 'world music' as a marketing category and the domestic market is also rather small. Money is scarce, especially amongst young people. Despite it not being a profitable business, economic aspects remain important. Stringbands use modern marketing tools – at least insofar as these are available in Vanuatu – to increase their popularity and their commercial success, for example by producing video clips, tapes and CDs. A study of marketing strategies of music in Vanuatu and the representation in the media clearly shows that stringband music is assigned to the domestic market, while *pop miusik* is also directed towards overseas markets.

The construction in the media of "aspects of 'reality' such as people, places, objects, events, cultural identities and other abstract concepts" (Chandler 2006: 1) can be called 'media representation'. In the following, I focus on the technical requirements for processes of media representation, the industry players and the conditions for studio productions – all topics with the sound carriers in the centre of attention (5.1). Then, the representations are discussed: the image musicians create for themselves and the promotion of their products (5.2), as well as the role of the media for the music market in Vanuatu (5.3).

[579] As already mentioned, this situation has changed within the past few years due to the wide distribution of smartphones. The Telecom Vanuatu Limited (TVL) and Digicel operate mobile phone systems. International roaming is also available from most countries (according to http://www.vanuatu-vacations.com/vanuatu_internet_phones_post.html, last accessed on 14 May 2018).

[580] "Sunshiners", Sony/BMG, 2006. Their second album "Welkam bak long Vanuatu" (2008) was published by the label Ter a Terre and produced by La Chimiz Productions.

5.1 Sound Carriers

The idea of producing an album is, as for many musicians worldwide, attractive for ni-Vanuatu musicians, no matter whether they play *pop miusik* or *stringban miusik*. Recording undertakings are thus usually surrounded by much debate about financing and visions about how the recording could be, which songs could be recorded, and so on. In 5.1.1, I focus on studio productions, particularly with regard to production costs and profits, the recording technology and techniques, and issues surrounding intellectual property rights. Chapter 5.1.2 addresses the retail trade of music media in Vanuatu, which consists mostly of music cassettes. When I left the field in 2004, music cassettes were still the first choice of most ni-Vanuatu (Figure 27).[581] In contrast to former decades, people are more aware of differences in sound quality nowadays, as explained to me by interlocutors. One reason for this might be the comparability with the CD as a medium, a few albums being available both on MC and CD. Vanuata Productions, for example, does not release every production on CD but only those which are exportable to Fiji or New Caledonia; that is, only *pop miusik*. A small edition of very popular stringband albums is produced in the form of homemade CDs (see 5.1.1.3) and a handful of productions of the recording studio of the Vanuatu Kaljoral Senta (VKS Productions) are only available on CD.

5.1.1 Studio Productions

The first commercial stringband recordings were produced for the small domestic market in a warehouse of Burns Philp, the old Western Pacific trading company, in the mid-1970s.[582] The cassettes were produced by EMI in New Zealand from a master tape and then sent back to Port Vila. The sound carriers of better quality (both cassettes and CDs) are produced even nowadays, wether in New Zealand or in Australia. The copies usually number 200 at first. If an album sells well, another batch is produced. A number of small enterprises offer the duplication of small editions of cassettes and CDs, such as Sky Computers, Vanuata Productions and the VKS Studio which takes about one week. Those musicians who decide to

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[581] Musician Gaëtan Telemb left the capital for his home community in Malekula in 1994. Only once he had returned to Port Vila in 2002, did he detect the existence of the new sound carrier CD (interview with Gaëtan Telemb 2003). Single blank CDs and MDs can be bought in Vila at a high rate: 350 vt (2.50 €) for one blank CD.

[582] This is very late compared to other parts of the world. Gronow notes: “In West Africa, the first commercial recording of music occurred in the 1920s, more than twenty years after European firms began operating in Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America” (Gronow 1981: 252-53 in Waterman 1990: 8).

organise the duplication themselves compare prices and quality and then commission the duplication (both, CDs and cassettes, however not necessarily at the same business). The VKS has a machine (Figure 28) which makes five copies within about six minutes (both sides of the cassette).[583] The cassette duplicator by John Josiah (Sina Productions) has two speeds; it can copy cassettes at either eight times or sixteen times faster. Josiah is satisfied with the quality, however after copying 100 cassettes he uses a new master copy.

An album is regarded as successful by those who run the studio if about 1000 or more cassettes are sold.[584] The number of copies depends on the expectations of sales and on the financial means the groups have at their disposal to pay for duplication. The number of CDs produced by the stringbands who recently released an album numbered between 50 and 200. There are always more cassettes because the demand is far higher. First, they are less expensive, second, most people (especially on the islands) do not have a CD-player. The VKS studio underestimated this need at first and released "Lake Siwi" by the STONEY BOYS only on CD. Because of the many requests, the stringband decided to also make an edition on cassette (these were then produced by Sun Productions).[585]

Because of the different instrumentation and the different aesthetics, there are some differences between stringband music and *pop miusik* concerning studio productions. In the 1970s and 1980s (and maybe even later) stringbands simply played their usual live performance, which was recorded and then put on a cassette. One should keep this in mind when comparing old tapes with new releases. Nowadays, with the digital recording facilities, there are far more possibilities. Musicians can record their music on multiple tracks, and thus do not have to sing and play at once, for example.[586] Mistakes can be wiped out and additional voices or percussion tracks can be added. Despite these opportunities, studio recordings of stringbands sound very much like the stringbands' live performance (thus the differences between the live and the recorded versions are usually less compared to *pop miusik*

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[583] When the machine was broken it had to be sent to Australia for repairs.

[584] John Josiah reported that the pop group UPB sold many cassettes, about 2000 copies of their album "Dedication (Vol. 1)" (2001). Nearly 2000 copies of the album "Peace Vanuatu" by the particular successful interpreter REYNOLDS were sold when I talked to Josiah. He reported having sold 1000 copies of an album of artist SAMMY G. At the outset, 1000 album copies by VETLIS were produced and Josiah was confident that 2000 tapes would be sold altogether within two years. In reference to the sales figures of this cassette Josiah used the typical construction to indicate intensity in Bislama: *i sel we i sel we i sel* (it sells very well).

[585] The VKS studio produced a little over 200 CDs of "Lake Siwi" (STONEY BOYS) and 500 CDs of the pop sampler "Tagune Saon". LUKUNAEVA planned to produce 100 cassettes and 50 CDs of their album "Friendly String Band (Vol. 2)" and then wanted to produce more from the money they earned by selling these first albums (interview with Tony Alvos 2003). Those CDs which are produced abroad are sometimes sealed in plastic foil (for example TROPIC TEMPO'S "Vois Bilong Ol Bumbu", 1996).

[586] To record at once is referred to as *wantaem* in Bislama, to record individually, one after the other, as *wan wan*.

recordings). However, even without flashy sound effects, the sound is still molded through the use of equalizers, limiters and compressors – not to mention the positioning of the microphones and the mere choice of microphones and other equipment. At the recording sessions I observed, the groups – stringbands and pop groups alike – did not use a metronome.[587]

Recordings of stringband music are characterised by the explicit rejection of certain technologies. It is the avoidance of implanting various musical instruments and sound effects otherwise common in multitrack studio productions that contributes to the definition of the aesthetics of the genre. Digital sampling, for example, is virtually absent in stringband music.[588] At most, it is used for the application of sound effects; for example, DAUSAKE use a child's voice in 'Dawn of February 14', TOVOTAE from rural Espiritu Santo use the sounds of a helicopter and gunfire in their song "11 September"[589] and the sound of gunfire is also used in the title song of SARATOKOWIA`s album "Operation Lagoon". The associations which arise from these sound effects bear reference to the contents of the lyrics. Reverb is the only popular sound effect for instruments and especially for vocals in stringband recordings.

As far as the recording equipment is concerned, studio operators use devices which are designed for the semi-professional and home amateur markets. A major constraint to the recording industry of Vanuatu is the fact that professional equipment is hard to obtain. John Josiah (Sina Studio) tried to order an eight-track mini-disc-recorder and contacted Yamaha in Japan via telephone; however, he was told that the Sound Centre is the sole distributor for Yamaha products in Vanuatu. He had no choice but to order it through the Sound Centre which boosted the price exorbitantly (interview with John Josiah 2003).[590] The most important criterion concerning the sound is the clarity of a recording; the phrase "*hem i klia*" being the

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[587] Even while recording the sophisticated album "Sail On" (NAIO), the group's drummer did not use a metronome but "his own timing" ("own *kaon blong hem*"; personal communication with Jimmy Nakapue Barrett Sampson, the band's bass player, 2003). In other *pop miusik* productions, the musicians follow the guide of the programmed drums/percussion tracks while recording their instrumental and vocal parts.

[588] In *pop miusik*, samples are used to emulate conventional musical instruments, especially the horn section.

[589] The sound effects were taken from an old keyboard. They seemed adequate to the members of the stringband because (or rather despite the fact that) the song is about the 11th of September 2001.

[590] The fact that Vanuatu is far away from any equipment supply worsens the situation. After paying 25 5000 vt (1 820 €) for the device, Josiah detected that it has some severe disorders which make it impossible to utilise its full potential. He nevertheless recorded an album of LUCKY STRIKE (interview with John Josiah 2003). Dick Smith, a branch store of an Australian chain of retail shops for electronics, sells midi-interfaces (as their sole product related to music production).

most voiced appreciative commentary by musicians I heard about the recordings of a new studio or of recording equipment.[591]

Bands from all over the country have to come to Port Vila for recordings. There are no studios outside the capital, not even in Luganville.[592] Because of the high cost of both the journey and of staying in town for the time of recordings and mixing, normally only established and well-organised groups have the possibility to make an album because they are capable of raising enough money. Some groups from the islands have members who live in town and who only occasionally join the group when on holiday on their home island. When the band comes to Vila to record, they might practise for a few days with the others after the band has arrived and then join them in the studio. These band members select the studio, raise funds or try to find a sponsor (see 7.6), and organise transportation and accommodation for their colleagues.

During the course of the year, there are more and less busy times for recording studios. Before the independence celebrations and before Christmas are the busiest times because the musicians hope to sell their albums before and during the festivities. Typically, stringbands choose some old and some new songs for recording. Some prepare by recording layout tracks with small tape recorders during a practice session.

In Vanuatu, there are no studio musicians in the sense of professionals who record other people's music as instrumentalists or singers, without belonging to the line-up of the group. However, groups do sometimes work together and help each other out. For example, Philip 'Fany' Louis ('YANG' SOUWIA) recorded three songs with TOKOTAKIA.[593] Besides, some guitarists are in demand for solo parts in studio productions, such as Leonard Willie or John Josiah in his own studio.[594] In the studio recordings I witnessed, the working atmosphere was good; however, some sound engineers urged the musicians not to clown around but to concentrate.

Creating new albums is an aim that is nearly always present to varying degrees in the future plans of musicians. This seems natural for upcoming young people, but also older members of

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[591] For example, this criterion was one of the decision factors when SOUWIA chose the VKS studio which was still in the process of being set up. Band members heard one of the first releases from that studio, "Lake Siwi" from the STONEY BOYS, and were convinced.

[592] In February 2004, Benjamin Ratonel thought about establishing a recording studio in Luganville someday, although his intention seemed rather vague. Ratonel, who founded a pop band in Luganville, originally comes from Sabah, Malaysia (interview with Benjamin Ratonel 2004).

[593] Amongst other things, he sang the song 'Bus Driver' (published on "Round taon long bus – Vol. 6" by TOKOTAKIA 1999). The two groups share a long history of collaboration (interviews with Philip Louis 2002 and Lui Philip 2003). At a live performance of (YANG) SOUWIA I heard the group play several songs of TOKOTAKIA.

[594] In Bislama, musicians refer to this as *bakemap*. A whole band can 'back up'/accompany a solo artist. A *bakap ban* is a supporting act.

groups that stopped rehearsing and playing concerts or that clearly do not exist anymore, again and again voiced their propositions with enthusiasm (often paired with the intention to do everything different the next time). Once you are into it, it seems, you do not stop (see also Chapter 7).[595]

In the following, the various studios of Vanuatu are portrayed, focusing on key people and their connections, as well as on the technological standard of the studios.

5.1.1.1 Gardissat's Vanuata Production

The first real recording studio – although still equipped with the simplest facilities – was Vanuata Production, founded in the beginning of the 1980s (see 2.2.5 and Appendix 2).[596] Even beforehand, Gardissat had taken his tape recorder and gone to the different communities in town, or invited musicians to come to his house to be recorded.[597] Initially, the only difference between a living room and 'the studio' was that Gardissat set up a couple of microphones and covered the walls and windows with cloth to avoid an echo. FUTUNA FATUANA was the first stringband which produced an album with Gardissat in this way in 1979. About ten songs were recorded in one night. Paul Gardissat emphasises the high technical standard of many stringbands in the 1970s and early 1980s. Both Gardissat and stringband veterans are of the opinion that contemporary groups are not capable of recording an album under the same conditions as they themselves had to face in the past. One of these stringband musicians said: "Back then, stringbands… they were real stringbands!" ("*Bifo, ol stringban… oli stringban ya!*"; imagine a strong pronunciation on the second half). Being a 'real' stringband included being capable of recording an album in one night.

Recalling a recording session in an interview, John Apei (ERRO STRINGBAND) exclaimed: "No voice anymore! […] Paul is a hound!" ("*No voes ya!* […] *Paul hem i wan ravis man!*"). Apei appreciates what Gardissat did for the bands but the recording sessions were exhausting. Like other stringband veterans, Apei points at the fact that musicians used to record without all the technical knick-knacks which are available today (*taem ya mifala i plei drae nomo*). In his

[595] John Apei (ERRO STRINGBAND) dallies with the idea to select some best-of songs of his band and rework them with a computer. Kalo Daniel (LUMBUKUTI BEACH BOYS) dreams of having the possibility to record an album with a banjo mandolin to preserve his style before he dies. TIM KALMET is looking for a copy of the album "Souwia Fridom" to edit a remix on the computer, and so on.

[596] Gardissat recorded on reel-to-reel tape. At first, he used a portable mono recorder by Nagra which produced good quality recordings; later a stereo reel-to-reel recorder. Reel tape machines have the advantage that the recording head is bigger than that of cassette recorders and thus easier to clean. The quality of the recording is far better.

[597] When he worked at the radio, stringband musicians approached him and asked if he would record them.

view, recordings do not sound natural anymore if too many 'machines' are used, such as an Auto-Tune effect on the lead vocals (at the time of the interview a song was very popular which featured this effect in extreme – the vocals were not meant to sound natural; the effect was not used as a tool for correction but as an aesthetic means. Shortly afterwards, the stringband SHAKURA used the effect exactly in this way in their song 'Moonlight Lover'.

Sometimes Gardissat also recorded the groups at the radio studio. This provoked opposition among some colleagues (from the Anglophone branch of the radio) because the cassette production was regarded as his private business. He told this to an enterprising friend, Jean-Paul James, and then both of them set up their own small studio in Manples, Vila, around 1981. This recording studio was, due to a lack of financial means, quite improvised and built from second-hand materials, yet a cosy place to work on music productions. Jean-Paul James used old carpets from the Hotel Le Méridien for the walls at the studio.[598] At that time, the name Vanuatu was on everybody's lips and any newly-opened enterprise used 'Vanuatu' as a part of its name. James devised 'Vanuata' for the fun of it and Gardissat added 'Production' (without 's' at the end). Vanuata Production was also a pioneer in the production of pirate cassettes, which were sold from 1985 onwards, because otherwise the studio would not have yielded enough profit.[599] When James left the country, the enterprise was eventually bought by Mrs. Goiset who thus became Gardissat's boss (see 2.2.6.2 for details). Because of irreconcilable differences, Gardissat left Vanuata Production in 1989. Goiset found no replacement for him and Vanuata Production lay fallow until she sold it to Jean-Marc Wong who did business with pirate cassettes at the time.

In the year he left, Gardissat founded the recording studio Sun Productions in Namba Tu, Vila. Here, he carried on his stringband recordings,[600] printing activities and pirate cassette production until 1994. From then on, he focused on printing only because the production of cassettes was not financially worthwhile. Gardissat was the manager of Sun Productions and

[598] Studio operators in Vanuatu are ingenious when it comes to improvising acoustic insulation (see below).

[599] Gardissat sold the pirate cassettes to ni-Vanuatu as well as to expatriates. He pirated whatever was the flavour of the month: THE BEATLES, MICHAEL JACKSON, DIANA ROSS, JULIO EGLESIAS, music from Tahiti and later from PNG. Business was going well. Gardissat began selling pirate cassettes in 1985 and, according to him, he was the first.

[600] He also reworked some of his earlier recordings he had made at the Vanuata Production studio. During the production process at Sun Productions, SOUWIA first recorded a guide track, then an instrumental track and finally the vocals (interview with Lui Philip 2003).

had 24 employees; however, the business was owned by a businessman with various ventures in Port Vila, such as Au Bon Marché and Ah Pow Bakery.[601]

In his recording studios, Paul Gardissat worked together with the popular stringbands of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s: SOUWIA STRINGBAND, MAKURA TOKOLAU, WESTERN BOYS, FUTUNA FATUANA, NOISY BOYS and many others. He produced altogether 175 stringband cassettes. Meanwhile, several of Gardissat's recordings have been transferred to CD and are stored at the VKS (string band preservation project).

5.1.1.2 The BLACK BROTHERS and Vanuwespa

In the mid-80s, Paul Gardissat received fierce competition from the Vanuwespa Studio, founded by the BLACK BROTHERS, a band which had originally come from West Papua. Andy Ayamiseba from Biak Island, West-Papua, founded the group BLACK BROTHERS in Jayapura, West-Papua, in 1973. He did not participate as an active member in the group but as its manager.[602] In 1975 the BLACK BROTHERS moved to Jakarta. The band which was singing in the national language Bahasa Indonesia became one of Indonesia's most popular groups and had golden records.[603] They were supported by West Papua as well as other eastern areas of Indonesia (Sulawesi, Moluccas, East Timor) and when they were broadcast on television the streets in Jayapura were empty. The group came for a concert in 1978 to West Papua and some people would walk for a week from their villages to witness the event. In the early morning, people were already sitting on their mats at the concert site, although the show was only to start in the evening. The biggest crowd allegedly ever drawn in West Papua came because of the BLACK BROTHERS, who attracted more people than the visiting president of Indonesia. In 1979, the BLACK BROTHERS "bribed [their] way out" and left for PNG with their families. They were invited to do a tour by Air Niugini[604] and thus were also able to bring their modern

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[601] This businessman wanted Gardissat to manage a printing house while Gardissat wanted to operate a studio. They agreed on a studio with a small printing shop. However, in 1994 the accountant revealed that the studio was not profitable and therefore this part of the business was abandoned.

[602] I conducted three interviews with Andy Ayamiseba in Port Vila in 2003 and 2004. Most information on the BLACK BROTHERS given here is based on his account as well as on details reported by older ni-Vanuatu musicians.

[603] As with other musicians in West Papua, there was always a political component to the work of the BLACK BROTHERS. While Papuans cannot dominate within the realm of politics, they strive to assert themselves in the fields of music and sports. Interestingly, the dark colour of most band members' skins seems to have contributed to the success of the BLACK BROTHERS in Jakarta because the musicians were mistaken for Afro-Americans by some ("You won the show before you even started", Ayamiseba said).

[604] Source: http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/notebook/stories/s1579085.htm, last accessed on 8 May 2009.

P.A. system.[605] During their four-month stay in PNG they played concerts and recorded an album which was produced by Raymond Chin who founded his company CHM (Chin Hoi Meen) in 1979. Adjusting to the limited technical conditions, they had to take a step backwards from 24-track recording machines in Jakarta to a reel-to-reel (quarter inch tape) four track machine and a home-recording studio in Boroko, Port Moresby. Despite the poor sound quality the album proved very successful in PNG and then also in other Melanesian countries. The unfamiliar rock music and the good equipment, lighting and smoke-machines impressed their new audience. While the Indonesian officials might have appreciated the fact that the band showed how developed the western part of New Guinea was, the BLACK BROTHERS had a different agenda. They began to sing about the oppression in West Papua.

During their stay in Port Moresby the band members met some of the leaders of the Vanua'aku Pati who had come to the University in PNG. One of them was Hilda Lini, the sister of Vanuatu's later Prime Minister Walter Lini, and a supporter of the West Papuan cause. Melanesian nationalism was their common ground.

Because of increasing pressure on PNG from Indonesia, the musicians and their families left in January 1980 to Manila, Philippines. Finally, with a lot of luck and with the help of the activists Fred Korwa, Dirk Kereway and late Marcus Kaisiepo, they managed to get visas and tickets for 20 people and joined the West Papuan community in the Netherlands, where they had refugee status.[606] In 1983, the second elections took place in Vanuatu. The BLACK BROTHERS, who had meanwhile received their identity papers, came to support the election campaign of the Vanua'aku Pati through concerts around the islands. The group returned to the Netherlands but in 1984 Ayamiseba came back to Vanuatu to pursue his political work on behalf of the West Papuan independence movement. He was looking for support within the Melanesian region and could count on his friends in the Vanua'aku Pati. Because West Papua was not recognised in many international forums, he tried to gain status as a member within delegations of Vanuatu that took part in international conferences.

Ayamiseba opened a store for tapes with music from PNG in Vila,[607] and arranged the production of TIM KALMET's first multi-track album, which was produced in PNG by CHM

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[605] However, the group had to leave its brass section behind because the men were on holiday in Jayapura when the band took the opportunity to leave the country.

[606] In July 1980 they received a telex from Hilda Lini who stayed in Copenhagen at the time. She invited the group to play at the Independence Day in Vanuatu but the musicians had no papers and stayed in Europe.

[607] Next to Fung Kuei store; nowadays there is Sky Computers.

Studio in Boroko.[608] In 1986, four band members and their families had arrived in Vanuatu (they even brought their Dutch engineer) while two members chose to stay in Europe. Ayamiseba had started to import studio equipment and in 1986 the BLACK BROTHERS were able to open their Vanuwespa Studio in Namba Tu with a portable quarter-inch 8-track-machine by Fostex. It was a joint venture of Andy Ayamiseba and the ni-Vanuatu politician Barak Sope, but neither was involved in the actual studio work of the four musicians. One of the group's guitarists, Augustus Rumwaropen, produced the ni-Vanuatu band BLACK REVOLUTION while the bass player produced all albums recorded with VATDORO.[609] The master tapes recorded at Vanuwespa were sent to PNG and to the Solomon Islands for reproduction. The store in Vila downtown was their retail business where they sold their own productions.[610]

All stringbands which had produced albums with Vanuata Productions for years – MAKURA TOKOLAU, SARATOKOWIA, VATDORO – now turned to Vanuwespa. An exception was the stringband WESTERN BOYS. Gardissat even paid their airfare to come to Vila and they received an exceptional 100 vt per cassette sold instead of the usual royalties of 60 vt. During the night, the band came from Emae Island, recorded their songs the next morning and was already boarding the ship to Emae in the afternoon. The WESTERN BOYS recorded two albums in this way. It was worth the effort – the cassettes of the WESTERN BOYS sold well and were out of stock a number of times. Vanuwespa Studio not only recorded stringbands but also pop groups and especially played an important role for the conversion of stringbands to pop groups and for the development of *rege* in Vanuatu (see also 2.2.6.1).

In 1988, the BLACK BROTHERS's involvement in the political landscape of the country had negative consequences.[611] When Sope had a clash with other leaders of Vanua'aku Pati, the BLACK BROTHERS were forced to leave the country. Ayamiseba blames foreign advisers (of Prime Minister Lini), who took the opportunity of a landowner riot in Vila (headed by Sope) as a pretext to get rid of the activists of the OMP. In fact, the band had nothing to do with these home affairs or with the power struggle within the party. There was no trial and no

[608] TIM KALMET recorded two *pop miusik* albums, "Pas long yu" and "Wan Man Meri", both in 1985, playing all instruments himself apart from some drum parts.
[609] An artist from New Caledonia, GEORGIE PIRALDIE, came to record at Vanuwespa studio.
[610] The BLACK BROTHERS also performed at live concerts in Vanuatu, including one or two ni-Vanuatu musicians in the band. They had many guest musicians, one of them being Charles Bice from the group TROPIC TEMPO. I met several who claimed to have played with them.
[611] Ayamiseba visited several countries, among others Libya and Angola, as a representative of the West Papuan independence movement (OMP). Barak Sope travelled with him and also worked together with activists of independence movements from New Caledonia and East Timor.

sentencing but all band members (except for the bass player, who had family in Vanuatu) went to prison for six months until Australia accepted taking them as refugees. The BLACK BROTHERS perceived this as a violation of human rights. Finally, the band settled down in Canberra. After spending eight years in Australia, Ayamiseba went back to Vanuatu alone in 1996. In the beginning of 2003, Prime Minister Natapei officially apologised for the treatment of the BLACK BROTHERS in 1988.[612]

5.1.1.3 Wong's Vanuata Productions

When the BLACK BROTHERS left, there was no longer a studio for the recording of *pop miusik* in the country. Gradually, this gap was filled by Jean-Marc Wong and Vanuata Productions (Figure 29).[613] Wong kept the symbol of the studio (a conch shell) and also its name but added an 's' at the end. At first, he only continued with the duplication of Gardissat's cassettes. He had purchased the right to do so as well as the necessary machine with the studio.[614] In 1990, he began to record stringbands with the old equipment, just putting a microphone in the middle of a live performing stringband and pressing 'record', as he said (interview with Jean-Marc Wong 2003). A friend from New Caledonia provided advice and Wong ordered the necessary equipment for a small studio from a supplier in Australia. His first device was a Tascam MidiStudio 688, an 8-track cassette recorder, which he purchased in 1992 and used until 1994. The revenue from the first releases enabled him to buy other equipment bit by bit.[615] The first CD released in Vanuatu was "Coming Up" by VATDORO (in April 1995), followed by "Reggae Tribute" by the same group (in December 1995). The initial spark came about through an enquiry from New Caledonia and Wong ordered the first CDs by way of a

[612] A pig was killed for the occasion during the *kastom* ceremony. While the band is highly regarded by ni-Vanuatu musicians, the stateless Ayamiseba again got in trouble with some ni-Vanuatu politicians. After his diplomatic passport was withdrawn, George Wells, minister of internal affairs tried to deport him again in 2006 (http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/notebook/stories/s1579085.htm, 8 May 2009 and http://www.rnzi.com/pages/news.php?op=read&id=23824 (Radio New Zealand International), 30 December 2009.

[613] Jean-Marc Wong does not claim that music is a great passion in his life – he considers himself a businessman in the first place. Wong was born in 1958, as one of nine children. His father came to Vanuatu around 1946 from the south of China, following his brother who already stayed in Espiritu Santo. His mother followed in 1956. Initially, Wong's father grew crops and sold them on the market, afterwards opening a store in Vila. Wong went to school in New Caledonia between 1976 and 1979.

[614] Wong started with a tiny budget. With the revenue of the sold copies, he stayed afloat. Gardissat took the original master tapes with him and only left the master cassettes from which the copies were produced. These, however, were soon worn out (after two to four years; because of humidity, dust and so on), thus the older albums cannot be reproduced anymore. Wong is not sure about his own first recordings but all his recordings since 1994 are digitally stored (since the album "Laef Hemi Isi" by VATDORO).

[615] In 1994, he acquired an analogue 16-track recorder (Tascam MSR 16 with half-inch tape) and a mixer.

partner from there, later by himself at Pacific Mirror Image in Melbourne.[616] Since the production of the album "Sail On" by NAIO (2003), Wong changed to Sony in Sydney (where he can stay at his parents' place, if necessary) as a manufacturer of CDs. Their minimum number is 500. Since 2002, Wong produces small editions of CDs himself. He burns them one by one with his own computer and also puts homemade stickers on them. These do not look as professional as those coming from overseas and thus are not exported but only sold on the domestic market. However, Wong has the advantage to produce any number requested, sometimes only ten or 20 (for example, he produced less than 100 CDs of DAUSAKE's album "Grassroot Laef" whereas about 1000 cassettes of this album were already sold at the time of our interview).

Fred Janura, a French studio technician, worked at Vanuatua Productions from 1996 to 1999 and introduced digital recording (at first with a Power Mac 7200, later a G3, both by Apple, and the recording software Cubase). When Janura was about to leave Vanuatu, Wong was looking for a replacement. Benson Nako came to Vila in 1999 and used facilities at Wong's studio for a production of the second album of the MONUMENT SINGERS. Wong asked if Nako wanted to work at Vanuata Productions and he accepted. At about the same time, Janura intended to deploy his co-musician Henry Toka[617] as his successor – a fact Wong had not realised. Janura gave a crash course to both of them and the plan was to test them after one month. Eventually, both were employed and worked together on the album "Unity" by NAIO, learning digital programming, recording and editing along the way.[618]

When TOKOTAKIA recorded an album at Vanuata Productions, they recorded each song in two rounds: first, the musicians only played the guitars, *bambu* and *seka*, then, in the second round, *yuka*, *busbes*, *bongo* and singers. Wong used a microphone with a wide range and the musicians gathered around it (interview with Philip Louis 2002). Meanwhile, he records each instrument on its own track, thus enabling him to use equalizers and other applications

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[616] A promoter from New Caledonia asked Wong to organise a concert of the South African singer SISTER PHUMI in Vanuatu in 1993. Wong organised the whole event from A to Z (visas for the musicians, the coordination of the equipment and the stage, as well as the ticket sales). This promoter sold the releases of a South African label in his shop and brokered these to Wong. When Wong asked him to sell the cassette "Coming Up" in his shop, he agreed, provided that the album would be released on CD. Wong sent a digital master tape to the promoter in New Caledonia who made the artwork and commissioned the production of the CDs in Australia.

[617] Janura, a guitarist, and Henry Toka were colleagues in the pop group FLYING CLAQUETTES ROUGES.

[618] At the time, they used a sixteen-track recorder with a two-inch tape (interview with Benson Nako 2003). After only one year, Toka left for France, while Nako worked for three years at Vanuata Productions.

specifically. Some instruments, *yuka*, *busbes* and guitars, record in the same room, each with its own microphone on individual tracks.[619]

Among the many albums recorded at the studio, "Sail On" by NAIO takes a special place. While the drums of all the other albums were programmed (including "Unity" and "Same Old Cap" from NAIO) apart from some fill-ins played on the snare drum, "Sail On" was the first album recorded in Vanuatu with a real drum set.[620] The production of "Sail On" took half a year, which is long compared to other pop productions which take about two months on average. In contrast, the production of stringband albums is particularly important to Wong's business as they take only one week on average and some albums are good sellers.

Vanuata Productions is the only professional recording studio in the country. By now, the studio can measure up with international recording standards and is comparable with a small professional studio in a Western country. The enterprise has no competition in the field of high quality recordings but during the time of fieldwork other, smaller studios improved while new ones were emerging.

Those musicians who expect a high standard have no alternative to Vanuata within the country. However, some musicians consider approaching Mangrove in Nouméa, New Caledonia, because they suspect that Wong would not devote himself enough to the production in order to get the best results (which is something that he only does for NAIO, they say). Many pop musicians accuse Wong of favouring NAIO, whose tour manager and manager Wong came to be.[621] They appreciate the good sound of the albums of NAIO but complain because Wong does not dedicate himself equally to other productions. For example, musician Julian Ligo points to the fact that NAIO's "Same Old Cap" sounds better than the album of KROS ROD which came out around the same time. Some musicians even categorically call Wong's skill into question because he is not a musician himself.[622]

[619] Wong uses microphones of the brands Shure (SM 57 and SM 58), Audio-Technica and Ramsa and a recording machine with a half-inch tape.

[620] Up until then, Wong worked like John Josiah of Sina Studio: programming the drums with a drum machine or the computer, a sound module and a master keyboard and then adding some fill-ins (*rol* in Bislama), recorded with a real snare drum (interview with John Josiah 2003).

[621] After Wong had accompanied the band on tours to New Caledonia and the Solomon Islands (in December 2001 and May/June 2002), the musicians asked him to assume the booking, tour management and management.

[622] There are parallels in the ways Chinese PNG studio operators employ their Melanesian sound engineers. I was repeatedly told that Jean-Marc Wong would be lost without his ni-Vanuatu or expatriate technicians, while Raymond Chin of Chin H Meen in PNG "is described as having little, if any, practical understanding of the use of [music] technology but always returns eager to find a way of applying the latest overseas development to the music scene in PNG through his studio and distribution business" (Crowdy 2018: 109).

Ni-Vanuatu from Tanna provide strong support for their people, something which can be observed in the fields of both sport and music. Sometimes this support can take on aggressive features, as I was told.[623] In 2000, at Fest'Napuan, NAIO was strongly supported by Tannese people in the audience who, at the same time, denigrated the other bands (interview with Marcel Melto 2002). Jean-Marc Wong offered to record NAUTEN BOYS, a group from Tanna in which Melto also took part (despite the fact that he is not from Tanna) even though the group's songs were, Melto admits, not very good. Melto suspects that Wong most probably hoped for many supporters who would buy the cassettes. The same holds true for NAIO (however, they are also good musicians).[624]

In 2002, Benson Nako took the opportunity to leave the studio when Wong refurbished the premises.[625] He regrets the fact that many good demo tapes arrived at the studio and then came to nothing. After Nako left, there were no new releases by Vanuata Productions for some time, while he managed to open his own studio Tropik Zound soon afterwards (see 5.1.1.5).

5.1.1.4 Collaborations

A pioneering project in digital recording with a computer was launched by Ken Oshika who recorded the pop group TROPIC TEMPO. The production of the album "Vois Bilong Ol Bumbu" (voice of the ancestors, 1996) was a joint venture of Oshika's small studio Ocean Deep, Wong's Vanuata Productions and Mangrove Productions by Alain Lecante in New Caledonia.[626] The instruments were recorded at Ocean Deep (electric drums and part of the keyboards), while Wong recorded the voices and part of the instruments (slit gongs, *nalaklak*, guitars, bass and additional keyboards) in his studio. The recording of a few overdubs and the mixing (with Alain Lecante in charge) was made in Nouméa which took about one week (interview with Henry Toka 2006). The album is only available on CD (not on cassette) and contains radio edits of some of the longer songs.[627]

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[623] I observed such incidents myself but I do not have enough experience to make such general assertions. However, I did find that the presence of a bigger group of Tannese can cause uneasiness amongst young ni-Vanuatu from other places.

[624] The pop group KROS ROD made a song, 'Tafea' about the TAFEA Football Club with the intention to sell cassettes to the club's fans (interview with John Kapala 2003).

[625] He worked many overtime hours for which he was not paid and he generally had the feeling that his efforts were not appreciated. Nako received a salary of 50 000 vt (357 €) per month.

[626] Mangrove, in contrast to Vanuata, is a key player for international productions in Island Melanesia and beyond.

[627] The songs are shortened through, for example, the omission of solos. This marketing concept was new to the band members who only thought about how to express themselves musically and who did not ponder such

Mangrove Productions in Nouméa, New Caledonia, is considered by many pop musicians as an alternative to Vanuata Productions because of the higher technical standard (for example by VANESSA QUAI). Despite this rivalry, Jean-Marc Wong from Vanuata Productions and Alain Lecante from Mangrove Productions cooperate on various projects. Some groups record the most part of their album in Wong's studio and then a few band members go to Nouméa to make some additional recordings. The editing and mixing also takes place there.[628] Artists from other parts of Island Melanesia record at Mangrove, for example the group APPRENTICE from the Solomon Islands. VATDORO, DAVID ANDREW, VANESSA QUAI and TIM KALMET recorded albums in PNG.

Even if Henry Toka criticises Alain Lecante for not pointing the musicians to the French performing right society (the Société des Auteurs, Compositeurs et Éditeurs de Musique, SACEM), the band had a say and creative leeway during the process of production in the case of "Vois Bilong Ol Bumbu". This is not always the case, as a project of NEW ETHNIC illustrates. The studio operator Richard Wongsokarto from New Caledonia saw a performance of the band on TV (on occasion of Army Open Day which was filmed by Radio France Overseas, RFO) and invited them to produce an album. Wongsokarto came to Vanuatu, listened to the band's whole repertoire and then selected some songs for the recording.[629] NEW ETHNIC recorded their album "Roots Man" within two weeks in Studio Alize in Kone, New Caledonia. Wongsokarto then paid the expenses for the flight to New Caledonia[630] and provided accommodation for the time of the recordings. As a matter of fact, a share in the revenue of CD sales was agreed upon; however, when I spoke to David Daniel five years later, he said that they had not yet received any payment.

Jean-Marc Wong (Vanuata Productions) organised assistance in recording, editing and mixing for himself in the form of collaboration with Australian sound engineers. Phil Sawyers came for two months to Vanuatu in 2001 to mix the recordings for the album "Same Old Cap" (NAIO) – expenses which made this album the most expensive so far. He came back to Vanuatu to record NAIO's new album "Sail On", while Wong and musician Gero Iaviniau went

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commercial decisions (interview with Henry Toka 2006). Most stringband songs are short anyway, thus no extra version for the radio is needed.

[628] HUARERE even made all the recordings of an album there. Alain Lecante came to Vanuatu during Fest'Napuan and became aware of HUARERE. Subsequently, the band recorded at his studio and he released their song 'Tavola' on a sampler (interview with Edgar Hinge & Ben Siro 2002).

[629] Band member David Daniel is convinced that the album would have been better if the musicians themselves had chosen the songs. The first track, 'New Caledonia', for example, was only recorded to attract buyers in New Caledonia – this was the producer's idea (interview with David Daniel 2003).

[630] Air Vanuatu also sponsored the band, probably by giving a discount on the freight.

to Australia six months later to record additional instruments and to edit the recordings. The album was mastered by Chief Mastering Engineer Steve Smart (Studio 302 in Sydney. Because of these extraordinary expenses, “Sail On” (2003) became the most expensive album to date.

HUARERE made recordings with a French sound engineer, another co-production of Wong and Lecante who shared the production costs. For example, the musicians recorded chords played in an off-beat rhythm on a keyboard employing MIDI technology and planned to take the hard disc with the MIDI files to Nouméa (New Caledonia), where they would choose a fitting piano sound from a better expander, sound module or synthesizer. Macka Silona (VKS Studio) and XX SQUAD likewise recorded their album in 2003 with the software and help of an Australian sound engineer, and Benson Nako worked together with French sound engineers when working on a joint project with KROS ROD and musicians from France.

Phil Sawyer also recorded the stringband DAUSAKE with his own equipment and Macintosh computer (with the software Pro Tools) for which Wong had to pay the freight. Sawyer came for only two days and recorded eight songs. Since this is not enough for a stringband album, Wong recorded another four pieces with his tape machine to complete the album. While *pop miusik* recordings can be an international undertaking, stringbands only record within Vanuatu – there is less collaboration when producing a stringband album.

5.1.1.5 Small-Scale Studios

The high demand in more affordable recording possibilities at the time of fieldwork was met by relatively advanced home-recording studios as well as the new recording facilities at the Vanuatu Kaljoral Senta. Thus, there were good opportunities to document the developments in this sector and witness strategies, rivalries, and dealings among its actors.

In Vanuatu, all of the interim instances which usually characterise the music industry and which often have great influence on the music production, are absent: A(rtists) & R(epertoire) managers, bookers[631], distributors, publishers and so on. Most musicians in Vanuatu do not hope for much from the owners of recording facilities, except a good sound quality. The bands’ committees are capable of managing the groups themselves, and marketing is mostly reduced to the task of placing the cassettes in the manageable number of stores present in the towns and the islands, something which they can also do on their own (see, however, 5.1.2).

[631] However, Jean-Marc Wong, David Nalo and George Lapi organise concerts as a part-time job.

All ni-Vanuatu who are operating a small studio or who are working there as technicians, are musicians themselves. When considering commercial productions in Vanuatu, one should keep in mind that studio operators acquired the necessary specialised knowledge about studio production technology auto-didactically or with only little help. In the 1990s, Oshika (see 2.2.7) was a tutor for several of them (John Josiah, Joel Malesi, Falau Jacob, Maurice Michel, Tim Kalmet and Samson Andrews 'Fender'). Oshika had been working at Vanuwespa[632] and then founded his own small studio named Ocean Deep where he also gave courses in digital home-recording. TROPIC TEMPO was the first group which recorded at Ocean Deep Studio, a new experience for the band, who had not recorded with computer technology before (interview with Henry Toka 2006).[633]

Maurice Michel operates the small Shepherds Studio, a home recording studio where he, for example, produced a cassette of the (YANG) WESTERN BOYS.[634] At the time of fieldwork, Timteo Kalmet was about to set up a home recording studio at his home in Erakor. Small home recording studios usually only record *pop miusik* with programmed drums, since they are not equipped with enough microphones – essential for the recording of a drum set or a stringband. A larger studio, built with improvised materials, is integrated in 'Wan Smoalbag Haos', the domain of the Wan Smolbag drama group. As an effect of the new studios in Vila, all of the (pop) musicians in Vanuatu can record their music – as long as they pay.[635] So far, the processes of production and distribution need an infrastructure that is situated in Port Vila. However, many musicians have the desire to found their own studios, and several picture themselves doing so on their home island.[636]

In 1994, musician David Andrew had the possibility to take part in a Papua New Guinea government programme and learnt sound engineering in Port Moresby by John Wong, chief sound engineer of the Pacific Gold Studio.[637] Andrew has no ambitions to establish a studio of

[632] This information was obtained from John Josiah.

[633] According to Hayward (2012: 62) Ocean Deep existed from 1997 to 1999, however it definitely existed earlier, when he worked with TROPIC TEMPO. The group published their elaborately produced album in 1996.

[634] Shepherd Studio is situated in Anambrou, Seven Star. Michel records with a computer.

[635] Jean-Marc Wong (Vanuata Productions) usually asks for a demo tape to assess the potential of a group. He often rejects bands. The bands usually produce a demo by home-taping a live performance with a simple tape recorder.

[636] For example Charlie Tari, Benjamin Siro and John Brown – apparently independently of each other – in north Pentecost.

[637] His flight costs were covered and he received an allowance and accommodation. Andrew left for PNG in August 1994 and came back in the beginning of 1997. The contact came about through BARIKE BAND from Rabaul (PNG) which toured Vanuatu during the South Pacific Mini Games. Andrews was a member of BLUE CYCLE which played at the same event at the USP. Eileen Nganga, a Tolai from Rabaul and PNG consul in

his own but as an apprenticed sound engineer he has the skills to implement his ideas when recording at another person's studio. For the recordings of his songs, he chose the Tropik Zound Studio of Benson Nako. Andrew values a fruitful collaboration over better equipment. Other musicians – of stringbands and pop groups alike – think likewise. The best advertisement for his new studio was probably Nako's work as a sound engineer at Vanuata Productions. Musicians such as John Kapala from KROS ROD came to know him and his ways there (interview with John Kapala 2003).

After Benson Nako left Vanuata Productions, he gave himself five years to build up a business as an alternative to the aforementioned. In addition, he wanted to attract musicians from overseas and specifically aimed at musicians from New Caledonia, when we spoke in February 2003. Nako moved into a former training studio of Radio Vanuatu which had been established by Hendrik Kettner in 1991 (interview with Hendrik Kettner 2004).[638] The first production of an album at his studio Tropik Zound (Figure 30) was "Friendly String Band (Vol.2)" from LUKUNAEFA (October 2003).[639] In 1996, the stringband had recorded an album with Jean-Marc Wong (with a different line-up) but had not received enough shares of the revenue – in their view. Because of the costs of producing an album and also the fact that it comes to nothing, the group was reluctant to record another album. At Tropik Zound, however, the musicians feel comfortable and appreciate the good sound as well as the relaxed atmosphere. Nako takes the time to listen – in contrast to Wong, as the musicians said, who is more business-oriented and for whom time is important (interview with Tony Alvos and LUKUNAEVA 2003).

The proceedings in recording a stringband differ slightly from studio to studio and from band to band. Nowadays, most groups do not play all at once while recording. LUKUNAEFA started with the *yuka*, guitars and *busbes* at once, and recorded the soprano voice next. After that, *alto* and *tena* were recorded, and then, in a fourth step, on separate tracks the *bongo* and, finally, the *seka* (interview with Tony Alvos 2003). They were quite quick and recorded fifteen songs

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Vanuatu, connected Andrew with the consulate of PNG (interview with David Andrew Iaukou Ruben Holden 2004).

[638] Kettner came to Fiji and Vanuatu via projects which had been financed by the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation, the German Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit and other institutions. He trained radio technicians from various independent countries of the Pacific. A grant of the Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation enabled stringband musician Moses Stevens to spend four months in Honolulu where he worked at the radio. In Vanuatu, he worked at the radio as a news presenter (in English and Bislama) for some time.

[639] Benson Nako started his studio at the end of July 2003 and I witnessed a recording session later that year. Hayward mistakenly gives a later date, namely 2005 (2012: 64).

in twelve hours (on four days, each time from six to nine pm).[640] Twelve of these fifteen songs were selected to be published on their album. For the recordings, the group called on each instrument's specialists: two boys recorded the *busbes* part and two others the *yukalele* part. Although the group has four or five guitarists at live performances, there were only three at the recordings to reduce the likelihood of mistakes (all have to strum in sync). The joined album of MAGAWIARUA and SARATOKOWIA is another early project completed at Nako's Tropik Zound Studio. MAGAWIARUA and SARATOKOWIA; altogether twelve musicians (six of each group) were finished with the recordings within one week (interview with Jeffrey Thomson 2003).[641]

John Josiah (Sina Studio) started with a four-track-cassette-recorder (see 2.2.7). In his productions, Josiah sang and played all the parts by himself, copying single tracks together until all the means were exhausted.[642] One song turned out to be a success and was played on the radio for a long time. Josiah had no intention to win money out of his hobby; he did not receive any royalties and did not give concerts. The news spread that there was the possibility to be recorded by a ni-Vanuatu and that a big studio was not necessary. In order to record the group LONWOLWOL, Josiah purchased the eight-track Yamaha MT8X multitrack cassette recorder for about 175 000 vt (1 346 €). The investment steered the enterprise in a more professional direction.[643] After switching temporarily to an eight-track-mini-disc-recorder around 1997, he works with computer and recording software since 1999.[644] Josiah works with the recording software Cakewalk Pro Audio which cost him 4 000 or 5 000 vt (28 – 36 €) for a

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[640] Unfortunately, there were severe computer problems and they had to record some lost tracks again.

[641] Nako uses a SCSI connection (not FireWire) and can generate 24 audio tracks. He bought the software in Australia and his mixer in Nouméa, New Caledonia, where he went with the group KROS ROD. He also uses the Roland Sound Canvas SC8850, a sound module. Nako quotes these prices for his equipment: a Power Macintosh G4 (Apple) with a flat screen for 600 000 vt (4 285 €) and a mixing console for 34 3000 vt (2 450 €). Benson Nako uses a G4 Macintosh (Max Os X) with the software Pro Tools Le and Cubase 5.0 At the time of the interview, he also planned to produce video clips.

[642] The number of overdubs is limited with a four-track-recorder. When the first three tracks are recorded, they can be combined into one on track 4 ('ping-pong'). Now the fourth track is occupied but the other three are free for recording again. Another two tracks are combined into track 3 in order that the remaining two tracks can be recorded. Thus, up to seven recorded voices and instruments sound simultaneously in a fairly good quality. Evidently, the options for mixing and editing of the single tracks are restricted with this method.

[643] Josiah could proceed with overdubs in the same way as with the four-track-machine. However, he could only record four tracks at once and only four tracks had a 3-band equalizer.

[644] Josiah became acquainted with using a computer while schooling in the USA; however, he did not know anything about hard- and software for recording. He learnt to handle the audio recording software by using the help function of the software. Josiah bought his computer at Sky Computer. At first, he could only record midi files, as the system was not really sufficient for audio recordings. Josiah had to upgrade his system and now uses several hard disks (for example 30 GB, as matters stood at the time of fieldwork). His next investment will be a new sound card which will enable him to make 24-bit recordings (up to now he can only record in 16-bit). Josiah found the trader over the internet.

pirated copy at Sky Computer. He also built his new recording room (a small house of 5 x 3 m), employed Joel Malesi and holds a business license. Josiah named his studio after his daughter, Sina. When Josiah built the new concrete house, he enquired among his colleagues about possibilities for sound reduction. Peter Walker from Wan Smolbag (a theatrical company with its own studio) advised him to put coconut husks on top of his roof, to absorb the noise of rain on the corrugated iron. When the interview was conducted, Josiah was pondering on whether to use coconut husks, bamboo, carpets or sheep wool from New Zealand as a means of quietening his studio from the inside. However, even at present, Josiah engages in audio recording rather as a hobby and regards his studio not as professional.[645] Sina mostly produces cassettes, as CDs are seldom demanded. Those individual requests can be met by simply burning them in the personal computer.[646]

Often, studio operators do not have proper monitors. Another difficulty is that the mix might sound great on good monitors but poor in the final product (and on inferior stereos). Josiah uses the loudspeakers of a Sony stereo as monitor speakers but prefers headphones. Timteo Kalmet uses speakers by the brand Ramsa.

In Vila, every bus driver knows where to drop you if ‘Huarere Studio’ is requested as a destination. Band members of this popular group live here and plan to set up a studio (even though it is not yet there, a signboard with the name already exists). HUARERE’s declared aim is to build a house, obtain equipment and set up a studio which is better than that of Vanuata Productions.

According to Stern, Darren Wu created the Mastersound Studio in 2009 which has a good reputation amongst musicians (thus is financially worthwhile) and apparently mostly records stringbands (2014: 10, 16).

5.1.1.5 VKS Productions

The studio at the Vanuatu Kaljoral Senta (Figures 32 - 34) was set up in the end of 2001 by the Swiss ethnomusicologist Raymond Ammann. Initially, the main purpose was to record traditional music and narratives (*ol kastom stori*) for the archive. Ammann also recorded the stringbands DAIA ROIA DONGA and EASTERN BOYS because, as Macka Silona (sound engineer

[645] Sina Studio is situated in the part of town known as Freswota 4 (Figure 31). Josiah uses various devices to improve the sound: a dual-channel graphic equalizer (Yamaha Q 2031 B), a gated compressor/limiter he ordered directly from Australia through an acquainted Australian who runs a music shop and once came to Vanuatu, as well as a denoiser (Behringer SNR 2000) which he ordered in New Zealand after a friend had brought him a catalogue from there. Josiah uses the multi-effect processor SPX 990 from Yamaha (bought at the Sound Centre).

[646] Sina’s most popular albums, those of UPB and REYNOLDS, are occasionally requested on CD.

at the studio) said, “stringband is local, it’s ‘roots’” (“*stringban hem i lokol, hem i* roots*, e?*”).[647] Moreover, it turned out that the software was suitable to record a full band and so Ammann tried it out and recorded the song ‘Freedom’ by the pop group NAIO[648], as well as the singer VANESSA QUAI. Ammann introduced Macka ‘Splaff’ Silona to studio technology during the recordings of Marcel Meltherorong (henceforth called Mars Melto, an abbreviation of his name he uses himself), who engaged Silona as a guitarist. Back then, Silona worked at the Television Blong Vanuatu. Silona took over from Ammann and started to work at the VKS studio in June 2002.[649] Silona had the prior knowledge[650] and Ammann showed him the rest he needed to know in order to run a studio: how to arrange the microphones (*maekem* in Bislama), for example for the recording of a drum set or a *busbes*, how to produce a master CD, CD duplication, distribution of CDs to retailers and also accountancy (like managing the stock, drafting contracts and archiving).

The recording software was funded by the French ambassador who was also expected to pay for the salary of the technician. After nothing came about for a while, the VKS decided to cover these continuous costs on the condition that Silona ensured that there was a monthly revenue.[651] At the time of the interview, Silona was in his first year. He received 60 000 vt (429 €) gross per month and was optimistically expecting that he would earn more with increasing experience and productivity – after all he was just at the beginning.[652]

In the VKS studio a pilot track (a recording made for the orientation of the first musicians who record a multitrack recording) is made with one single stereo condenser microphone.[653] The other studio equipment includes a 14-channel mixer and the recording software Cool Edit Pro.

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[647] Interview with Macka Silona in 2002.

[648] Later, the song was recorded again in the studio of Vanuata Productions and published on the album “Same Old Cap”.

[649] He worked from seven thirty to noon at the studio and then from one thirty to ten pm on TV until the end of his notice period in August. From August 2002 onwards Silona worked fulltime.

[650] On TV, he worked with analogue equipment. In the matter of music, he had, as a band member of the pop group XX SQUAD, distinguished himself in paying attention to sound details and had experience in the identification of false timing and so on.

[651] Thus, the VKS took over and the studio was not anymore subject to the French Embassy. This is how it came about that the VKS runs a studio and Silona became the sound engineer and a full staff member of the Kaljoral Senta (however, without a defined time period). Apart from the studio, Vanuatu Kaljoral Senta (VKS) Productions includes the audio and film unit, the archive and radio-programme of the VKS (Sam Obed, Jacob Kapere and Ambong Thompson).

[652] When I spoke to him about his work, Silona did not express feelings of satisfaction about his work, not even when an album was finished – he always wanted to change something and wondered about small adjustments. Besides, he worked long hours without pay; sometimes on Saturdays or even on Sundays. Nevertheless, he said, he is glad about having accepted the job.

[653] It is the model VP88 by Shure, which is otherwise used by Sam Obed from the audio and film unit of the VKS.

The VKS Studio could use better technical equipment; a bigger hard drive and better loudspeakers for the mixdown in the first place. The present speakers do not reproduce the bass-frequencies adequately.[654]

According to my notes from participant observation during the production of the album "Onesua Golden Jubilee", SOUWIA, 2003), the pilot track was recorded on a Thursday, *yuka* and *busbes* on the following Tuesday, the guitars (at once) on the next Thursday and then a lead guitar and percussion. At this stage, another three days for the recording of the vocals were anticipated.

5.1.2 Deals

Technical standards of studios and conditions of contracts are two of the most discussed issues amongst musicians. Each studio operator has his individual way of making contracts with the bands and sometimes there are different terms for different musicians. This situation makes it difficult for the fieldworker to assess whether musicians are in fact treated unfairly as they often state. Amongst the musicians in Vanuatu, I often came across the opinion that ni-Vanuatu should operate the studios because they are taken as being less business-minded than people with European or Asian roots (whether they were born in Vanuatu or not).[655] The following account displays the various positions as reported in interviews. There is probably no other realm in the field of music, where different positions clash as much as when it comes to the payment of royalties.[656]

Paul Gardissat usually made one-off payments per unit of sold cassettes – for each hundred cassettes, the groups received a payment. Once all the cassettes were sold, another one hundred were produced and money was accordingly paid to the band. Gardissat kept an account[657] and granted access to his chart of royalties: for example, 202 copies of FATUANA MATHUA's cassette "In Australia" were produced and the same number sold. The band received 60 vt per cassette, which comes to 12 120 vt. TAKAFELAPA STRINGBAND from Emae

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[654] Whenever Silona was content with the preliminary mixes, he detected that the low frequencies were far too strong when he played the music at his stereo at home (he said literally: "*E, mi karem i go long haos – bes i kavremap evri samting, i kavremap voes, yu no harem man i singsing*"). He then altered the mix the next day (interview with Macka 'Splaff' Silona 2002).

[655] Apart from Wong and Oshika in Vanuatu, there are also others in the pop industry in Island Melanesia who have Asian ancestry (Richard Wongsokarto from the Studio Alize in Kone, New Caledonia, and also in the Solomon Islands as some musicians reported). It is also a well-known fact throughout Melanesia that the operators of the Pacific Gold Studio and Chin H. Meen (CHM) in PNG both have Chinese ancestors.

[656] By "royalties", I refer to the musicians' share in sold sound carriers – not to aspects related to copyright.

[657] He wrote out all receipts in Bislama to avoid any misunderstandings.

did not have such success; they only sold 70 cassettes and received 4 200 vt. 403 cassettes, the album "Again" by the WESTERN BOYS was produced, 402 were sold, one remains in stock and so on. The WESTERN BOYS received a cheque (WestPac Banking Corporation) and Gardissat kept a copy in his records. The album was a success and more copies were produced (the band received 47 280 vt for 788 sold cassettes). A few stringbands, Gardissat reported, actually earned good money. In retrospect, Gardissat declares that the recording and marketing of the stringbands cannot be profitable in the long run. He made losses with Vanuata Production, as well as with Sun Productions. However, he was able to balance these with the production and sales of pirate cassettes (and the printing house in the case of Sun Productions). The process of printing the covers was much more work without computer technology. He had to buy the blank tapes and the stickers and then his employees had to duplicate the master recording to the cassettes. Once they had produced 200 copies, they had to be distributed to the shops. As many of these came back to him, the unpopular bands received nearly no royalties.

When Jean-Marc Wong resumed the production of albums at Vanuata Productions after he had taken over the business, the arrangements between the recording bands and the studio operator remained unchanged. He kept to 60 vt royalties per cassette sold (80 vt per CD) and the time spent recording was not charged.[658] However, it should to be noted that 60 vt were worth more in the 1980s compared to, say, 2004.[659]

Sometimes, when publishing an album of a very popular group (such as VATDORO), Wong agrees with the musicians on a fixed amount which is paid on the day of the release. Wong takes the risk of making no profits if the albums sells worse than expected but does not have to pay any share to the band if he sells more. According to him, he is authorised to use the recordings for further publications, once the musicians are paid off. The musicians of VATDORO, however, are displeased by the fact that Wong released the album "Best of Vatdoro" with the band's songs compiled by him (interview with John Brown Sigeri 2002). In contrast to some other studios, Vanuata Productions not only records and produces the cassettes and CDs but also tends to the marketing and distribution of the sound carriers.

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[658] These are the numbers given by musicians. If they are true, the profit margin of CDs is particularly good. Wong himself reported that he pays 15% of the wholesale price of each album to the bands (according to Wong this is also the rate paid by Mangrove in New Caledonia). The wholesale and also retail prices are the same for all stores in Vila, Luganville and in the islands. The fixed price is meant to keep the business fair for everyone, Wong said. However, Wong gives a discount if a customer buys five albums at his store.

[659] For comparison: a newspaper (Vanuatu Daily Post) costs 100 vt.

Sina Productions works with a different model: Josiah charges a flat fee in advance and then the musicians record without a time limit.[660] In contrast to Wong, Josiah rejects no recording projects as long as the customers pay. As a minimum, he produces 200 cassettes (duplication, cover and stickers); this amount is included in the fee.[661] Reorders are charged with 650 vt (4.60 €) per cassette.[662] If an album sells well, he benefits because he can produce and charge more cassettes (without any more recording, editing and so on). Josiah engages not in distribution and retail sale, this being the customer's (musician's) own responsibility. In the past, the customers came on Sundays or in the evenings, after he came home from work. Although Josiah cannot make a living on the recording studio but has a job at a bank, he is now able to employ a technician, Joel Malesi, who records in the daytime.[663] Josiah offers the option for musicians to buy the mastertape and duplicate the cassettes elsewhere or to do the duplication at Sina Studio. There are no written contracts but Josiah works on a confidential basis. The solo album of JESSE TEMAR costs 850 vt (6 €) at the 'Commercial', a small general store in Wuro, West Ambrym (Temar's home). A share of 150 vt (1.07 €) per sold cassette is allocated to Temar, another small amount goes to the 'Commercial' but the lion's share goes to Sina Studio.

There is a similar deal model at Tropik Zound Studio (Benson Nako). Nako charges 80 000 vt (570 €) for one month of recordings. Groups pay 40 000 vt (285 €) and then take their time recording their material. The group receives a master-CD and takes care of the duplication, marketing and sales themselves.

At the VKS, musicians have to pay the basic charge of 25 000 vt (179 €) for the recording of an album. The hours are tracked, a necessity because some bands are not prepared enough and thus need more time due to failed attempts.[664] When the scheduled time is used up, the band has to speak with the director of the VKS and might be granted a fifty percent reduction for the remaining hours they need. The decision is taken by the director, the accountant of the VKS and the technician, Macka Silona (at the time of fieldwork). Since the CDs are fabricated

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[660] Josiah charged 130 000 vt (930 €) at the time of fieldwork. According to Stern, the production of an album nowadays costs between 150 000 and 200 000 vt (Stern 2014: 7).

[661] Musicians can order more, for example 500 cassettes at once. However, the market is small, thus most do not.

[662] Usually, there are no privileges for musicians: when musician Gaëtan Telemb wants to buy a copy of his own album "Vent D'Espoir" (Vanuata Productions, 1990), he has to pay the full price (interview with Gaëtan Telemb 2003).

[663] Malesi was paid gradually more, beginning at 5 000 vt per week, than 7 000 vt, 8 000 vt and 10 000 (70 €). Josiah and Malesi entered no written contract but work on a confidence base. Meanwhile, Malesi is paid by project – Josiah suggests a sum and he agrees (interview with John Josiah 2003 & with Joel 'Joe Max' Malesi 2003).

[664] The measure of keeping track is meant to result in the groups coming prepared to the studio.

in New Zealand, they have to calculate costs for customs, the jewel cases and so on when considering whether they can give a discount. Those who are well-prepared can finish the recordings for an album in one week.[665] David Nalo acts as a broker for some deals between bands and VKS Productions. VKS Productions pays 500 vt (3.60 €) per CD sold to the band which is a good share for the musicians.[666]

It was a recurring topic in the interviews that musicians feel betrayed by studio operators. In many cases, I was told that despite agreements they never received any money at all. Some groups were paid only once, despite the fact that there were subsequent batches of sound carriers produced. According to Joel Kaltang, SOUWIA recorded altogether seven albums with the Burns Philp company but received only one single payment. As a result, some musicians can only estimate whether their albums sold well or not.[667] Although ni-Vanuatu musicians generally pay their respect to the BLACK BROTHERS, some stated that after recording and publishing at Vanuwespa they did not receive a proper payment or even no payment at all.[668] Some pop musicians who produced albums overseas complained about having been pulled over the barrel.[669] Other musicians are content with the payments they receive. In some cases, the musicians do not save up money to finance the production of an album but rather find a sponsor (see 7.6).

5.1.3 Intellectual Property Rights and Copyright

Musicians impose all restrictions concerning musical arrangements, style, and lyric topics themselves. In some cases, the *jif* or *big man*, the elders of the home community and/or the laws of *kastom* prohibit the musicians to realise some ideas, or the required technical means are not available. However, there is no authority on the part of the music industry which controls publications. I have never heard of a case of official censorship (except of an incidence which occurred in the 1970s, see 2.5.5.2).

The international pop music albums sold in the stores in Vila downtown, Luganville and the

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[665] ALME SYSTEM, an example for an unprepared band, needed six weeks (every day, as Silona said). TOVOTAE, a stringband from Santo, needed three weeks, which is comparatively long for a stringband.
[666] In the case of the CD “Tagune Saon” (2002) with contributions of various groups, each interpreter who provided two songs received 100 vt and those who only provided one song, 50 vt. This is possible because of the comparatively big edition of 500 CDs.
[667] It is important to note that Jean-Marc Wong (Vanuata Productions) does not have a monopoly on complaints because according to some musicians, the (Melanesian) ni-Vanuatu John Josiah (Sina Studio), still owed them money despite good sales.
[668] Amongst these is TIM KALMET.
[669] Amongst these are TIM KALMET (he received some money after the release but then the payments ceased despite rumours that the album was sold further on in PNG, the Solomon Islands and Fiji) and NEW ETHNIC.

trade centres in the islands are for the most part pirate copies.[670] This is possible because of the lack of copyright legislation and the fact that Vanuatu is a small and remote place. When Paul Gardissat prepared for the business as a bootlegger in the mid-80s, he approached a lawyer from Singapore and enquired about how to proceed to avoid problems. Gardissat heeded his advice: he shuffled the tracks on the album and changed the album's cover by creating collages (for example by cutting out MICHAEL JACKSON, who sits on a car, and putting him on a chair instead). Gardissat also used another brand name (SALE) and logo for his 'label' (interview with Paul Gardissat 2004).

The experienced bootleggers Gardissat and Wong do not believe that business in Vanuatu is possible with imported sound carriers because they would be far too expensive. When Paul Gardissat began to produce pirated cassettes at Sun Productions, he also offered the music of artists from Papua New Guinea. However, someone from the studio concerned contacted him and asked him to stop the sale or to engage in business and purchase the right to make legitimate copies. Gardissat stopped immediately as he was not interested.

Jean-Marc Wong himself faces the problem that the recordings of Vanuata Productions are pirated. When members of NAIO were out and about in Luganville, they heard recordings of their new and hitherto unreleased album on the bus and in a taxi. Wong had given a rough mix to staff of the television – of course without the authorisation to reproduce and sell it, however this is exactly what happened. Covers of such pirated cassettes are cheaply copied in black and white. Wong can do nothing against this practice.

Stern takes the positive side of the coin and notes that "original recordings produced by official recording studios circulate mostly through copying practices. This allows a wide diffusion of music, and encourages young people to be musically creative" (2014: 12 f.). She remarks that

> "it is difficult for young people circulating music using digital media to accept the fact that they are now taking part in illegal practices, especially because they do not have the financial means to acquire music in the official way. However it seems that everyone agrees that people should be able to ask for the music they like for free. Here digital technologies are adapted to local uses" (Stern 2014: 12; punctuation as in the original).

Stern comes to the conclusion that "digital technologies provide a unique and independent way for local musicians to promote themselves and find a niche in the international music

[670] As Hayward reports, this is also true for music DVDs (2009: 64). According to Niles, the distribution of pirate copies is common also in PNG (1998).

world" (Stern 2014: 12). .

There was no national collecting agency at the time of fieldwork, although there have been various attempts to establish laws concerning the protection of intellectual property rights. Even after Vanuatu joined the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) in 2012, the law was not implemented (Stern 2014: 1).[671] The problems which result from this situation are a subject of debate amongst musicians. Many musicians complain about this unresolved issue and some have developed strategies of damage control. LUKUNAEFA from Emua village (Efate) do not perform any new, unpublished songs at their concerts. The stringband takes this measure because of an instance where another group copied their new songs. Tony Alvos explains: "When we haven't recorded [the songs], we complain [if someone copies them] because we want to sell them first. If other groups play [our songs] after they have been published and sold, it's all right".[672] The habit of recruiting only boys from the own community constitutes a simple but effective measure to prevent the unwanted dissemination of a stringband's style and songs.

When cultural practices are the subject of copyright discussions, this is sometimes connected to objects of material culture, such as the bottles (in Futuna) and bamboo tubes and flipflops (in Futuna and Aneityum) which are used as musical instruments.[673] There are two other dimensions of the copyright problem: first, the international copyright issues, and second, the customary property rights within Vanuatu's communities. Ammann writes with respect to traditional songs: "[…] each song in Vanuatu belongs to either one person or several persons of the same lineage. Such songs are not allowed to be performed by any person without the song owners' permission" (Ammann 2012: 23). Stern notes in relation to the commodification of music:

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[671] In contrast, there were efforts to establish a copyright legislation in Fiji in the 1970s (Saumaiwai 1994: 96). The Fijian singers LAISA and SERU SEREVI are currently directors of the Fiji Performing Rights Association which is a non-profit organisation that protects the rights of composers in Fiji (https://www.fpra.com.fj/about.htm, last accessed on 21 March 2020). New Caledonian artists are covered by the Société des Auteurs, Compositeurs et Éditeurs de Nouvelle-Calédonie.

[672] "*Taem we mifala i no putum long rikoding yet, mifala i komplen* […] *from mifala i wantem salem festaem.* Then *afta we i stap long maket long sel finis, ol nara grup i plei long hem, hem i oraet.*" On one such an incident, the matter could be resolved in conversation between members of each group's committees (interview with Tony Alvos 2003).

[673] The claims concerning the authorship of Graham N. Nimoho and Bob Kuao respectively are discussed in 2.2.3. The public in Vanuatu has predominantly accepted the provenance of Futuna and thus it is not necessary to adopt measures to protect this cultural practice – other groups respect the uniqueness of the Futuna style and do not copy it.

> "[…] although in Vanuatu music does appear to have conventional economic dimensions, since it can be exchanged for other objects of value, most of these exchanges remain first and foremost elements of the social relations which they initiate or confirm. Music in Vanuatu was first and foremost an important factor in an economy of prestige and public representation connected to customary law" (2014: 11).

Intellectual property rights concerning cultural practices is a much-debated topic in Vanuatu, most notably discussed in relation to *kastom*.[674] The Vanuatu Kaljoral Senta accommodates the National Museum and an archive with video and audio data (the so-called 'Kastom Bank' in common parlance) and is the principal institution in questions concerning the protection and preservation of cultural practices and artefacts.[675] Thus, it seems the perfect place for a non-commercial collection of songs. Joel Kaltang who has a long history in stringband music with his bands SOUWIA and SARATOKOWIA, asked Paul Gardissat to grant access to his master tapes. Kaltang's aim was to 'register' the songs as a means with which to acknowledge the authorship of the songs. However, Gardissat disapproved of the idea to make his old stringband recordings available because he feared that copies of the material would leak and that other musicians would then ask him for royalties. As a condition, he called for an official project. Accordingly, Kaltang wrote a proposal to Ralph Regenvanu, then director of the VKS, and meanwhile the 'string band preservation project' has been implemented.

Apart from the preservation of the stringband songs as a recognised cultural practice, Kaltang was also motivated by staking out the territory of the various stringbands from the island of Emao. These use each other's songs in their repertoires and in recordings of cassettes which causes quarrels amongst their members.[676] A registration of the songs of each stringband from Emao at the VKS and archiving in the 'Kastom Bank' would provide a form of recognition of

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[674] Drawing on various writings of Haidy Geismar, Hugo DeBlock notes that "the Copyright Act of 2000 was designed almost exclusively for the North Ambrym context" (DeBlock 2019: 68), a context in which slit-drums and tree fern figures are sold to museums, collectors and tourists. At the time of fieldwork, the copyright issues discussed in public related to the protection of Melanesian customs such as the land-diving (*nanggol*) of South Pentecost. Ni-Vanuatu musicians may worry about copyright infringement for their own songs; however I had the impression that only few are concerned with the consequences that ni-Vanuatu lovers of international music would have to face if international copyright law is put into force in Vanuatu. In some communities, the fear of black magic (*blak majik*) plays a role in the acknowledgement of other people's *kastom miusik* (see Stern 2914: 11).

[675] The documents, video and audio recordings stored at the 'Kastom Bank' are not accessible to the public. However, the relatives of those who are the authors of the stored data may have access.

[676] For example, SARATOKOWIA published the song 'Moskito' on their album "Operation Lagoon" (Vanuata Productions 1999) although it is originally a song by SOUWIA which was published on one of their albums in the 1970s. With the foundation of the 'Malamow Miusik Asosiesen' (Malamow Music Association) Kaltang plans to settle disputes amongst the groups of Emao and also to protect their songs and style against stringbands from other islands (interview with Joel Kaltang 2002). As part of his endeavours, Kaltang compiled a list of song lyrics, some with commentary.

the property rights and thus a de facto copyright in a setting without official copyright law. Kaltangs role in all this is somewhat ambivalent: as a member of SOUWIA, as well as SARATOKOWIA, one could argue that he 'stole' from his own group. He was anyway not the composer of the songs in question but someone who now works as the driver of a bus which is owned by the (YANG) SOUWIA and is used for public transport (see Chapter 7.5).

For Kaltang, copyright also became an issue when the song 'Island Dress' was supposed to be used for a film project about the *aelan dres*, the women's typical garment in Vanuatu. A member of MAGAWIARUA is the composer of this song.[677] DAUSAKE, a stringband from Nguna Island, bought the song, performed it and also published it on one of their albums. Their version became very popular. When DAUSAKE's 'Island Dress' was supposed to be used in the film, the question arose as to who had to be asked for permission (the composer or DAUSAKE) and Kaltang became involved in the issue.[678]

Henry Toka tried to find out about the financial outcome of TROPIC TEMPO's project "Vois Bilong Ol Bumbu" (Vanuata/Ocean Deep/Mangrove, 1996) when he came to France. When he finally became a member of the Société des Auteurs, Compositeurs et Éditeurs de Musique (SACEM) and tried to register one of the songs he had composed, he was told that he had to seek permission at Mangrove. When he wrote to Lecante and he did not receive an answer, Toka let it go at that.

In Vanuatu, the right to use cultural practices is closely related to the topic of identity. This is evident when bands use traditional songs in a modern arrangement. The proceedings by which permissions are granted or prohibitions are imposed vary from community to community. A dance group from the communities of the small islands Wala and Rano already performed traditional dances of this area in Brisbane and New Caledonia. When creating NEMINAMEL, a modern dance and music group from the Walarano area in Malekula, it was necessary that one of its organisers, Vital Soksok, went through all of the official channels to obtain permission to convert traditional songs (the rhythm being particularly important) of Wala and Rano to *pop miusik*. The presidents of the Wala Council of Chiefs and the Rano Council of Chiefs signed an agreement which confirms that the cultural practice is allowed to be performed outside the

[677] According to Kaltang, as well as Kalo Malesu, member of DAUSAKE, the song was composed by Alphongs Jack.

[678] In the case of 'Island Dress' he seems to take sides with the man from Emao, Alphongs Jack of MAGAWIARUA. However, he denied MAGAWIARUA's use of SOUWIA's old songs for a new recording and allegedly even wanted to take them to court. He did not when he heard that his old band colleague Lui Philip had given them permission to use the songs ("I gave [the songs] to them" – "*Mi givim long olgeta*", he said; interview with Lui Philip 2003).

communities of Walarano.[679] Furthermore, Soksok also informed the small Kaljoral Senta in Lakatoro, the provincial administration, as well as the council of chiefs of the whole island of Malekula.[680]

The question of copyright is closely connected to questions about authenticity, innovation and genuineness. Although NEMINAMEL appeal to *kastom* and although they need their project to be approved by the chiefs, they in fact create a mixture of traditional and contrived elements. For example, they developed a new way of dancing (composed of three or four original dances) and new designs of the wooden dancing-clubs. Their *kastom*-like outfit, especially the penis-wrappers, has nothing to do with the original dress of Walarano people.[681] The group calls itself a 'cultural association' and is part of a bigger initiative to educate young people in matters of *kastom* and to earn money with tourism-related activities since 1992, especially by building a small tourist resort at Wala Island, a small island just off-shore at Northeast Malakula.[682]

In Vanuatu, copyright is often a matter of the community, rather than the concern of only one group or an individual. Many musicians tend to put their own contribution (for example in the form of a performance or a composition) into the service of their community, their home island or the Republic of Vanuatu. When, for example, TROPIC TEMPO performed at Walt Disney World in Florida, Henry Toka tried to make sure that the band gets a copy of all audio and video recordings which were made during their shows. Toka was not really interested in

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[679] Soksok said: "In the village it is them who preserve our identity" – "*Long vilej olgeta nao oli holem taet* our *aedentiti*" (interview with Vital Soksok 2003). *Jif* Aleck Nawinmal, who is regarded as '*kastom* professor' in Walarano, likes such usage of selected *kastom singsing*: "It is good if they use [this music]. If they did not, it would be dead. When they use it, it is kept alive" ("*Oli yusum i gud. Sapos i stap nating nomo, hem i olsem ya, i ded ya. Taem oli yusum samting ya i laef ya*"). He has no doubt that his father would have forbidden the fusion of Walarano *kastom miusik* with *pop miusik blong waetman* (white man's popular music).

[680] In a short article for the UNESCO "Gender Equality: Heritage and Creativity" report Thomas Dick (2014) mentions that the Leweton Cultural Group, a Mere Lava diaspora based in Luganville includes stringband music with traditional musical instruments, rhythms and chants. Maybe this case is comparable to my example of Walarano, with the difference that it is not *pop miusik* but stringband music which is syncretised with traditional music.

[681] There are a variety of reasons for these changes. Some have to do with the intended effect on the audience (of tourists), others for example with changed habits of circumcision. Several of the dancers have not acquired the right to wear a proper penis sheath which has to be paid with money, yams and pigs, but were circumcised at the hospital. Thus, the group decided to use a penis wrapper design which was borrowed from Pentecost and dyed it with colours (made in China). At least one dance/song performed by NEMINAMEL was brought to Malakula from Ambae in the past as part of a traditional exchange system.

[682] Tilley (1997) also traces some sources of the Wala islanders' knowledge about 'their *kastom*', which was put on display in tourist shows by the *kastom* dance troupe AMELBOAS and, in the end, was probably also used by NEMINAMEL. These are firstly the memories of Wala islanders, as noted in the anthropological work about a neighbouring island (Layard 1942), and are secondly sources of information provided by Kirk Huffman, former director of the VKS. In contrast to AMELBOAS, who meticulously tried to erase "[v]irtually all signs of modernity" (Tilley 1997: 85), NEMINAMEL deliberately fuse *kastom* and popular music.

those copies but rather looked for a way of ensuring that the performed music remained the property of the people of Vanuatu. When asked why he claimed their show for the people of Vanuatu instead of for the band, he said:

> "[…] if someone goes to overseas, this person is an ambassador of his/her place […]. If you represent your culture, I think that you are an ambassador. And if you go and screw things up, it's not you who pays for it; you are responsible for it but in the end, it reflects on your small country. That's true."[683]

Although innovations in cultural practices are usually the merit of individuals or groups (such as a band), in Vanuatu the community often makes demands. Ideas, such as a special way of building or playing a musical instrument, or a special way of dancing, become the property of the home community and – it is generally accepted that they should be built or performed by only this group. This claim of the community also finds expression in pecuniary form. When the dancing group VAKE came to Vila (training secretly at night to protect their unique style) they were not only accompanied by their team manager Charlie Iawantak but also by a chief of their community whose task was to watch out for them and to collect most of the money the group earned with their shows (interview with Charlie Iawantak & Jack Malia 2002).

The examples of TROPIC TEMPO and VAKE show typical attitudes of musicians as well as the usual relation between music and community in Vanuatu. Taken from the domain of pop, they particularly leap to the eye of an observer from Europe; however this sort of entanglement between music and community is even more typical for stringbands.

One might think that there is an overlap in the two domains of arts/artefacts and (stringband) music; however, upon closer inspection, there are considerable differences between these fields which can be summed up in one essential point: there is no "hunt for the authentic artifact" (DeBlock 2019: 56) on the part of western buyers as far as stringband music is concerned. Many issues bound to material objects do not apply to music. Such issues include the phenomenon of "singularization", that is "the singling out of things, in order to make them special, more valuable" (DeBlock 2019: 11, drawing on Kopytoff 1986) and DeBlock's categories "inauthentic (unused), made authentic (walked/worn), or truly authentic (performed)" (ibid.: 135). Although in Vanuatu (*kastom*) music may help in authenticating artefacts through usage in dance performances (see also DeBlock 2019: 25, 101), music itself

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[683] "[…] *eni man hem i aot hem i wan* ambassador *blong ples blong hem* […]. *Sapos yu reprisentem kalja blong yu mi ting se yu wan* ambassador. *Sapos yu go yu mekem wan ravis samting be i no yu i pem, yu* responsible *long hem, be afta i kam bak long smol kantri blong yu. Tru ya*" (interview with Henry Toka 2006).

is not made authentic (or more authentic) – at least this holds true for stringbands. In the domain of stringbands there are no "authenticating institutions" (ibid.: 195) such as museums which act "as arbiters of authenticity" (ibid.: 29) for artefacts. Stringband music is not a "frozen-in-time [masterpiece] of tribal art" (ibid.: 87), it does not have a pedigree, there are no repatriations and one cannot leave it in the bush to make it look older (and thus enhance its value for sale). Rather, stringband music is always authentic. It is bound to concrete persons and places (venues/performance contexts), or it is available on a sound carrier, and if copied from there, the music does not lose any of its authenticity.

5.1.2 Retail Trade

Stringband musicians told me that the release of new albums before Christmas/New Year and before Independence Day is related, on the one hand, to marketing (especially before Christmas people spend money), and also to the fact that it has become a tradition, as stringband music is the music people preferably listen to at this time of year, and one hears it resounding from many houses, especially in the neighbourhoods of Efate.

Musicians I spoke with offered two reasons that speak against recording at smaller studios as compared to at Vanuata: the equipment does not measure up to the same standard and the release is not available in Wong's shop. Besides, smaller studios such as Sina do not have Vanuata's distribution network, thus, the chance to sell cassettes is greater with Vanuata Productions. Jean-Marc Wong's most important client in Santo is Philip Wong, who has a store in Luganville.[684] Stringband tapes are sold in the general stores of Port Vila (for example at Chew Store), Luganville and in the trading centres in the islands along Melanesian pop music cassettes released by Vanuata Productions, as well as by Chin H. Meen and Pacific Gold from PNG. Island trade centres do not – if at all – sell the quantity of tapes (not to mention CDs) that can be bought in Port Vila (or, in a more restricted choice, in Luganville). Recent releases can be found astonishingly soon in the islands; not necessarily because people buy them there but because travelling individuals take the cassettes with them.[685]

Jean-Marc Wong, the manager of Vanuata Productions, the most professional recording studio, sells his products in a tiny shop in Vila's Chinatown, partitioned around 1989 from a

[684] Despite the same surname they are not related. Jean-Marc Wong told me that there are many Wongs in Vanuatu. Even his wife's maiden name is Wong.

[685] For example the album of BRATAZ VIBRATION reached Ambae one day after its release in Vila (interview with UPB 2004).

bigger general store which his brother had taken over from their father.[686] He sells *stringban* and *pop miusik* releases produced in his own studio along a range of pirated albums of Western interpreters and some albums produced by his partners from overseas. Older albums cannot be bought but a copy (without a proper cover, just a blank cassette) is produced on demand, as an individual order, and takes about one week until it is ready for collection.[687] If an album is much in demand, the place gets busy. For example, when a cassette of the popular pop group NAIO was released, people cued up in front of Wong's shop.

The pricing is interesting: Wong sells pirated cassettes of international interpreters such as MAKOMA and KASSAV for 780 vt (5.60 €). The whole sound carrier with a sticker and cover is locally produced. This is the cheapest price category – which is evident, given the fact that he has no expenses for recordings and copyright fees. Those releases of Vanuata Productions which are three or four years old are sold for 910 vt (6.50 €), while new releases and imported cassettes of groups from New Caledonia (Mangrove Studio) and the Solomon Islands cost 1020 vt (7.30 €).[688]

Some groups prefer smaller home-recording studios such as Maurice Michel's Shepherd Studio instead of Vanuata Productions and then place their cassettes on the market themselves. The stringband LUKUNAEVA has a 'production komiti' which sees to it that the group's cassettes can be found in the stores in town and generally is responsible for sales, marketing and duplication (interview with Tony Alvos 2003). The distribution is influential in deciding whether an album is marketable or not. DAUSAKE recorded their second album "New Millenium" (2000) at the home-recording studio of Tim Kalmet in Erakor. Despite the fact that many people approached them to buy the cassette directly from the band members, the group decided to turn to Vanuata Productions for their next album productions.

On the pavement in front of the general stores and the ice-cream and T-shirt shop in downtown Vila, racks of wood with cassettes (*stan*) are positioned and albums sold on commission. Whether or not a cassette which was released by a smaller studio can be bought at a particular shop in Vanuatu, is highly dependent on individual traffic routes. For example, a stringband's album might be sold at a particular shop in Luganville because a relative of the

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[686] The operation of both a recording studio as well as a shop where these recordings can be bought was also practised by the BLACK BROTHERS who ran a shop for cassettes in the 1980s. In Vanuatu, it is not common to sell sound carriers at live concerts.

[687] For example, those albums of ALIZÉ and VATDORO which were produced in the 1990s can be ordered in this way.

[688] Wong and Lecante grant each other special rates; otherwise, Wong could not sell Mangroves' releases which are more expensive in New Caledonia. Wong has an employee, a young woman, who sells the sound carriers in his shop.

band members works there. Benny, a member of XX SQUAD, works at a pizzeria and thus could arrange XX SQUAD's album being sold also there. The place of origin of the stringband's members is also important: the album "Lake Siwi" from the STONEY BOYS can be bought in Vila, Luganville, as well as in Ambrym. This group would not sell any albums on Tanna Island, for example. Other albums are available at even fewer sales outlets. The solo album of JESSE TEMAR (Sina Productions), for example, can only be bought at the Commercial in Craig Cove, West Ambrym, and in a particular shop in Vila. Vila Handprint also sells some releases of Sina Productions.

Some of the venues where the VKS sells the sound carriers produced in its studio differ completely from the other studios selling points: the museum shop of the National Museum of Vanuatu, the Vanuatu National Library and Archive, the Alliance Française de Port Vila and the Sound Centre. Stringband albums and albums with traditional music are also sold at the Kai Viti Hotel and Le Méridien Resort (interview with Macka 'Splaff' Silona, 2002).

The shop Sky Computer in Port Vila sells music on self-copied CDs. These are of very bad quality, that is, the CDs are broken after playing them a few times.[689] Thus, studio operators such as Silona would not have their CDs sold there. Maraki Samuel, DJ at Club Imperial, told me that when he buys a new music CD at Sky Computer, he copies it (*bonem* – burn) immediately because the 'original' gets worn out so soon (although sold at a high price). By comparison, the CD album of BRATAZ VIBRATION (Sina Productions) costs only 1500 vt (10.70 €) which is comparatively cheap for a CD.

5.2 Image

The most important marketing resource of a stringband is its members: their skills to sing and play the instruments but also the ways they move, their smiles and their outfits. The group LUKUNAEVA got to the heart of the image that stringband musicians generally create for themselves: "Friendly String Band" is both the title of their second album as well as of one of the album's pieces. On cover photographs, stringband musicians are always smiling as if they

[689] I heard people referring to the products of Sky Computer as "*giaman-CD*" (fake-CD).

were on the payroll of the national tourism office.[690] There is even a Facebook group called 'Vanuatu Island's String Band - Contemporary Music of Happiness'.[691] Generally, it is fair to say that the beauty of Vanuatu and its people is foregrounded. But this 'Welcome to Paradise'-smile can be deceptive, as a look at the lyrics of stringband songs reveals (see Chapter 6): stringband songs are not always about the sunny side of life.

When I was interviewing ALSINA GARAE, a soul and R&B singer staying in Port Vila, she commented on a video by the stringband (YANG) SOUWIA, stating that the group should not show a red sports car in their clip. Louis Philip, who sings the song, can be seen riding around Le Méridien Resort. She objected to this display of status symbols because it does not match with her notion of stringband music authenticity. Quoting an apt phrasing by Mitchell, it can be said that such notions regard stringband music "as possessing an inherent truth, value, tradition and originality which places obligations on performers not to deviate from the implicit rules inherent in these elements" (1996: 9 f.). The elements which compose the credibility of stringband music, most musicians feel obliged to, may include being Presbyterian, anglophone, 'grassroots', young, male and Melanesian. Generally speaking, stringband songs picture the ordinary, simple life, as for example in the song lyrics in 'Grassroot Laef' by DAUSAKE.

5.2.1 Outfit

On some concert occasions, stringbands wear a special outfit. This is not the case when performing at a fundraising event or in a kava bar.[692] At stringband competitions or at any tourist event, however, the uniform dress of musicians is mandatory.[693] The simplest way to be uniform is to put on T-shirts of the same colour. The standard and most popular outfit consists of Aloha shirts of the same colour and design (often a graphic design of white hibiscus flowers against a background with a shiny colour – red, blue and green being the most popular) along with a matching cloth worn around the waist (called *lavalava* or *parpar*; see Figure 35). When stringbands play for an audience of tourists, they often wear hibiscus flowers or flower

[690] This reflects the overall image of Vanuatu – the success of which was confirmed through the appointment by the Happy Planet Index which claims to have found that ni-Vanuatu were the happiest people on earth in 2006 (see http://happyplanetindex.org/, last accessed on 22 March 2020).
[691] https://www.facebook.com/groups/Vanuatu.StringBand.Music/, last accessed on 22 March 2020).
[692] Apart from the obligatory red lantern and a small illuminated area at the 'bar', the place is dark anyway (kava drinkers prefer dimmed light). Wearing uniforms is a practice which goes back as far as the 1950s (see 2.2.3).
[693] In this respect, stringbands are similar to choirs: the group SEASIDE YOUTH won the first prize in the category 'costume' at the Unelco Kwaea Kompetisen which was endowed with 16 000 vt (about 114 €; TP Issue No. 869 Dec. 17 2002).

garlands in their hair or behind their ears. LAURUA STRINGBAND perform barefoot and (additionally to the standard outfit described above) wear a sash over their shoulders when performing at Le Méridien Resort (the same sash is worn by the attendants at the front desk). Correspondingly, the members of MAUNA STRINGBAND wear *aelan dres* of the same calico in green and white, with flowers behind the ear and barefoot.[694] Joel Kaltang reported of an incident when SOUWIA hid behind a fence of corrugated iron and then surprised the audience with their uniform appearance at a concert in Tanna in the 1970s (interview with Joel Kaltang 2002).

Usually, the band members' dress is one facet which is rated in competitions.[695] Nowadays '*kastom* outfits' are esteemed and often rated highest in competitions.[696] The reason for this is may be owed to the fact that "[t]he wearing of 'custom dress' by men in Vanuatu has a very powerful significance […]. Here, traditional ideas of political legitimacy are expressed through nakedness and traditional knowledge […]" (Tilley 1997). Tourist expectations probably also play a vital role. *Kastom* outfits vary from place to place; however, they are often comprised of '*kastom*-style' outfit rather than the authentic traditional dress of the place.[697] The outfit might include feathers which are put in the hair and small mats worn as a loincloth (as, for example, can be seen in Figure 36) or grass skirts, sometimes dyed in bright colours.

Dancers sometimes paint their skin or use coconut oil when performing a traditional dance and maybe some stringband musicians do the same. Musicians place importance on appearing washed, perfumed and well-dressed at competitions. The fact that I heard several anecdotes by stringband musicians who took part in a scruffy state for some reason and still won a competition rather proves the rule.

The most extreme and flamboyant appearance in terms of outfit was described to me by the ethnomusicologist Raymond Ammann: it was an incident in which the members of DAUSAKE appeared on stage not only all dressed the same but also with one side of their heads shaved.

[694] I observed this outfit at a performance of the group at the lounge of Le Méridien, where a boy was performing with the women; as can be assumed, he did not wear a dress.

[695] At a stringband competition I witnessed in southeast Ambae, the members of COOL SHADOW were cross because they had not found out until the beginning of the event that the outfit was one of the evaluation criteria. Otherwise, they would have dressed in uniform, they said.

[696] I observed at a competition in Luganville that members dressed in a Melanesian-looking outfit were per se uprated in comparison to musicians wearing a different outfit. Thus, a '*kastom* outfit' was always preferred by the jury.

[697] For example, I never saw stringband musicians performing while wearing penis wrappers.

When they started playing the first song, the boys standing on the stage began moving synchronously, and this was immediately acknowledged by the jubilant audience.[698]

The use of uniforms corresponds with the overall role of musicians in stringband music: the individual does not stick out but rather appears in a collective of equals, to a certain extent even interchangeable and replaceable. In contrast, most pop musicians dress individually.

In the case of a stringband performing in New Caledonia, the band members' exceptional outfit was not entirely uniform but rather a case of one uniform complementing the other so as to form the flag of Vanuatu.[699]

5.2.2 Covers

According to Joel Kaltang, former member of SOUWIA, he was the one who chose the motive for the first commercially produced cassette of stringband music: it was a picture taken from a postcard, showing a man from Emao Island standing in a canoe (interview with Joel Kaltang 2002). Compared to later motives, this cover is untypical. Covers of stringband albums mostly show a photograph of the musicians. This goes for early recordings just as for contemporary albums.

The cover of a later album (Vanuata Production) which was recorded by only four musicians, shows SOUWIA (band members Lui, Joel, Freddy and David) gathered around a gramophone by the brand Hero-Phone in fashionable clothes and with digital watches around their wrists.

Inspired by the song 'Go raon long Toyota', Paul Gardissat took a photograph of MAKURA TOKOLAU in a car waving at people for the cover of the cassette – to show the joy of riding around from village to village. I unfortunately never saw this cover; however, from the way Gardissat described it to me, it is similar to Figure 37.

On a few covers, the musicians pose with their instruments[700] or are shown while performing; in most cases, however, they line up or gather in a special location without any instruments. The cover of "My Home Vanuatu" by HUARERE shows a photograph of some of the stringband's instruments: a *rasras*, a *busbes* (with the inscription 'Huarere String Band') and a guitar-shaped ukulele. On the cassette cover of MAGAWIARUA's "17th Anniversary, Vol. 5" there is a small photograph which shows the stringband while recording in the studio (some members wearing headphones).

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[698] Personal communication at the ESfO conference in Verona (2008).

[699] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z4MjnsNa8TI, last accessed on 23 March 2020.

[700] For example, on the cover of "Lumbukuti Tongoa" two of the YOUNG BEACH BOYS band members pose with their mandolins and FATUANA pose with their full set of instruments on the cover of "in Australia".

Some of the depicted scenes are connected with the title of the album, as in the case of "Jaksen Rod", an album of ERRO STRINGAND. The album is called after one of the songs which is about the introduction of a junction in Port Vila and road safety. One of the band members is a police officer and can be seen regulating the traffic at the junction. The cover of "Bloody Mary's" shows the STONEY BOYS in front of the eponymous fast food restaurant. COOL SHADOW pose with giant beer bottles on the cover of their cassette "Vanuatu Tusker".

Some covers are designed as a collage, showing landscapes, mixed with photographs of the band members, items which represent Vanuatu (such as the national flag) and contours of islands. The cover of "Nina, Rita", the third album of FUTUNA MATUA, shows headshots of the musicians on drawn bodies which sit on a bottle in a montage.

Graphic designs are not common in stringband music; however, they can be found on *pop miusik* covers such as TROPIC TEMPO's "Vois Bilong Ol Bumbu". Each item seen on the cover has a meaning: the national flag of Vanuatu, *namele* leaves (a sign of peace), the tusk of a boar,[701] an upright-standing *tamtam* along with the drumsticks, a headdress from the Banks Islands, crosses which represent a sand drawing design from the Banks, and more.[702]

Many studios in Vanuatu are small enterprises – often consisting of only one person – and because of the lacking division of responsibilities, studio operators do not only record, edit, mix, duplicate and sometimes distribute the audio material but also design the covers. John Josiah creates the covers on his computer.[703] He orders the sticker for the blank cassettes through Sky Computer or Stop Press (a stationary store in Vila) and prints them.[704]

It is common to use cultural emblems on the covers especially in *pop miusik*, and most musicians use the emblems of their home islands; however, in a few cases the arrangement of

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[701] The circular tusks of boars are prized in many parts of Vanuatu and are an often-used symbol. "By removing two of the upper teeth of the boar, two of his lower teeth were able to grow in a spiral fashion without any resistance. When the tusk had completed an almost full circle, it re-entered the lower jawbone and slowly grew through it until it came out and began a second circle. The growth, so very painful to the boar, made it very difficult for him to eat. Consequently, these pigs were fed by hand […] and tethered to posts so that they did not have a chance to break their tusks while wandering through the bush" (MacClancy 2002: 31).

[702] 'Tamtam' is an alias or a brand name of the graphic designer who works for the Mangrove Studio. Tamtam is credited with the cover design of "Vois Bilong Ol Bumbu" although Cooper, the cousin of Jimmy Dummic, TROPIC TEMPO's bass player, drew a picture which was used as a model for the cover design of the CD and Tamtam kept close to this original. The band members obtained the right to use the design of Cooper, one of the dancers who sometimes performed with the band. They considered it an honour to be allowed to use the drawing for the cover (interviews with Jimmy Dummic 2003 & with Henry Toka 2006).

[703] Sometimes one of his relatives does the job (interview with John Josiah 2003).

[704] There are six stickers on each side of a DIN A4 sheet, thus twelve for six cassettes. Before, he also ordered through Sun Productions. The cover of his own solo album shows a collage with the contour of his home island, Ambrym. A traditional mat from Ambrym can be seen within the contour, as well as a headdress, a *tamtam* and a sand drawing, all from the island of Ambrym. In the surrounding sea, there is a marlin, a yacht and a cruise ship – those items being only decorative without any special meaning, as Josiah says (interview with John Josiah 2003).

cultural emblems follows the overall theme of the album, such as in the case of "Lake Siwi" (STONEY BOYS) with references to Tanna Island.[705] However, there are also unsophisticated covers with featureless standard emblems taken from computers.

Small-scale studios commission the production of the covers at Imprimerie de Port Vila (IPV) or Sun Productions. Due to inexperience with digital graphic design or to other reasons, some covers comprise photographs of poor quality or of a wrong format. The covers of the cassettes produced by Vanuata Productions are of a better quality. Jean-Marc Wong has them printed at IPV, a professional printing house. However, even there, the final product is different from the original design (maybe because of poorly calibrated machines, as Wong supposes). It is possible to commission the design when photographs and texts are handed in, however, Wong is not satisfied with the result and prefers making the artwork himself. Thus, he easily can make changes if the band does not like a part of the design. Often, he also takes the necessary photographs. Wong's covers have their own characteristic style, including standards in fonts and general layout (see Figures 37-43). In the case of the cover for "Grassroot Laef" (DAUSAKE), he created two designs, one of them with the flag of Vanuatu in the background. The stringband decided for the other (see Figure 39). In 2016, the *Daily Post* reported of an experiment in cover design: a group called for designs amongst its fans. The art work of the CD and cover is made up of the designs sent in via Facebook or on paper. In this way, "fans can feel a sense of ownership and involvement of the […] album" (Willie 2016: 3).

Accompanying texts on the inside of the cover of stringband cassettes are written in English or Bislama and mention the stringband's achievements in competitions, explanation of band names, sometimes a rough sketch of the band's history, as well as Christmas and New Year wishes (or Easter wishes depending on the release date). Some groups include a short a story which is meant to create a connection between all the album's titles or quotations from lyrics (the latter in bold and italics) such as this example, taken from "Round taon long bus" by TOKOTAKIA:

> "We boarded a 'Bus' one bright morning and went around town. As we left town and passed by '**Imere village**' we saw three beautiful ladies – **Jessica**, **Eselyne** and **Edna**. They were enjoying themselves with oranges from Aniwa and calling out '**Swit aranis blong Aniwa aelan**'" (orthography as in the original).

[705] For example, Tanna's volcano Yasur is shown on the cover. The home island of the STONEY BOYS is Ambrym.

Dedications and acknowledgments are addressed to institutions, communities, fans, families, "stringband lovers", friends and individuals whose first names or nicknames are mentioned. Occasionally, albums are dedicated to a deceased person.[706] Individual musicians are sometimes mentioned for their special contribution, such as senior members of a previous generation and guest musicians such as the singer Alsina Garae or the guitarist Sarabera 'Saka' Sakaria ("Vanuatu's Santana"). Often the studio operators and/or technicians are also mentioned. Apart from that, the stringband's line-up is listed.[707] However, the assignment of name to instrument or function in the group is occasionally mixed up and the names are not always the members' real names for reasons explained in 7.2.1. Although musicians and studio operators cannot actually take legal action, the phrase "All rights reserved" (or "Hemi Tabu Blong Kopi") followed by the specification of the year is printed on CDs and cassettes. In December 1999, TOKOTAKIA wrote in the cover of their album "Round taon long bus": "In conclusion, this is our sixth and final album for this Century [sic]". The reconciliation between the groups MAGAWIARUA and SARATOKOWIA has been sealed in a ceremony and the production and release of a combined album. Two shaking hands between the members of each group clearly depict the reconciliation (see Figure 43). Some cover texts comprise a few unctuous sentences, generally showing Christian undertones. This has been realised in "Wind Of Change" by SHAKURA in the extreme. The cover is also extraordinary in sofar as it does not include any photograph of the band members but instead shows a photomontage of a 100 Vatu coin falling into water (Figure 49). The cover photograph of a vinyl album with music from the New Hebrides (1976) shows a Pentecost land diver (photograph by J. Mulders of the Tourist Information Bureau). The same motif was used on the cover of TOKORUA's "Vanuatu the only Destination" in 2003. The *nanggol*[708] remains a popular motif for the representation of Vanuatu in music clips.

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[706] Dausake write in the cover of their 3rd Volume ("Dawn of February 14"): 'Dawn of February 14' is dedicated to late Ms. Sessie Dick who died after a quarrel with her lover in February 14, Valentine's Day, 2001. We are sorry for her tragic death and hope that the hearts of her children, families and friends are comforted by the grace of God".

[707] TOKOTAKIA specifies: "Members in this Album" which makes sense, given the fact that the stringband has more members than those who recorded the album.

[708] This custom is confined to a small area in the south of Pentecost where, for a period of about two months each year, men and boys 'dive' from tall wooden towers with vines around their ankles to keep them from hitting the ground.

5.2.3 Music Clips

To the best of my knowledge, HUARERE produced the first music clip around 1988 (in collaboration with the VKS, see 2.2.6.2). Apparently, this was a unique undertaking without much outreach because Henry Toka told me that the first music clip produced in Vanuatu had been shot in 1996 with his group TROPIC TEMPO, shortly after the release of their album "Vois Bilong Ol Bumbu". Toka himself wrote the screenplay, in the same vein as the lyrics of the group's song 'Hiaove'. With the permission of the VKS, some old photographs showing big sailing ships were included. These ships were meant to represent those of the labour recruiters in the blackbirding era (see 1.4.3), as the song is about these early encounters between Europeans and Melanesians. The clip was produced by Television Blong Vanuatu in collaboration with Radio France Overseas, a French broadcasting corporation (interview with Henry Toka 2006). For the complex, *kastom*-inspired *pop miusik* by TROPIC TEMPO which performed with several dancers on stage, the visual level of a music clip is an important addition to the audio recording.

Many other Vanuatu pop groups as well as stringbands followed in style, producing music videos. Some stringband music clips retain the concept of the pioneering work by TROPIC TEMPO (and, of course, other music videos worldwide): the story told in the video follows the narration in the lyrics and the musicians and other people appear as actors. As one main type of stringband lyrics comprises of boy meets girl stories, the same account for a main topic for stringband music videos. At least one member of the band is shown, often the *soprano* singer, singing the song while he is promenading around with a girl or a young woman, smiling at her or into the camera, maybe hugging the girl or dancing with her (for example 'Island Dress' by DAUSAKE). Since stringband music is a male domain, it is interesting to take a look at the image of women and girls in stringband music videos.

When I spoke to the members of LUKUNAEFA, they planned the production of a music clip for their song 'Maeva' which is a love song about a girl from the Cook Islands. The story told in the lyrics (respectively the infatuation) happened to the composer himself, who went to Suva (Fiji) and met Maeva there. However, interestingly, the male part is acted in the clip by another band member, the lead singer, and the girl is also acting (it is not Maeva herself, who is in the Cook Islands).[709] It is my impression that Polynesian-looking girls and women are

[709] At the time of the interview, the band had already paid the TBV for the production of the clip. The shooting was planned to take place in Vila, as well as on Kakula Island, a small off-shore island in north Efate (interview with Tony Alvos 2003).

preferably involved in the production of music clips. For example, some of the people of the island of Ambae have Polynesian features. In Vanuatu, young women from Ambae have the reputation of being particularly attractive.[710]

Some girls and women who act in the clips seem timid (and/or amused). This is understandable, given the fact that they usually are not professional actors.[711] The musicians possibly tend to appear more confident because they are more used to being in the spotlight and their role as musicians or dancers is closer to their usual activity while playing in a stringband. The women's role in stringband music clips often exhausts itself in nothing more than holding the hand of and smiling to the singing protagonist.

Another type of music video is used for songs about Vanuatu. In the clips, the country's tourist highlights are exhibited over and over; the same footage of landscapes and beaches filmed from the perspective of a helicopter or plane is used in several videos. Other prominent material shows divers at a reef or men engaged in the *nanggol*, the land-diving ritual which Vanuatu is famous for (although it is practised only in a specific location and even there only during a particular timespan of the year). These pictures are intermingled with the genuine film recordings from the band.

Many Western music clips depict imaginary settings, outlooks, even creatures which invite the spectator into a realm of phantasy which has little or nothing in common with his or her everyday experience of the world. Stringband music clips in Vanuatu are different: the scenes seen are taken from the real environment of the local viewers (with the exception of the 'standard-footage' mentioned above). Still, some clips entail slight deviations, for example when the musicians drive around in fancy cars (which are not their own). [712]

In some music clips the names of sponsors, the number of the volume (as with the cassettes) and a hint to the copyright are displayed. Some clips also have subtitles like karaoke videos.

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[710] This favouritism has a long history and includes expatriates, as depicted in Fletcher's letter to a friend: "The Aobans [people from Ambae] are freaks among the Kanakas, being Malayan rather than Papuan. Their complexion is light; their hair yellowish and long; their features are good. I should not call the women classically beautiful, but they are very pleasing and petite. […] They are quite established in the N. H. [New Hebrides], and in a good many other groups, as white men's 'keeps'" (Lynch 1923: 175). Western clichés of South Sea holiday destinations include beautiful young Polynesian women. This affection's history dates from the days of first contact between Europeans and islanders in Oceania and in early accounts there are often references to the so-called 'village maidens' (see Tcherkézoff 2004: 18 f. for a discussion of the concept).

[711] Jo Dorras who founded the Wan Smolbag drama group in 1989 together with Peter Walker reported about the difficulties of recruiting actors, especially women (interview with Jo Dorras 2003).

[712] This is different in *pop miusik*. The clip to the song 'Papa God' of young singer VANESSA QUAI, for example, begins with a scene showing the crucifixion of Jesus taken from a movie.

Hayward lists the most important elements of music videos, many of which also can be found in music clips from Vanuatu:

> "[…] lip-synched vocal miming of sung lyrics provides a core element of the visual text. […] instrumental performers miming their parts; musicians and/or non-musical performers dancing (in approximate synch) to the music's rhythm; footage of actual onstage performances and/or rehearsals; informal footage of the band (socializing etc.); singers (and/or other band members) acting in narrative fragments; footage of scenic locations; stock footage (from television programmes, films etc.) [and] visual effects sequences" (2009: 64 f.).

In 2001, Jo Bong founded Bistaveos Productions over the course of the production of a radio play and a film about the 'Comprehensive Reform Program'.[713] In his first three years, Bong produced about eighty clips, most of them with religious groups (such as the MONUMENT SINGERS and REUNION) and two with artists from the Solomon Islands (SHARZY and APPRENTICE). Bong later turned to the production of music DVD albums (containing several clips of one stringband or pop group).[714] He complains that the TBV prefers music clips from PNG, New Caledonia and Fiji over local productions (interview with Jo Bong 2003). In terms of economic enterprise, music clips in Vanuatu have the function of promotional tools. Some stringbands, such as TOKOSOUWIA are quite productive and produce many clips. Although there is a market for DVD releases with local music videos since after 2004, the possibilities for bands to earn money with videos are few – on the contrary: the groups have to pay for the production of the clips. At the time of my fieldwork the rate was at 10 000 vt (71.40 €) (Tony Alvos interview 2003). Concerning the DVD albums, Hayward finds: "Given their minimal commercial viability as stand-alone products, Vanuatu music DVD releases can be regarded as primarily promotional artifacts", thus:

> "[…] one of the principal factors behind music video production in Vanuatu appears to be that of public expression and prestige for the artists and the specific families, communities, localities and/or language groups concerned (with those aggregations also comprising the main sales focus and potential market for the DVD product)" (2009: 64).

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[713] Jo Bong left his job as a secondary school teacher and became a member of the Wan Smolbag drama group in 1989. There, he learnt to handle audio- and video equipment. At the end of 2003, he employed two camera operators, an editor and a volunteer. Bistaveos Productions otherwise produces television commercials, documentaries, jingles, radio-soaps, posters and flyers (interview with Jo Bong 2003).

[714] According to Hayward, "production companies such as Bistaveos […] manufacture between 150-200 copies per release, and retail them for between 2000 and 2500 Vatu […] per copy […]. […] [There] has been a steady stream of DVD releases in Vanuatu from 2005 on. These are either compilation DVDs […] or single-artist DVD albums […]" (2009: 64).

Jean-Baptiste Kalo is involved in the production of most music clips as 'producer/director'.[715] His aim is to achieve that music clips from Vanuatu are broadcast overseas. Thus, in 2002, he created and presented the programme *Pacific Tempo* which was aired every two weeks, then paused for some time and was broadcast again once a month since 2003. It was a challenge to produce the clips including the storyboard, shooting and editing of the hourlong programme. They managed to produce two or three clips with only one camera and this also meant work on the weekends.[716] In order to come up with a storyboard, Kalo and his team have brainstorming sessions in a dark room, while listening to the song in question. Kalo and his team also shoot clips with foreign musicians if the opportunity arises.[717]

Part of the concept of *Pacific Tempo* was to look for sponsors because the bands usually do not have enough money to pay for the clips.[718] Kalo is also anxious to be on good terms with the musicians (since there is no copyright in Vanuatu, this is important, he said) and with Jean-Marc Wong from Vanuata Productions. Interviews with local musicians were also included. On the first programme in 2003, on the 28th February, there was a clip to a song by NAIO whose release of their new album was imminent on the 1st of March. Kalo and Wong have mutual benefits: Wong attained the promotion of his product, while Kalo's programme was up-to-date.

Pacific Tempo used to be presented in Bislama; however, due to a collaboration with RFO in 2003, Kalo had to switch to French for the new issues. This is a constraint but in return Kalo's clips had the chance to be broadcast in other parts of the world through RFO programmes. At the time of fieldwork, musicians or studio operators had to pay for the broadcast of their music clips,[719] a situation that has changed recently. However, the musicians still do not receive any royalties (Stern 2014: 9).

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[715] As a young man, Kalo played the drums as member of the pop group BLACK REVOLUTION. He began as a radio journalist in 1991 at the French Section and changed to the TV in 1997. For political reasons, he had to stop working there for two years and eventually came back (interview with Jean-Baptiste Kalo 2003).

[716] For example, I attended the shooting of a stringband clip on an early Sunday morning at the waterfront in Port Vila. This time was chosen because the site is too busy at other times. Many ideas cannot be realised since Kalo does not have the financial and technical means – ideas such as a view from above for which a helicopter would be necessary, for example (at the time of the interview, drones were not on the market yet).

[717] For example, they produced two clips with SHARZY and with APPRENTICE, both from the Solomon Islands. Kalo tries to build relationships on a give-and-take basis with partners in the Solomons, in New Caledonia (such as the label Mangrove) and also in PNG.

[718] Centrepoint Ltd., a supermarket in Vila downtown, is such a sponsor which was mentioned four times during the programme.

[719] Jo Bong told me that the TBV charges 1 000 vt (7 €) per minute.

5.2.4 Merchandise and Promotion

Merchandise plays a tangential role in Vanuatu. The music-related material products from Western countries like merchandising products, fashionwear, hairstyles and accessories are not easily available in Vanuatu. Exceptions are the T-shirts and decorative fabric young people buy in the general stores in Vila and Luganville. The international artist which is featured most as motif on these T-shirts is BOB MARLEY (AND THE WAILERS) but there are also T-shirts showing MICHAEL JACKSON and others. Bob Marley, as well as the Ethiopia- and reggae-related colours yellow, green and red are omnipresent on blankets, posters, stickers and else in Vanuatu. Interestingly enough, the flag of Vanuatu shows these colours as well as black (which is also in the Jamaican flag). Displaying these colours seems to mean a statement in favour of reggae as well as the nation of Vanuatu at the same time. At the time of fieldwork, many young people, particularly boys, wore knitted caps with a brim (and thus similar to a hat) in the same colours.

Band T-shirts by groups from Vanuatu are rare and are produced in limited editions. The T-shirts by the group FLYING CLAQUETTES ROUGES showed two red flipflops. On a cover of the ERRO STRINGBAND the band members wear T-shirts with the label 'Erro Boys Stringband'. At Fest'Napuan, T-shirts and Polo shirts with the current design are sold at the festival.
In Europe, concerts of popular music are usually promoted with big posters. These are absent in Vanuatu. There are occasionally small bills in Vila downtown which announce an upcoming pop band or choir gig but such posters are rare for stringband music. I saw one old poster hanging in Paul Gardissat's office; however, it was not meant to promote a concert but rather the release of the album "Again" by the Western Boys. A more recent example is the album "Grassroot Laef" (DAUSAKE) which I found billed at a shop in Luganville on its release (Figure 50).

The fact that the coverage of local music groups and events is positive throughout, the press in Vanuatu is a convenient promotional tool for musicians (see 5.3.3). The Waterfront Bar regularly inserts an advertisement which announces the current music entertainment.
Although music clips on TV are important for advertising groups and their releases, at the time of fieldwork, they only reached those in town with access to a TV set. At the time, not many had access to the internet and there was not yet a thriving market for DVDs (see Hayward 2009) which can, at least in theory, also be watched on the islands (with a DVD player and a generator). The radio has played the most important role for the promotion of stringband

music over the past decades. An easy way for musicians and studio operators to get airplay is to pass on a new release to radio staff members and hope that he or she will put it on. Recently, the radio's outstanding position has been complemented by the internet, the video portal YouTube being particularly essential.

Successful stringbands have the possibility to promote their name by labelling their vans. The vehicles are operated as taxis (*seves bas*) around town and usually have the group's name written in large letters across the bonnet or the upper part of the windscreen. Philip 'Fany' Louis, member of (YANG) SOUWIA told me that people became aware of SOUWIA again when they saw the bus running around in 1999 and approached him for concerts at kava nights.

5.3 The Media

The media scene of Vanuatu is meagre, especially outside of Port Vila and thus does not have the determining role which it has in Western societies. However, a "digitamorphosis" in Vanuatu, that is "the technological changes and altered behaviour related to digital technology" (Stern 2014: 4), started at around the time my own fieldwork ended. This is especially noticeable in music. Stern observes:

> "The dematerialization of sound afforded by digital media makes it easy to save recordings, and facilitates their better preservation and wider dissemination. In addition, the portability and lightness of tools like memory cards, flash drives and phones, as well as Bluetooth protocols, make the circulation of music easy at very little direct cost" (Stern 2014: 4).

In the 1990s, Radio Vanuatu underwent a rebuilding phase. Political control over the Vanuatu Broadcasting and Television Corporation (VBTC) had increased and resulted in the appointment of incapable and/or uninterested factionists which in turn gave rise to frustration amongst the old staff.[720] Employees went on strike and many were given notice.

5.3.1 Radio

The radio is the most widespread medium in Vanuatu and radio broadcasting plays a prominent role in the distribution of local as well as international popular music.[721] The

[720] Interviews with Paul Gardissat 2003 and with Hendrik Kettner 2004, as well as personal communication with several former employees.

[721] In 1999, half of the households had a radio set; a proportion which was nearly the same in 1989 (Population and Housing Census 1999: 31).

homepage of the VBTC states that “Radio Vanuatu is the only viable means of reaching the rural poor, 80% of Vanuatu’s population”.[722] It is the only radio station but “provides trilingual FM, AM and SW services throughout the country. All services operate continuously from 6 am to 10 pm […]” (Statistical Yearbook 2002: 154). There is a branch in Luganville, called Studio 5 Not, with two employees. One, Sheila Arukesa, is employed as a secretary but due to a lack of staff also works as a presenter, conducts interviews and puts on music (interview with Sheila Arukesa 2003). During her programme she constantly receives phone calls by people who commission messages (*seves mesej*) for other people (who are not accessible except by radio) that she reads during the programme (Figure 51).[723] The shortwave radio channel ‘Namba Wan FM 98’ which primarily broadcasts popular music is confined to Port Vila.[724] The BBC can be received 24 hours a day and the programme CHM Supersounds from PNG broadcasts “100% Superhits” on Saturdays.[725]

The radio played a crucial role in the building a national conscience (which involved the awareness of Vanuatu as a unity, the concept of *kastom* and the standardisation of Bislama; see Bolton 1999b) and stringband music had made major contributions to these processes (see 2.2.5.2). Stringband music was occasionally broadcast over the radio from the end of the 1960s, and in the mid-70s, Paul Gardissat started to put stringband music regularly on Radio Port-Vila which had previously been reserved for the contents and interests of the French expatriates. People were given the opportunity to contribute to the radio programme and in this way the radio had access even to remote places, while musicians from these places could reach a broad public.[726] It entailed much work to edit all the tapes and to do all the correspondence, and with a lack of suitable equipment, the jingles had to be produced ‘manually’. In the jingle for the stringband programme, for example, Gardissat and his colleagues imitated a delay effect. (“All the people sing… A programme for you, made by you and if you are interested […] write to Paul, PO Box 71, Radio Vila…”). Some people he met in the islands greeted him with: “Paul! Radio Vila-vila-vila…”.[727]

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[722] https://www.vbtc.vu/en/radio-vanuatu, last accessed on 25 March 2020.

[723] Nowadays, nothing remains of the competition between the radio stations in Vila and Luganville which had been different before independence (interview with Paul Gardissat 2003).

[724] At times, the FM is also available in Luganville; however, often the lease for the cable cannot be paid and the service is discontinued (interview with Hendrick Kettner 2003).

[725] The programme is also available in the Solomon Islands (Webb 1998: 155).

[726] The programme ‘Olketa man ol i sing sing’, Paul Gardissat’s initiative in the 1970s, is exhausted in 2.2.5.3.

[727] “*Olgeta man oli singsing (-singsingsingsing...). Wan program long yufala we yufala i stap mekem mo sapos yufala i intres* […] *raet i kam long Paul, PO Box 71, Radio Vila (-vilavilavilavila)*”.

Gardissat also made radio programmes about the big stringband competitions, and every Saturday night there was a stringband live show (*laefso*) hosted by Gardissat in Studio 3 of the radio. Studio 3 had enough room not only for the bands but also for their supporters. The presenter asked questions to the musicians in order to keep the listeners from getting bored and to create a relaxed atmosphere among the often rather stiff musicians who were not used to the studio with its air-conditioning.[728]

When he was on vacation in Paris, Gardissat used to meet several musicians from Africa whom he interviewed for his radio programmes. One of them was LUCKY DUBE, who is particularly popular in Vanuatu. The radio programmes of Paul Gardissat were very popular, a popularity which can no longer be reached, as he says, in the age of mobility and more modern media even in Vanuatu, especially the television. In the 1970s, the radio could promote stringband music in a way that is nowadays most probably not possible anymore. Without video, TV and CDs it had the full attention of the people concerning the media. Before independence, people also did not get around as much as they have since. The radio was important, not only as a source of information and entertainment but also for connecting people. Radio Vila (or, in French, Radio Port-Vila) was renamed Radio New Hebrides (Radio Nouvelles-Hébrides in French and Redio Niu Hebridis in Bislama) during the second half of the 1970s, because stronger transmitters now reached the whole country, even the Banks and Torres Islands in the far north of the archipelago.[729] In 1979, around the time of the first Arts Festival, the radio moved to its new building.[730] With independence, the radio changed its name to Radio Vanuatu in 1980.

The radio station does not pay composers, musicians or studio operators in return for playing their music. Thus, airplay only plays a promotional role for the music industry but does not generate any direct income. Ambong Thompson reported about the time when he worked at

[728] For example, he greeted the listeners after FATUANA MATHUA's first song and then went with the microphone near to the stringband's characteristic percussion instruments to capture their sound. He interviewed the band's leader and asked about his provenance, the meaning of a vernacular song title, and so on. The leader introduced the band and Gardissat made witty remarks about a musician's T-shirt or such-like (interview with Paul Gardissat 2004).

[729] The news were broadcast in English, then in French and finally in Bislama. There were two Bislama sections at Radio New Hebrides, a French and a British section, with its own time slot. The news accordingly differed, for example the British section would report about Queen Elizabeth, while the French would not (interview with Paul Gardissat 2004).

[730] At first, the radio was situated at Malapoa. The new building was opened on 30th April 1981, although it was already in use for a while. In the second half of the 1970s and in 1980, there were politically-inspired broadcasting services. MacClancy reports: "[…] Radio Vemarana broadcasters interrupted their programme of Madness and other New Wave rock bands to shout secessionist slogans" (2002: 156); see also Van Trease 1995: 46. MacClancy (2002: 158) and Van Trease (1995: 35, 52) mention Nagriamel's illegal broadcasting service.

the radio that he had a deal with the Vanuwespa Studio: for mutual benefit, he received a copy of every new release of the studio. When he left the radio, these cassettes remained there. Judging from his view, the narration of Paul Gardissat and my own experience, the radio is not the best place to keep recordings. Too many people help themselves and take cassettes home, from where they then disappear.

Vanuatu stringband music is occasionally played on the radio but local *pop miusik* is better represented (probably because it fits better to its international counterparts). The radio is nonetheless an important medium for stringbands. The *laefso* is carried on in the tradition of Paul Gardissat by Simon Jackson and François Aissav and is still restricted to stringbands (pop groups never perform at the *laefso*). Interested musicians get in touch with the radio and agree upon a date for a live gig.[731] This format is a valuable chance for groups to introduce themselves to the public or to advertise a new release. Taking part in the *laefso* is also an important motivation for stringbands to rehearse[732] and some groups repeatedly perform at the show. The fact that the *laefso* survived for decades and is one of the few original productions of Radio Vanuatu attests to the popularity of the programme.[733] Despite the fact that the *laefso* is generally regarded as a good opportunity, some musicians hesitate to take part in it. When he was invited to perform at the radio in 1989, Kalo Daniel refused because he wanted to record an album with his band and was afraid that people would not buy the cassette when they could also listen to the music on the radio (interview with Kalo Daniel 2003).

The commercial radio station Namba Wan FM 98 broadcasts live from promotional events.[734] The customer, for example a supermarket in Vila downtown, pays for time on air and the radio sends a team there with a ‘reporter’ who comments on the promotions, sweepstakes and so on. These events are sometimes accompanied by live music entertainment. For example, DAUSAKE played in-between the sales presentations in front of the Centrepoint supermarket and thus their songs were also broadcasted live.

[731] Often, the show is recorded on another day and then broadcast on Saturday night. Sometimes stringbands do not turn up, despite having an appointment (interview with Simon Jackson 2003).

[732] Maria Manua from MAUNA STRINGBAND fixed a date for a performance at the radio as a means to get her fellow musicians to practise.

[733] Large proportions of broadcasting time are filled with less demanding request programmes. The proportion of local and regional (that is from Melanesia and the Pacific) music is quite high.

[734] The radio DJ and presenter of FM 98, Alex Uri, speaks with an unusual English accent (although being Melanesian ni-Vanuatu).

5.3.2 Television

The local TV channel Television Blong Vanuatu (TBV) which "was established in 1993 with the help of Radio France Overseas (RFO)",[735] only broadcasts several hours a day, from around 4.30 pm to 11.30 pm (Statistical Yearbook 2002: 154). The transmitter has a very limited range, only really covering the capital. At the time of fieldwork, the TV programme was sent to Luganville from Vila once a week on video tapes. Thus, all television programmes – including the news – reached Luganville one-week late.

There are a number of Pay TV channels available via satellite, although only few citizens can afford a satellite system.[736] Club Vanuatu has two huge receiving dishes and receives Telsat Pay TV (9 channels) and a sports channel from Singapore. Movies are screened non-stop in a room on the first floor of Club Vanuatu directly from one of the channels. People pay 100 vt (about 0.70 €) and then watch as long as they like (without knowing what the programme is or will be about, or when the next movie will start). Sports events are displayed on the ground floor.[737] One of the receiving dishes is for the reception of a channel from PNG which is used to screen special sport events such as the Rugby Finals (they are not covered by Telsat; interview with Robert Wola Tien 2003). Some people in and around Vila have access to Christian TV stations.[738]

The importance of television for music reception in Vanuatu is confined to town. From time to time (especially around Christmas and New Year's Day) some villagers watch movies on video tapes or DVDs, powered by a generator.[739] The Alliance Française stages francophone cinema nights in Port Vila and Sagato Felonaki operates the project 'Cinema dans les îles' in which he shows films in village communities.[740]

In 2002, there was live coverage of Fest'Napuan on TBV for the first time. The Fest'Napuan committee or the Kaljoral Senta also filmed the event (filmed, for example, by Sam Obed).

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[735] https://www.vbtc.vu/en/tbv, last accessed on 25 March 2020. The TV moved to Studio 3 of Radio Vanuatu; thus the *laefso* had to move to a smaller studio.

[736] Within the first week after the arrival of 'Canal Satellite Caledonie' over fifty homes were hooked up ("Over 50 homes already hooked up to Pay TV", in TP, November 22 2001 (Issue No. 709), p. 1).

[737] In Luganville, movies are similarly displayed in a small room with a television set. There used to be two branches of Cine Hickson, in Port Vila and Luganville; however, at the time of fieldwork they were closed down. However, Cine Hickson can be rented for events and for example was used for the launching of the movie "A Piece of Land", produced by the Wan Smolbag Theater. Besides, there used to be the Cinema Pacific (personal communication with Sagato Felonaki).

[738] For example, Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN) is available in Vanuatu. For example, such programmes are popular with the family of Vanuatu's most popular singer VANESSA QUAI.

[739] Around Christmas, I witnessed the screening of "The Ten Commandments" (1956, with Charlton Heston as Moses) in a village in south-east Ambae, for example.

[740] It is funded by the French Embassy and sponsored by Vanair with special rates for airfares.

When the music show *Pacific Tempo* was axed for the second time (see 5.2.3), music clips were bumped to other slots in the programme "either within programmes or as 'filler' material in the schedule" (Hayward 2009: 64). Just as with the radio, the choice of clips shown on television highly depends on the individual in charge. Jean-Baptiste Kalo told me that he knows who of his colleagues is on duty just by watching TV and thus identifying the person's favourites.

5.3.3 The Press

The three official languages are all present in the papers in Vanuatu. In the 1970s, the newspaper of the French Residency, *Nabanga*, was issued weekly and written in French and Bislama. Paul Gardissat arranged one page to advertise his stringband and *kastom* programmes. Nowadays, there is no equivalent organ left. From 1984 to 2001, there used to be the *Vanuatu Weekly/Vanuatu Hebdomadaire*.[741] In the 1990s, *The Trading Post* came in addition; it was renamed to *The Vanuatu Daily Post* in May 2003 and from then on published from Tuesdays to Saturdays.[742] It is written in English but also contains a section in Bislama.
Moses Stevens, former member of the stringband WESTERN BOYS, stopped working at the radio and began working as a sports editor at the newly-founded *Port Vila Presse* at the end of the year 2000. In the first years, the paper was published in two versions, in French and English, then the name was changed into *The Independent/L'Independant* and is now written in equal parts in English and French, each article in both languages; some articles in Bislama are also included. There are digital editions of *The Vanuatu Daily Post* and *The Independent/L'independant.*
The articles usually cover recent releases, biographical information about groups and musicians,[743] as well as the line-up of the upcoming Fest'Napuan which, however, is of limited validity because there are generally many changes until shortly before the event. Photographs of bands on stage dominate the front pages of newspapers during the week of Fest'Napauan.

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[741] http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/pambu/catalogue/index.php/vanuatu-weekly-vanuatu-hebdomadaire, last accessed on 25 March 2020.
[742] http://www.radionz.co.nz/international/pacific-news/143204/vanuatu-trading-post-newspaper-to-become-daily, last accessed on 25 March 2020.
[743] Newspaper articles are often a valuable source for the music researcher in Vanuatu; however, of course not all information is appropriate – for example when NAIO is cited as a model for the NOISY BOYS (Tony Ligo in *The Independent/L'independant*, 22nd November 2003) or when MAKOMA is depicted as a singer instead of as a group (*The Independent/L'independant*, 15th November 2003).

In a setting where a high-quality P.A. system has to be flown or shipped in from New Zealand (see 4.5.3), the purchase of new band equipment is a matter of public interest.[744] At the time of fieldwork, many articles on *pop miusik* and *stringban miusik* were written by Tony Ligo.

In the articles about music by ni-Vanuatu musicians, there is a strong tendency to rate every concert or release as a success. For example, after the first Fest'Nalega *The Independent/L'independant* reported: "There was no difference between the well-known and unknown Thursday night: all were good. It was a true success and Port Vila needs more of this string band fever".[745] In this rhetoric of encouragement, which seems to assess Vanuatu's music as a national achievement in general, there is no space for critical voices. From a Western perspective, the public support of local musicians is admirable; however, the mutual respect, that is, the avoidance of stepping on other people's toes, can also be interpreted as a sign of the fragility of ni-Vanuatu society. With this way of reporting and looking at local music, the press cannot offer the criticism which, one may argue, in the end helps a music scene to develop. Thus, the press and the media in general can be regarded as promotional tools.

Occasionally, there are articles about popular music in New Caledonia or other neighbouring Pacific countries, as well as articles about international stars of popular music. In the *Trading Post* there was a recurrent section called 'This Day in Rock 'n' Roll History'. For example, on the 4th of December 2001 the *Trading Post* listed 22 different anniversaries of this day. The column quoted the birthdays of stars such as Jimi Hendrix, announced the sales records of album copies and less sensational facts following the scheme: "**14 years ago** Eurythmics member Dave Stewart and his wife, former Bananarama member Siobbhan [sic] Fahey, have a son (1987)" (TP, November 27, 2001, p. 12; original orthography).

For a while, there was an insert called *Yumi TV* in the *Trading Post* which contained black-and-white posters of international stars, "all the latest entertainment news" and "hot gossip" which concerned stars of the international pop music scene. International journals such as the *Rolling Stone* magazine can be bought at Stop Press in Vila downtown. The *Vanuatu Daily Post* has the section 'Showbiz News', however these articles are of a shallow yellow press

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[744] An example for this is the coverage of the new equipment of the NOISY BAND in 2003. The situation in Vanuatu reminds me of circumstances in West Africa, as described here: "Technological "improvement" is also an omnipresent theme. Collins and Richards (1982: 116) have discussed the "new instrument ethos" of much West African popular music. […] A recently re-equipped band will take space in the press to announce the launch of its equipment" (Waterman 1990: 17).

[745] "Stringband festival steals Port Vila's hearts", in *The Independent/L'independent*, 15 November 2003 (Issue No 5), p. 1.

level and more about scandals and sensational announcements than about music.[746] In contrast, the private lives of local musicians are not discussed in the press, although a newspaper did report about the reconciliation between the groups NAIO and NOISY BAND.

5.3.4 Internet

The Internet is an important medium for the distribution of music and information on it – this also extends to "(previously) localized taste" (Hayward 1998: 4). Stern notes that "[in] parallel with the former systems of circulation of musical knowledge, the Internet and mobile phones have created new networks for the exchange and circulation of musical culture" (2014: 11).[747] At the time of fieldwork, stringband music was hardly represented in the worldwide web. Meanwhile, a Google search with the keywords "stringband Vanuatu" amounts dozens of YouTube videos, most of them uploaded after 2010.[748] Some of these clips have over 100 000 clicks, over one hundred 'likes', fewer 'dislikes' and positive comments added by viewers such as "*Taf tumas*" (also written "*Tuff 2mas*"), "*Top tumas*" or "*milaikem*". Some people comment by using graphic layouts of punctuation marks and letters such as ":-D". An enthusiast of the group SARA POKASI commented "Sara Pokasi still keeps the stringband music of us Efate islanders up" ("*Sarpokasi keepim string band blong yumi man vate i stap strong oltaem*").

Apart from professional music clips, there are some private video recordings of live performances made by someone from the audience available on the Internet. The first videos of stringband music I detected on YouTube several years ago were such recordings made by tourists. Due to the fact that all videos coexist regardless of the effort, costs and time invested in them, the search results are of different quality. For example, the visual component of some 'clips' simply consists in a single photo. Moreover, the video recordings of ni-Vanuatu performing stringband music abroad are disproportionately represented.[749]

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[746] On Friday, 21th November 2003 the headlines were: "Michael Jackson to face multiple child sex charges", "Meat Loaf collapses" and "Eminem Accused of racism" (original orthography).

[747] The arrival of Digicel came along with a lowering of prices, as it ended the monopoly held by TVL. The wide dissemination of mobile phones even in rural areas of Vanuatu is possible because a solar battery unit is provided with every device. The increase in mobile phones was paralleled by an increase in access to the Internet (Stern 2014: 3).

[748] A few stringbands such as DAUSAKE can also be found on Myspace; however their account has not been maintained for a long time, probably because this online platform has lost relevance.

[749] This is because those who upload the videos have access to computers and the Internet, while many ni-Vanuatu have none. See, for example, a video with the description "Local seasonal workers from Vanuatu doing their sing-song fund-raising at the Motueka Market, Nelson, New Zealand"

Some stringbands have a Facebook page, such as FENUARIKI STRING BAND (there, videos of live performances of the group, announcements of the new album and the band's history and philosophy are displayed).[750] There is also a group on Facebook exclusively devoted to Vanuatu stringband music, it is called 'Vanuatu Local String Band, Aningida Nalengana'. The group's description says: "WELCOME TO vanuatu LSB GROUP. This group is for vanuatu LOCAL STRING BANDS only!, U can post any vanuatu local string band music to this group.. Thanks..." (original orthography and punctuation).[751]

Other sources of audio or film material are scarce, especially when one expects additional information on the context of performances, groups and communities. An exception is the homepage of Michael Webb and Hideki Isoda (Melanesian Music Research), where visitors can listen to a stringband song and read condensed background information about stringband music and Vanuatu.[752]

Stern reports that:

> "[…] due to local economics, the majority of music consumers are not able to invest in the purchase of a CD system or other music media. Today the Internet is often the starting point, the main source of music in circulation. Those with Internet access are often those with access to more financial resources than the majority of young people, through their own paid work or that of their relatives" (Stern 2014: 6).

According to her, an emerging urban middle class, that is young, educated people with the resources (smartphones and laptops), download music and exchange it by putting it online or circulating it on memory cards. Musicians themselves are part of these distribution networks (ibid.).

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g_NADesitok, last accessed on 26 March 2020). The group is seen covering the song 'Weekend Long South Epi' (originally by DAUSAKE).

[750] https://www.facebook.com/fenuariki, last accessed on 26 March 2020.

[751] Another Facebook group calls itself 'Vanuatu Island's String Band - Contemporary Music of Happiness' (https://www.facebook.com/groups/Vanuatu.StringBand.Music/, last accessed on 26 March 2020) and yet another 'New Hebrides Sound' (https://www.facebook.com/groups/338729469539410/?hc_ref=ARSCib9r_c60cK07ZXegzNwa4ueDzWX8298ac6mlXfkwsGV8pCUNS7Zgep96CNcmE6E, last accessed on 26 March 2020. Stern lists other music related Facebook groups (2014: 4). The Fest'Napuan committee also has a Facebook page.

[752] http://melanesianmusicresearch.com/?page_id=32, last accessed on 26 March 2020.

6 Music and Language

There are many points of contact between music and language. As a means of communication, musical sounds can be used to convey messages, one of the clearest examples being rhythmic patterns played on slit drums in some parts of Vanuatu (see Ammann 2012: 164-182). It is more common, however, to construct the main messages in songs through language. This chapter is foremost about the use of language in music in the form of lyrics.

Most song texts are intentionally made for the reception of others. Usually, the song-makers wish to convey messages; song lyrics are meant to give voice to the notions, moods and experiences of those who created them.[753] However, in Vanuatu, as well as other parts of Melanesia (Ammann 2012: 23), the transmission of messages, the memorising of events and the expression of feelings are not always functions of song texts. There are several communities which sing traditional songs (*kastom singsing*) in a language which is not understood or only understood by few. Some stringbands also cover popular pieces and sing the lyrics simply by imitating the language although they do not understand it. The members of the stringband NAAHU TRIBES, for example, play a song from New Caledonia and sing by ear without having a clue about the meaning of the lyrics. Interesting as these cases may be, they are not anything special in Vanuatu, because as a result of all the different languages spoken, many lyrics of many songs are anyway not understood by many people. Still, the lyrics play a role and are, in some cases, the main reason for the success of a song.

Generally speaking, lyrics and sound operate in combined effect. However, in stringband music, the relation between the two is not strong. The lyrics exist quite apart from the musical arrangement, probably because of the high degree of standardisation of musical form and means. We see this effect on those not in the know about stringband music when they realise that a supposedly pleasing and cheerful song is actually about pain, loss or even death. Nevertheless, there are some songs which display a calculated effect from the combination of musical and textual means.[754] The form and structure of a stringband song is confirmed or rather shaped by the organisation of the lyrics in stanzas and refrains.

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[753] This is not to say that the statements voiced in lyrics should be overrated and that they can always be seen separately without considering the context.

[754] For example, this is the case with the song 'Melanesian Arts Festival' by DAUSAKE. The song has – very untypical in a stringband song – an introduction which constitutes the part of a traditional song (or at least is supposed to come across as such). At special occasions such as Fest'Nalega, the group performs this song with dancers, which reinforces the intended connotation of the song with the domain of *kastom*.

As languages (for example slang, *ekspresen*) develop, the vocabulary and grammar of song lyrics is likewise liable to fashion and other modifications. It is impossible to approach these complex processes in this chapter. One example of the subtleties of language shifts, however, may give an idea about the issues occurring in Vanuatu. Although musician Henry Toka was born in Vila, he commands the language of Nduindui, Ambae (his 'home island'). After having been absent from the island for several years he was be able to follow the conversations there but he did not understand some idioms. In his view, the people from Ambae (*man Ambae*) living in Vila had changed their vernacular into something more direct and 'flat'.[755] In contrast, the people on the island have a more melodious language (*Ol man aelan yu harem oli singsing*). He said: "My ear is shut in respect to the way of speaking in the island" ("*Sora blong mi i sarem hem long saed blong wei we mi toktok long aelan*", interview with Henry Toka 2006).

By means of language, identities and ideologies are communicated and formed. Choosing a specific language in a given song instead of another often signals focus on a particular identity. The same is true for changes in language habits, as for example the renaming of the New Hebrides in Vanuatu and the renaming of several islands at Independence. The song 'Hioaove' by TROPIC TEMPO tells the story of a legend according to which an early European explorer named the island Aoba after a marine bird with long legs (which is actually called *ova* in a vernacular language). In 1980, a council of chiefs agreed on the renaming of the island to Ambae. With his song, Henry Toka, who conceived the lyrics, wishes to explain and to remind his audience of this renaming because, as he says "it is a small place but it has its own identity" ("*Hem i wan smol ples be hem i gat aedentiti blong hem*"). For him, music is a means with which to signalise towards outsiders that his community exists.[756]

Due to the importance of the multilingual situation in Vanuatu, special attention is paid to issues of language choice and language ideology (6.1). For ni-Vanuatu, multilingualism is a matter of course. Spouses often learn each other's languages and people of mixed parentage often have knowledge of two vernaculars in addition to English or French and Bislama. Musician John Kapala (KROS ROD), for example, speaks Bislama as a first language, the languages of both parents (who come from different islands), English and some French he

[755] He said: "*i flat olsem Bislama o Inglis*" (interview with Henry Toka 2006).

[756] He wants to call out to his friends: "You have something there, show your colours, display your songs, don't be shy about it, don't be afraid about it" ("*Yufala i gat wan samting, yufala i soem kala blong yufala, yufala i soem* song *blong yufala, no sem wetem, no fraet wetem*", interview with Henry Toka 2006).

learnt at school (interview with John Kapala 2003). Often, musicians use more than one language in a song. The song texts are discussed in 6.2 in respect to structure, formal attributes and rhetorical devices (6.2.1), as well as content (6.2.2). The idiosyncrasies of song texts in stringband music stand out when compared to the lyrics in *pop miusik* (6.3).

6.1 Language Choice and Language Ideology

Like poetry, song texts are wittingly and elaborately written, and constitute an aesthetical form of language use. It can therefore be assumed that the choice of language in a song is more conscious and intentional than in speech acts of everyday life. In this subchapter, I focus on the choices songwriters in Vanuatu make and explore the possible reasons for these choices. Language ideologies influence the choices that are made about the language (or languages) used in a song. Ni-Vanuatu writers, poets and song-makers have quite a big choice.[757] Questions of language ideology, the views and notions linked to language, are accompanied by questions of identity. Language is an identity marker of immense importance in Vanuatu and thus the choice of language in song lyrics is crucial with respect to the constructions and representations of identity.

Most stringbands sing in vernacular languages as well as in Bislama which is used to reach out nationwide. Many vernacular songs contain some English and/or Bislama words. Some Bislama vocabulary was borrowed in these languages and those who sing in a vernacular might at times not even have the feeling that they have switched to Bislama.[758] Stringband music is a domestic genre and consequently does not reach out to international scenes. Most lyrics are anyway not comprehensible to others (than ni-Vanuatu). However, bands have adjusted to increasing tourism and more English language has also been used since the 1970s. Many stringband songs contain single English words although the lyrics are otherwise in Bislama or in a vernacular language. Often this has practical reasons, as many phrases are

[757] Lyrics are not always written down. The German terms “Textdichter” or “Texter” (text creator) would suit better in this context than the English ‘writer’.

[758] There are also many loan words from vernacular languages in Bislama, especially terms connected with phenomena from nature. Many names of species begin with ‘*na-*’, such as *natanggura* (sago palm) or *nasiviru* (the rainbow lory, a parrot). Another such semantic field is spirituality (Crowley 1990: 392).

long-winded in Bislama but concise in English. Some musicians told me that they make sure that English terms or phrases in their lyrics are not too difficult to understand.[759]

French is practically not used at all – the reason for this lying in the interplay of historical circumstances, education, church and party affiliation. In its history, the genre was particularly popular in some parts of Vanuatu, where the English-speaking Presbyterian clergy successfully eliminated traditional practices (in contrast to their francophone Catholic colleagues).[760] Stringband music there serves as a substitute for traditional music and is regarded as de facto *kastom miusik* of communities in the northern part of Efate and its offshore islands. English was also the language of the musically influential American troops stationed in the country during the Second World War, an important phase and precondition for the development of stringband music. Most anglophone educated parishioners of the Presbyterian and Anglican Church were supporting the National Party and later the Vanua'aku Pati which worked towards independence in the 1970s. During the same period, the stringband genre defined its most important characteristics. Eventually, the majority of tourists, a target group for a small proportion of stringband songs and valued customers for stringband cassettes, come from the English-speaking Australia. All things considered, it seems odd to use French in a stringband song.[761] As French plays no part in stringband music, there are no special ties to the French speaking overseas territory New Caledonia (in contrast to *pop miusik*).

Some of Vanuatu's stringbands receive nationwide attention. Songs with Bislama lyrics are more likely to become a hit because people can easily understand and sing along. However, there are also some examples of very popular vernacular songs, even if the majority of the population cannot understand the text. Even foreign songs are played and sung by ni-Vanuatu musicians like the Fijian song "Kisi mai" (for example, it was played by the LUMBUKUTI BEACH BOYS at the Fest'Nalega in 2003). The impact of the lyrics' content on listeners should not be overestimated. But even if one does not really try to follow the text when listening to

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[759] For example, Bob Kuao said that listeners should not have to look something up in a dictionary before understanding the lyrics (interview with Bob Kuao 2003).

[760] For example, Fletcher writes: "[T]he missionaries (i. e. the Protestant ones, *not* the Frères Maristes) have abolished all tribal customs" (Lynch 1923: 200, italics as in the original).

[761] The sole exception I found is the song 'Eredna' (DAUSAKE), with lyrics in a mix of Bislama and French. I heard rumours about a group from Santo which took part in a competition in the 1980s and which sang in French. Kalo Malesu, a member of DAUSAKE, reported of an event of francophone primary schools on the Journée internationale de la Francophonie at Saralana stage where a children's stringband performed DAUSAKE's 'Grassroot Laef' with French lyrics (interview with Kalo Malesu 2003). During my fieldwork, I never came across any fairly persuasive emic explanation for the absence of French in stringband lyrics.

music, the language choice is crucial. Frith argues that the mere sound of the voice plays an important role. People listen to pronunciations, delays, variations in pitch and accents even more than to the semantic content of the text (Frith 1988: 120 f.). These features of the voice differ according to the language used.

There are music genres and styles with what one could call 'key-utterances' – terms, sometimes non-lexical items that are often used in the lyrics. Such (stereo-)typical expressions are also used in stringband music; they are usually in Bislama and in vernacular languages (for example "*daling lei aginau*" for the case of stringbands from Emao Island.

There are only a few stringband songs which are sung in one language only. Often, there are three different languages in one song and code-switching within the lyrics of a song is very common. I came across a lot of songs in which a stanza was repeated in another language, while others have stanzas in different languages, also with different contents.

Various factors influence the choice of language depending on the music genre; Table 4 compiles some possible intentions.[762] Bislama is a vehicle with which to emphasise (as well as a means to build) the unity of Vanuatu. Discussions of national affairs are sometimes led in Bislama even amongst speakers of the same vernacular; thus, the application of Bislama in songs of this domain is parallel to common parlance. According to some older interviewees Bislama has increasingly been used only since 1978, on the eve of independence. Thus, the use of Bislama in stringband lyrics is directly related to independence, a national phenomenon.[763] Some stated that the song topics were just the same back in the days, only that vernaculars were used instead of Bislama and English.[764] There are certainly more potential reasons why English, French or Bislama is chosen for a song.[765]

The focus on the local sphere in the majority of stringband lyrics often results from the combined effect of the aspects language choice and content of the texts in combination with the music. By language choice itself a focusing on the inside (like the community) can take

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[762] I say 'possible' because not all of them apply in all cases. These intentions, some of them possibly unconscious, are crystallised from interviews, lyrics or extra-musical circumstances (grasped through communication and observation).

[763] However, the use of Bislama should not only be related to the modern nation of Vanuatu but rather as a means of expression of Melanesian identity in general. As Crowley points out, "it is likely that Melanesian Pidgin was used by Melanesians for expressing Melanesian interests, cultural values, and practices from fairly early on" (1990: 390).

[764] The song texts collection of Joel Kaltang also supports the conclusion that early stringband lyrics were often in vernacular languages. I found that the topics of the lyrics indeed changed in some respects, see 6.2.2.2.

[765] Another possible and possibly unconscious intention might be the display of education, that is, showing off, when English (or French) language is used in songs. The personal background of composers is certainly a determining factor.

place. Songs in the vernacular language are very popular within a stringband's own community. The singers of COOL SHADOW STRINGBAND sing most love songs in their vernacular because, they say, listeners are more touched emotionally by these songs. When it comes to recording an album, however, it is necessary to include many Bislama songs in order to catch a wider public's interest.[766] Those stringbands taking part in competitions in Vila have many Bislama lyrics in their songs because they want the jury and the listeners to understand what they are singing.

The rhythm of a stringband song (see 3.6) neither determines the choice of the language nor the topic of the lyrics. Even if traditional rhythmical structures are employed in a stringband song there still can be song texts in Bislama, and not necessarily in the vernacular. However, there is a correlation between the language chosen and the subject of a song. For example, many wedding songs (*mared singsing*) which are composed for celebrations in the community are in a local language, whereas songs which address tourists are in English. Several composers said that they write a song in the language in which the ideas come to their mind. Thus, they do not actively choose a language but the language appears by itself.

In fact, the use of a particular language can have the function of hiding information. Many anthropologists (and others) have most probably experienced situations in which people switch to a different language or jargon to disguise what they are saying. While the use of a vernacular can exclude most listeners in an urban setting, some boys from Futuna turned the tables by using English in a song about sneeking out to a party at a neighbouring village (instead of hunting a jungle fowl as they had pretended; interview with Albea Nalisa 2003). By using English, they could sing about their pranks without having to fear detection by elders who do not take English lyrics into account and also do not expect that an English song could be about local occurrences.

Tok Pisin, the variation of Melanesian Pidgin spoken in PNG, is used occasionally in stringband songs; 'Awe Liza' (YANG SOUWIA) is a typical example (cf. Tracks 28 & 31). The lyrics of the first stanza, the chorus and the third stanza are (Tok Pisin terms in bold):

Dearest *Liza mi mitim yu long Freswota*	Dearest Liza, I met you in Freswota
Mi ***tokim*** *yu nao yu laf smol long*(-o) *mi*	I talk to you and then you smile a bit at me
Mi kam nekis taem mi askem fren long yu	When I came the next time I asked if you would be my girlfriend
Yu ansa bak long mi se yu lavem mi	You answered that you love me

[766] For example, this was clearly stated by LUKUNAEFA (interview with Tony Alvos and LUKUNAEFA 2003).

[another line in a vernacular follows which is repeated once]

Awe Liza blong Bankis	Oh Liza from the Banks Islands
Likilik-i ***meri*** *blong Mere La-*	[Little] Girl from Mere La- [Mere Lava]
Mi no save fogetem yu	I cannot forget you
Yu stap oltaem long maen blong mi	You are always on my mind
Awe Liza blong Bankis	Oh Liza from the Banks Islands
Awe [the rest of the line in a vernacular]	Oh […]
Wanpela *naet* ***yumitupela*** *sidaon wantaem*	One night we sit together
Yu ***tokim*** *mi se bae yu go long ples Bankis*	You told me that you'd go to the Banks Islands
Mi aunt *i faenem aot se yu stap long Luganville*	My aunt found out that you are in Luganville
Yu mekem mi jokem tingting from yu [?]	I am surprised about you [incomprehensible]
Mi no save why *nao daling yu go*	I do not know why you leave me, darling
Awe Liza yu spolem frensip blong yumitu	Oh Liza, you ruined our relationship
Awe Liza yu brekem promes blong yumitu	Oh Liza, you broke our promise[767]

The Tok Pisin vocabulary in the song could easily be replaced by Bislama terms: *tokim* (*talem long* in Bislama), *liklik meri* (*smol gel*), *wanpela* (*wanfala*) and *yumitupela* (*yumitufala*). Thus, it is apparent that the use of Tok Pisin vocabulary cannot be due to practical reasons. In contrast to a few cases where Tok Pisin is applied in *pop miusik*, there are also no commercial interests. Musicians and composers told me that they apply Tok Pisin in stringband songs either for the fun of it (and to achieve a humorous effect), because they want to do "something different", or because they find it fashionable.[768] A humorous effect can also be achieved with the opposite, i.e. altering a foreign song text through the integration of only locally used terms.[769] Humour is an important catalyst in processes of acquisition.

The relationship between stringband lyrics and vernaculars in different local settings seems to be a very interesting field of study. For example, in Central Vanuatu (North Efate, Emae, Shepherds), the language of the island of Nguna, *Nakanamanga*, has been widely disseminated by missionaries, for example via hymn books. Nowadays it is spoken in Emua, for example, a village on the north coast of Efate (interview with LUKUNAEFA 2003). According to Moses Stevens, the old stringband songs of this region were written in this language, whereas Bislama and other vernaculars were used gradually. Stevens reported of his uncle who went to New Caledonia to work in the nickel mines and composed a song in the 1970s about his experiences. This song, Stevens said, is a good example of the use of two

[767] I suppose this refers to the promise the lovers gave each other. However, this line could also be translated as: "Oh Liza, you did not meet our appointment".
[768] Another Tok Pisin term which is frequently used is *tasol* (mostly applied in the sense of 'only').
[769] At Fest'Napuan, a group once performed a cover version of 'No Woman, No Cry'. A passage in the song was altered: "cornmeal porridge" substituted with "*tuluk*", thus a Caribbean dish was replaced by a handy snack from Efate Island which, of course, provoked laughter among the audience. 'No Woman, No Cry' was 'made local'.

vernaculars as well as "broken English" – all within one line (interview with Moses Stevens 2004). Other languages can also occasionally be found in stringband lyrics, for example Fijian. The choice of a certain language for a song attracts a particular spectrum of listeners. However, this applies only for single songs, as the languages are mixed to such an extent on albums and in live performances that there is no segmentation of listeners (there are no albums with songs for tourists only, for instance).

Bislama's potential as a unifying force works as "a vehicle of nationalism" (Keesing 2000: 238) and, since its evolution and dissemination, Bislama can be seen as a way "by which Ni-Vanuatu identity can be easily expressed" (MacClancy 2002: 69). The same is true for stringband music as a genre. In songs with Bislama lyrics both identity-establishing 'vehicles' gain momentum.

6.2 Lyrics

In Vanuatu, the drafting of lyrics is an integral part of the creative process of composition. In most cases, the composer of the music and the creator of the text are the same person or persons. Lyrics play a prominent role in stringband songs, as there are only very few instrumental pieces.[770]

In my conversations with the composers three aspects repeatedly came up. First, those who devise song texts expect the listeners to listen carefully, if not at a performance than at home when they listen to an album. Second, they strive to create a 'hook' that is characteristic enough both to get through and to be easy to understand. Third, both young and old composers strive to create meaningful lyrics, at least most of the time.[771] George Pakoa told me: "You must not tell inconsequential things but you must tell something that can touch the heart of the people".[772]

Most stringband lyrics are extremely straight-forward and are generally closely in touch with reality. They report and comment on what happens in the lives of the people. In this way, they

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[770] From a sample of altogether 365 songs from 31 different studio albums by 24 stringbands only five are without vocals. Only a few groups use instrumental pieces in live performances, namely those who feature additional instruments such as mandolins.

[771] Some musicians admitted that they wrote the one or other song just to complete an album, thus without particular depth. Some of these are from the category of 'songs for tourists', see 6.2.2.4.

[772] "*Yu no mas talem ol samting nating nomo be yu mas talem wan samting we i save tajem had blong ol man*".

mirror as well as shape the zeitgeist – in more concrete terms than do many lyrics in popular music which are often more abstract or fictitious. Certainly, as Simon Frith reminds us, it is not advisable "to read back from lyrics to the social forces that produced them" (Frith 1988: 106). There cannot be a direct and total analogy between current affairs and the real lives of the people and the lyrics. For one thing, because the language used in songs is usually different from spoken conversation (e.g. restricted, formal). For another, the song texts represent only a part of reality, that is, chiefly those things (young) people are interested in and those which are well received by the audience. On the other hand, the fact that stringbands usually also have old songs in their repertoire, ensures a certain diversification of topics – not only the latest fashion is represented.

In the following, I present some specific features of stringband lyrics (6.2.1), as well as a categorisation of topics (6.2.2) which illustrates in which ways the song texts work in terms of identity representation and construction. Some types of songs can indeed serve as archives, as sources of information about the lives of ni-Vanuatu nowadays as well as in the past.

The categorisation presented in 6.2.2 holds true for stringband lyrics in general; however, the examples given concentrate on song texts in Bislama or in a mix of Bislama and English. Thus, I try to minimise the problems which occur as a result of incomprehensibility. When interpreting lyrics, there is always the danger of not understanding hidden meanings or overlooking their possible philosophical depth. For this reason, I only concentrate on texts that I discussed with composers, musicians or listeners, or else on those which are the least ambiguous.

6.2.1 Formal Characteristics and Linguistic Means

Stringband lyrics represent a formalised language and singing is carried out in more or less the same way each time a given song is performed.[773] There are no formal and fixed stylistic rules, but typical attributes have rather developed which can be found in many songs.

Song lyrics often belong to the realm of fantasy. The songwriter usually has the possibility to slip into a role and thus sing, act and say things that would not make sense or be appropriate in his or her everyday life. However, the lyrics of stringband music are different. There are changes of perspective (for example a boy singing from the perspective of a girl), but the song plots are never made up. In contrast to the lyrics of many popular music genres, stringband

[773] Songs with several voices require that singers stick to their part when singing together. In stringband music, it is not common for the vocals to improvise. Maurice Bloch hints to the fact that individual creativity is ruled out in many types of songs, as compared with ordinary discourse.

songs tell stories from real life – not made-up stories – and thus can be regarded as anecdotes from reality, oral history, socially critical commentary, invocation or statements of opinion.
Despite the fact that stories from real life dominate the lyrics of stringband songs by far, metaphorical language is also used in some songs; for example, if a fleeing young lover is described as a dog that jumps out of a window and runs away from the house. Yet, these descriptions apply to real relationships between people or to real occurrences. The following two lines are from a song which was very popular in Vila:[774]

Bae wan dei blak ston blong Ambae	One day, the black stones of Ambae
bae i rol antap long waet sanbij blong Makira	Will roll on the white sand [/ beach] of Makira
[the sound of waves is inserted after this line]	

Apparently, this is the notion of a boy from Ambae who is in love with a girl from Makira and pictures that someday, both can be together. I once rode on a mini bus (*seves bas*) while the song was played. The lines cited above evoked cheers, whistles and laughter among the other young passengers. Apart from examples like these, I did not come across any encoded messages in stringband music. Of course, these are hard to detect for an outsider; however, I suspect that the 'social commentary in disguise', once ascribed to stringband music by Crowe (for example 1998: 198), is nowadays more common in *pop miusik*.
In a text that is to be sung, the poetic metre is of importance. Each phrase has to fit to metre and rhythm or, if not, has to be altered through omissions, filler words or sustained syllables. In Chapter 3 I report on the practice of *flasem* in playing musical instruments. The term has another meaning in the context of lyrics. *Flasem* refers to the technique of inserting vowels between consonants in words in order to make a line singable.[775] It is not used in speech, thus *flasem* is a special attribute of sung language in stringband songs. The parenthesizing of vowels happens in a standardised way, that is, a word is always 'embellished' in the same way: *olsem* (= like, as) is altered to *ol-o-sem* or *ol-o-sem-u* in a song (and never *ol-a-sem-i* or such).[776] In the song 'Philip Kating' (ERRO STRINGBAND), for example, the movements of the popular boxer are denoted cat-like: *olsem puskat*-i (usually one would say: *olsem Puskat*). Another dimension of *flasem* can concern melismatic style (described to me in Bislama as

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774 'Juliet' by MAGAWIARUA/SARATOKOWIA.
775 One musician used the paraphrase '*pulum toktok*'.
776 Another frequently used word, *blong*, is often sung *b*-i-*long*-o (and never *b*-i-*long*-a or such). Other, frequently embellished words are *lelebet*-i and, in older songs, *waet*-i-*man*.

tanem tiun). A phrase often used in stringband songs is *blong*-o *mi*.[777] The inserted vowels are important for the metrical structure of the song text.[778] BOB KUAO, who wrote another song about Kating, purposely involves the listeners by addressing them with the inclusive '*yumi*' (as in 'boxer *blong yumi*').

There are several devices for creating authenticity in stringband lyrics. For example, in nearly every song, specific locations (as the names of villages, places and islands) and/or names of persons occur. The first line of an enormous number of stringband songs comprises a temporal placement which, in combination with the references to places and people, introduces the listener to a concrete situation. These indications are verifiable, and thereby underpin the authentic character of the texts' contents (which report of 'real' events at 'real' places, involving 'real' people). Other songs are not related to a particular place although it is mostly clear that the plot takes place in Vanuatu and some explicitly address subjects of national concern. As far as I know, there are no lyrics about abstract topics like 'peace' or 'freedom' without putting them in direct context with Vanuatu. The fixed form of the beginning of songs is even more significant at the musical level, as most stringbands stick to only a few different types of song beginnings, to only one or two different rhythms and to only three or four different chords on a whole album. The title of many songs is made up of the first few words of the first line, thus the titles provide the chronological context – notwithstanding the fact that this passage only occurs once in the song. Usually, these words do not bear great importance but they build a frame or a placement.[779] Other song beginnings comprise a salutatory address, as in a letter (some lyrics are indeed based on letters).[780]

The regularity of the practice of using the first words as a title can be seen with the example of 'Close your eyes' from SARA POKASI (Track 32). Actually, the song is a stringband version of 'All my loving' by THE BEATLES. Not only have the fast triplets of the original's rhythm been transferred to a stately *tri step* (often preferred for lyrics about love) but the first words of the

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[777] As the described phenomenon is an untranslatable poetic device, I do not take it into account in the translations of the lyrics.

[778] I presume that this practice might constitute an (unconscious) endeavour to adjust Bislama to the sense of Austronesian languages which often avoid the succession of consonants. Seen from this angle, the text becomes more singable. If so, it would represent a deeper level of acquisition. However, this is purely hypothetical.

[779] Examples of these are 'Natau 1966' and 'Namba 9' (MAGAWIARUA & SARATOKOWIA), 'Natau 1977' and 'Namba II Desemba' (SOUWIA), 'Long Taem Bifo, About 1606' (VATDORO), 'Yia 1994' (STONEY BOYS), 'Natau Waia Epe 1978' (SARA POKASI), 'Last year long 1976' and 'Yestedei mi ko daon long Santo taon' (MAKURA TOKOLAU), '18 October' (TOKORUA), 'Long 3 November' & 'Long 8 Okest' (ERRO STRINGBAND) or 'Dawn of February 14' and 'Last Time Long Malapoa' (DAUSAKE).

[780] Thus, there are song titles such as 'Hey Nono' (DAUSAKE), 'My dearest Makie' (LAUTANO), 'Darling lei Anginau' (MAKURA TOKOKAU), 'Darling Lei Rose' (SARATOKOIA), 'Harry Aginau' (TOKOTAKIA), 'Dear Papa' MAGAWIARUA & SARATOKOWIA) and 'Oh dear A. L. M.' and 'Oh Jean Claude' (YOUNG BEACH BOYS).

first stanza also became the song's title.[781] Moreover, a Bislama verse has been added while there is no reference to the original composers of the song on the cassettes' cover.

The focus on the local sphere in the majority of the stringband lyrics often results from the combined effect of the aspects of language choice, form and content. Many songs are commissioned, and some composers try to use original quotes from letters or things the protagonists said (as passed on to the composer by the commissioner) in order to emotionally touch the person who ordered it. These words make the story 'real'. At times, they also come as a surprise for the persons involved. Someone said during one of my interviews: "The girl already forgot [about what she said] but…" and a stringband musician completed the sentence: "… she gets a sudden fright when she hears it in the song!" ("*Gel i foget be*…", "*…sek nomo i harem long singsing*!"). Sometimes, names of protagonists in lyrics are omitted or changed if there is the risk that the persons feel ashamed (even if it is clear who is meant anyway). Quite often, names are abbreviated and only the initial letters are used. The composers of the COOL SHADOW STRINGBAND sometimes use false names to disguise the identity of a particular person. In these cases, they do not use rare names but rather common ones (such as Tari or Garae, names from their island Ambae); hence it is not clear who is meant. Another option is to use popular English names (such as Linda). If, of course, the story told in the song is something the protagonist can be proud of, his or her real name is used.

Hendry Tari summarises the differences between the structure of stringband lyrics in previous times as compared to nowadays: songs had more stanzas, sometimes seven, plus all the refrains. Tari himself prefers to make short songs which keep the audience interested and are easy to learn. Young people nowadays describe the initial situation, leave out a lot of details in the middle and come quickly to the conclusion. By contrast, his older fellow musician John Peter told stories in their entire breadth.[782]

For the sake of completeness, it should be noted that non-lexical shouts are often part of a stringband's performance. These are mainly uttered by the audience and maybe this is one reason why they cannot be found in studio recordings. Yet, they are part of the soundscape of stringband music.

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[781] Interestingly, NAHUU TRIBES' stringband version of 'Meri Lewa' (by O-SHEN) works the other way around: the slow reggae ballad was transformed to a driving *tu step*.

[782] In a joking and exaggerating manner Tari recalls: "The protagonist is down by the beach, comes up to this or that location, takes a rest close to this or that tree and so on". Peter argues that back then, musicians had something to say, while today's lyrics consists of "I love you, you love mi – that's all" ("*mi lavem yu, yu lavem mi* – that's all" (interview with John Peter & Hendry Tari 2003).

The identification of song categories suggests that there is (in analogy to the musical form, see 3.5) also a standardisation of topics, at least to some degree.

6.2.2 Topics

There is evidence that the appropriateness of topics for lyrics varies from island community to island community, thus “ideas as to what constitutes musical sentimentality, crudity, or balance are not […] cross-cultural” (Kartomi 1981: 228) within Vanuatu. It is a well-known fact throughout the country that people in Tanna do not sing about emotions, especially love, in public (see 6.2.2.8).

Comparing the different topics in stringband lyrics, I come to the conclusion that a fundamental dichotomy pervades many song texts: separation and unification. Many songs address either one or the other, sometimes both. The overwhelming majority of love songs addresses the subject of separation more or less directly. ‘Unification’ is, as expected, connoted as something positive, while ‘separation’ is depicted as negative, and the aspect of separation is also addressed in songs about fatal accidents and, more generally, about the deceased.

While going through hundreds of stringband lyrics, I detected that several main topics can be found in each stringband’s repertoire. These categories of song texts are not fixed emic concepts but analytical divisions,[783] and I exemplify each of them in the following subchapters. Some topics are avoided altogether in stringband lyrics although they certainly concern many people. These include disputes over land,[784] crime (such as domestic violence),[785] smoking marihuana, or excessive kava drinking.[786]

[783] However, some are: every stringband musician would know what is meant by a ‘*singsing long mared*’ or an ‘awareness-song’; see below.

[784] Land disputes are not rare in Vanuatu. On my way to Pentecost, I found myself in a small plane with armed officers who set out for the southern part of the island to pacify a conflict in which someone had been killed with a bush knife. During the time of my fieldwork there were similar conflicts on the islands Ambae, Malekula and Espiritu Santo (to mention those that I know of).

[785] Violence against women had been increasing in the years preceding my fieldwork (Statistical Yearbook 2002: 152); however such developments are not reflected in stringband lyrics. ‘Dawn of February 14’ (DAUSAKE) is about a child whose mother had been killed but the crime as such is not addressed in the song text.

[786] Alcohol abuse is also not addressed. However, in Vanuatu, this concerns far less people than excessive kava consumption because alcohol is expensive. There is a song about the Tusker brewery by the COOL SHADOW STRINGBAND, as well as songs about kava or the kava trade by the LAEF KASTOM STRINGBAN and the VUSI BOYS.

6.2.2.1 Political and Social Critical Songs

Some stringband lyrics can be regarded as a mode of social and political discourse, as they address local social problems and political issues such as the lack of communication and health facilities in rural areas,[787] the problems of jobless young people who come to town,[788] and regional politics in Melanesia (such as the Bougainville crisis).[789] Sometimes, international initiatives are taken up, as in the 'Poverty Song' by MAGAWIARUA who refer to the First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, or in a song by the STONEY BOYS who made a song about the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless (1987).
Stringband music provides a forum for teenage boys and young adults which are, due to traditional notions of respect, otherwise excluded from political discussions concerning ni-Vanuatu society. These are dominated by older men. The song lyrics give them the possibility to express experiences, values and opinions. Disseminated via cassettes, stringband lyrics can effectively comment on social issues.[790] If they proceed cleverly and do not overstep the mark, they can make comments without insulting somebody personally. Due to the social structure of stringbands, however, in most cases there are senior members who are in control over the other band members to varying degrees.
The founding of TOTAS LOCAL STRINGBAND dates back to January 2000 when a gun was fired in Luganville and local police joined forces with police from the capital and military personnel of the Vanuatu Mobile Force. They arrested many people, above all unruly youth (*stronghed*) and young petty criminals who had not been involved with the fired gun. The local police pointed out the houses of the usual suspects (for example of the members of *Ol Slev*, the Slaves, a gang of jobless youth) and the police of Vila took decisive action: in Pepsi, Sarakata and other neighbourhoods of Luganville, the officers kicked in doors at three o'clock in the night, neither showing consideration for the children nor for others. The officers not only used hand cuffs and aimed with their weapons at the people's faces, but people were also injured with rifle butts and muzzles. Some women were also arrested when mothers complained too vehemently against the arrest of their sons. The worst part of the experience for some boys

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[787] This is voiced in 'Weekend long South Epi' (DAUSAKE).
[788] This is the topic of 'Poor Boy' (ERRO STRINGBAND). 'Nam Lusum Menenq Oman' (STONEY BOYS) is about someone who was expelled from school. The latter group also recorded a song which is about a girl who wastes her parents' efforts to support her schooling in Port Vila.
[789] For example, 'Arawa treaty' (DAUSAKE) and 'Operation Lagoon' (SARATOKOWIA). In 'Hunter mo Matthew' the NOISY BOYS comment on the controversial claims of France on the islands Hunter and Matthew.
[790] The lyrics of stringband songs are not published in printed matter; cassettes have a simple cover without much space and song texts are never included.

was the notorious prison cell called *namba sikis*.[791] Some boys were beaten and even when bleeding excessively were not sent home, or even to hospital, as those responsible preferred to keep them in order to hide what they had done. A couple of youth were put to prison in Seaside, Port Vila, and committed for trial. In some cases, the charges were dropped, in others the boys were acquitted and in yet others penalties were remitted.

When the boys had overcome the operation (which lasted about one month) and came back from prison in Vila, some of them founded TOTAS LOCAL STRINGBAND. They had little to do with each other but were involved in brawls.[792] Their song 'Operation Klinim Not' is written in Bislama and is meant as a reminder of the excessive operation.[793]

Operation Klinim Not	Operation 'Clean the North'
Namba 8 January year 2000	On the 8th January 2000
3 O'clock early morning ol slave blong Sarakata oli sek nogud	3 o'clock in the early morning, the slaves of Sarakata are startled up
[…]	
Kicken doa, usum musket blong treatem nogud man	They kicked in doors and used rifles to mistreat the people
blood i ron doan long face, tears i folfol doan	Blood runs down the face, tears flow
samfala i atmit long hospital	Some were admitted to hospital
[…]	
Hand-cap long hand	Handcuffs were applied
Pointem musket long face	Rifles were pointed at faces
Treatem mi olsem prisoner blong war	They treated me like a prisoner of war
One week long namba six makem mi saver gud	One week at *namba sikis* made me suffer very much

The members of TOTAS LOCAL STRINGBAND intended to create a song that reminds one of the police operation in Luganville so that their children will know about it one day.[794] The song 'Army Hat' by VANRUWO is about a youth who strolls through the streets of Port Vila, wearing a military cap. He gets arrested because thefts in the stores of China Town had been committed by people wearing camouflage and members of the Vanuatu Mobile Force were sick of being accused of stealing. As a result, they captured young men around town, trying to find the offenders. This is not explained in the song; the lyrics only depict the capture from the

[791] *Namba sikis* is a dark room without window or lighting, and without a bed. The name, 'number six', relates to the bearing one is forced into because of the cell's small size. The inmate gets a biscuit or two for breakfast, two spoons of rice for lunch and that is it for the day. Indeed, different people gave horrifying descriptions of *namba sikis*.

[792] Most members come from Paama, one from Malekula and another from Ambrym (interview with TOTAS LOCAL STRINGBAND 2003).

[793] The anglicised orthography presented here was written down for me by one of the band members of TOTAS LOCAL STRINGBAND. JESSE TEMAR composed a song about the same topic and also called his cassette album "Operation Klinim Not" (Sina Recording Studio).

[794] The typical phrasing being: "*putum nomo i stap olsem wan memori*".

perspective of a youth and his feeling of being treated unjustly. In cases such as 'Operation Klinim Not' and 'Army Hat' it is necessary to learn about the context before fully understanding the lyrics.

When enquiring about the motives to compose and perform a political song (in the sense of a propaganda song), I found three different motivations. First, the musicians may use the opportunity to exhibit their political opinion or support a particular party whom they vote or belong to as members. Second, they may take advantage by being directly paid by politicians in exchange for a song or a gig or by hoping to sell many cassettes to supporters of a party. Third, the musicians may play at the event of any party, for example, for any campaign team coming through the village, as a gesture of welcome and hospitality and need a song for the occasion.

When I spoke with John Apei (ERRO STRINGBAND), 23 years after independence, the big parties were split up into several smaller ones. The same is true with respect to the churches: people generally adhere less to the churches and there are additionally not as many Presbyterians as before but several other denominations have come to Vanuatu. For this reason, Apei said, one has to refer to the national level when making a political song – otherwise not enough people are interested in your cassette. This quotation shows the typical understanding of the term 'political song' of many musicians which is often limited to some kind of representation of the nation (unless it is understood as a propaganda song, see above).

A great many songs are evocative of Independence Day on July 30th in 1980. Such songs are constantly being composed because of stringband competitions around Independence Day.[795] In 1997, MAGAWIARUA published two independence songs on one album ('17th Anniversary' and '16th Independence'), while MAKURA TOKOLAU even released five independence songs on their album "Taem Bifo, Taem i Kam". Without exception, stringband lyrics display a positive attitude towards Vanuatu's independence which seems natural; however, at the end of the 1970s, there were different attitudes towards the timing and proceedings of independence.[796]

[795] Examples for independence songs are 'Fridom' (SOUWIA), 'Yumi Hapi' (YANG SOUWIA), 'Hapi Aniversari' (COOL SHADOW STRINGBAND), 'Protokol' (SARA POKASI), '19th Anniversary' & 'Untouched Paradise' (SARATOKOWIA), 'Yagfalla [sic] Kantri, Vanuatu', 'Independence Song' & No 5 aniversari song' (ERRO STRINGBAND), 'Man ples yumi kam fri' (LAUTANO), as well as 'Farewell song', 'Fas aniversari', 'Yumi hapi long 1980' 'Oh let us come' & 'Yumi presen [sic] God' (MAKURA TOKOLAU).

[796] See for example Van Trease 1995 (50 ff.). At the request of the new government of Vanuatu, PNG deployed soldiers, the Kumul Force, to oversee the transition.

Two years after independence, ERRO STRINGBAND also addressed problems of the young nation with an independence song:[797]

Yangfala kantri blong yumi long medel long Pasifik	Our young country in the middle of the Pacific
Olsem narafala kantri trabol taem hem i mas kam	Hard times must come as in other countries
Nambatu aniveseri blong yumi i kam tru	Our second anniversary came true
Sapos long God yumi stanap bambae hem i lidim yumi	If we stand with God he will lead us
Nogat wok, nogat mane, kopra tu hem i go daon	There is no work, there is no money, the price of copra falls
Be yumi no lusum hop from bambae i kam gud	However, we do not lose hope because it will be alright

'Julae namba 7 1978' is probably one of the first independence songs in stringband music. In July 1978, when Vanuatu was still the Anglo-French Condominium of the New Hebrides, George Pakoa, the singer of the group MAKURA TOKOLAU, composed the song for the independence of the neighbouring Solomon Islands.:

Julae namba 7 1978, Julae namba 7 1978	On the seventh of July 1978 [repeated once]
Yumi fri nao long hom blong yumi Solomons grup	We are free in our home, the Solomon Islands
Indipendens dei blong yumi i kam tru […]	Our independence day comes true […]

Pakoa uses the inclusive *yumi* (= we, us) although he is not a Solomon islander; however, he wanted to pronounce the commonalities of Melanesians and in so doing invoke a Melanesian identity (see also 2.2.5).[798]

Independence songs address the people of Vanuatu collectively and thus are usually in Bislama. Apart from the inclusive *yumi* and the omnipresent word *fridom* (freedom), the typical ingredients for the lyrics are the mentioning of the two colonial powers (often phrased as a farewell to friends), references to development and achievements, the invocation of unity, the mentioning of the flying national flag, as well as the motto of the nation *Long God yumi stanap* or other confessions to Christianity. MAKURA TOKOLAU even accredit the achievement of independence to "God Father" ("*Papa God*") in their song 'Yumi presen [sic] God'.[799] In 'Untouched Paradise', SARATOKOWIA sing:

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[797] Repetitions are omitted. A year earlier, MAKURA TOKOLAU likewise mentioned the hard times the country is going through in their song 'Fas aniversari' and VATDORO pointed to the fact that the young nation was experiencing many changes in 'All Vanuatu Sons and Daughters'.

[798] The kind of shared identity he had in mind, materialised meanwhile in the Melanesian Spearhead Group, for example, Pakoa said. In another passage in the lyrics, Pakoa directly relates the topic of independence to his country: "This time for you, next time for me" (interview with George Pakoa 2004). MAKURA TOKOLAU won a competition with this song.

[799] The STONEY BOYS do the same in 'New Millenium'.

I nomo gat waet-i *man i bos long yumi*	Europeans are not our bosses anymore
So yumi talem tangkiu long tufala	So we say thank you to both of them
Forom tufala i gudfala mother *nesen*	Because both are good mother nations
Biliv se bambae God i rewardem ol-o-*getas*	Believe that God will reward them
Long ol gudfala seves we oli mekem long yumi	For the good services they provided for us

In some lyrics, the hard work of the ministers of the new nation is mentioned and they are given thanks. George Pakoa depicted a performance of an independence song at the big stringband competition in 1990 (Vanuatu's tenth anniversary) when the musicians ended untypically with an abrupt stop, raised their arms and shouted: "Long live Vanuatu!" People in the audience were moved to tears.

The time when stringbands were most politically relevant, was during the second half of the 1970s. The LUMBUKUTI BEACH BOYS, who supported the NP, sang about the dubious methods with which some Europeans had bought land from islanders for a piece of tobacco or a mirror and a pair of sunglasses in the distant past (interview with Kalo Daniel 2003). HUARERE's song 'Nineteen Seventy Seven', about the declaration of the People's Provisional Government on 29th of November 1977, was published on a CD as late as 1997 (and I bought it several years later).[800]

Other lyrics make clear statements on social evils. In 1986 the Western Boys called their album "Cookie Bar" after one of the songs which is about an infamous bar in Vila (see 4.3.1). Although it was closed down in the late 1970s, its bad reputation lasts until decades later – also thank to the song. Richard, brother of Moses Stevens, composed the song and its chorus goes like this:

Cookie Bar yu swit tumas	Cookie Bar, you're really sweet
Yu stap long maen blong mi long evri manis	I think of you every month
Vatu blong mi i nomo gat	My money is all gone
Wea nao vatu blong mi?	And where is my money?
Oli draon long Cookie Bar	It's drowned at the Cookie Bar[801]

Moses Stevens quotes from the second verse:

Attention i go long pablik we oli stap long taon	A warning for all people in town
Traem blong sevem vatu blong yu	Try to save your money
Hem i laef blong yu	It's your life

[800] See Woodward (2014: 75) and Van Trease (1995: 37 f.) about the events of this day.

[801] By contrast, STONEY BOYS' 'Bloody Mary's' is a song of praise for another bar. Still, it is recognised that people squander their money there ("*Yu swit tumas mekem mi spendem vatu*").

In the case of the Cookie Bar, as well as in others, the criticism in the song happens in retrospect. I did not detect a case in which a stringband actually became involved in an argument. Thus, the 'political' songs often must be regarded as a comment rather than of a campaign. In 'Nasonal Eleksen' the STONEY BOYS promote democracy without aligning themselves with a particular party. On the whole, most stringband lyrics are apolitical and not critical of society. In most cases, they are a way to praise social norms rather than to criticise them.

6.2.2.2 Stringband Lyrics as Contemporary Documents and Oral History

Songs about a special event are meant to function as a remembrance or a reminder and thus constitute a form of archiving which one could call "oral archiving". The function of many stringband songs as an 'aural historic record' reminds one of the cultures of medieval troubadours or of griots in West Africa. It has been mentioned that the plot is dated at the beginning of many songs. This is, of course, a good mnemonic device. While the collecting of material culture and documents over long time periods faces challenges in tropical and cyclone-ridden settings, oral traditions such as the repertoire of stringbands are not affected by such constraints.

The topics of stringband songs have changed slightly over the decades. This applies to details, such as other official holidays before independence and extends to topics of more social relevance such as arranged marriages. As stringband song texts often mention particular locations, the lyrics bring to mind in which ways the setting has changed if, for example, a plantation or village is mentioned which is no longer there. As languages (for example slang, *ekspresen*) develop, the vocabulary and grammar of song lyrics is likewise liable to fashion and other modifications. Some songs contain old-fashioned Bislama terms. Thus, the diction itself embodies contemporary documents – the language is preserved in the songs.

The successful boxer and national hero Philip Kating was an inspiration for several songs, and particularly popular was the one by ERRO STRINGBAND. While such songs are meant as a comment on or as praise of a contemporary phenomenon, others are explicitly composed to memorise an event which has already passed, such as in 'Taem Blong Ol Olfala' (STONEY BOYS) about the blackbirding era:

Long taem long olfala taem	In the past
Waetman i kasem Niu Hebridis	The Europeans came to the New Hebrides
Giaman gud long ol olfala blong stilim blakman	Cheated our ancestors in order to kidnap Melanesians

The 'Blackbirding Song' (LAEF KASTOM STRINGBAN) and 'Long Taem Bifo, About 1606' (VATDORO)[802] also address this topic. The COOL SHADOW STRINGBAND recorded a song about Charles Godden, an Australian missionary who was killed on Ambae Island in 1906.[803] And there are several other songs about the early missionaries.[804] In 'Darkness taem' MAKURA TOKOLAU sing:

John Geddie memorial dei	John Geddie Memorial Day
Fes missionari we i sakemaot darkness *long Aneityum*	The first missionary who drove away the darkness from Aneityum

Communities in Vanuatu have always maintained oral traditions.[805] Lindstrom & White write that "[i]n societies without writing, songs serve as important archives, or data banks, of historical events" (1990: 159). Apart from some lyrics with little informative content (such as love songs or religious songs), many songs commemorate people or events of local or national importance. A big part of the stringband repertoire consists of songs that represent a historic record in the sense of an oral tradition of, for example, a village community. Indeed, the genre proves effective in storing data as the repertoires are passed from one generation to the next and thus some groups still play songs which date as far back as to World War II:

> "The events of war – sometimes exciting, sometimes deadly – provided obvious material for island composers. […] War songs encapsulate local historical understandings of the war. […] These songs continue to remind older islanders of their war experiences. They also transmit an understanding of the war to children and grandchildren born after the Japanese surrender. Many are songs of remembrance. These record the partings of islanders from the new friends […]" (Lindstrom & White 1990: 159 f.).

While war era songs are most probably gradually disappearing from the repertoire of stringbands, at the time of my fieldwork, however, I recorded a version of a song which was popular in Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands at the end of World War II and which was still being performed by a stringband in Ambae. Indeed, several of my interlocutors from different

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[802] In this song, historical dates are mixed up; in fact it is not about what happened in Vanuatu in 1606.
[803] In the lyrics, it is pointed out that the islanders back then where heathens. The song ends with the national motto *Long God yumi stanap*.
[804] Both, ERRO STRINGBAND and FUTUNA MAHTUA, have a song in their repertoire called 'John William' (both titles omit the 's' of this missionaries' surname). Williams and his colleague Harris were killed on Erromango in 1839 (see Gutch 1974: 145, 148-152). The vernacular song 'Martyr Isle' (ERRO STRINGBAND) possibly also addresses this topic.
[805] These oral traditions (*kastom stori*) can reach back hundreds of years, as has been confirmed by the excavation of the French archaeologist José Garanger.

islands knew ‘Ha Ha Japani Ha Ha’. In 1942, Willie Kala from Emao wrote the song ‘World War II’, a vernacular song about the works on the ring road around Efate Island (the song’s lyrics and a note about it are in Kaltang’s song list; he relies on notes of his father and Kala’s son Kaltang Willie).[806] By contrast, ‘1000 Pipol i kam long Port Vila’ (NOISY BOYS) was composed forty years after the advent of the Americans in 1941 and reports of people from Tanna who came to Port Vila during the Second World War.

Memorial songs are commissioned by relatives of deceased persons for a payment. There are songs about people who died in a car crash or who disappeared with their canoe or fishing boat. The touching *memori* song ‘Namba 9 Januari’ by the STONEY BOYS reminds of a friend who was killed by a shark:

Namba 9 Januari wan sad nius i kasem mi	On the ninth of January I received sad news
Blong-o *wanfala* beloved *fren long hom*	Of a beloved friend from home
Sak i putum hem long wan bigfala trabol	A shark put him at a serious risk
Stopem laef mo sarem eyes*, nomo man i tok long hem*	Ended his life and shut his eyes, no one could speak to him anymore

Stringbands are expected to play such songs whenever its owners (the clients) demand it at celebrations in the village.[807] The songs often address the deceased person as in a letter.[808] The lyrics of “Vanair Aircraft” by SARATOKOWIA are a mix of English and Bislama. While the stanzas report facts about the crash of an airplane in Mele Bay in May 1999, the chorus is narrated from the perspective of one of the victims:

O sori mum and dad	Oh sorry mum and dad
Friends and *famlies*	Friends and relatives
Mi livim yu nao	I leave you now
Mi lusum laef blong-o *mi*	I lose my life
Insaed long solwota	In the sea
Mi lusum laef blong-o *mi*	I lose my life
Wetem aircraft *Vanair*	Because of a Vanair aircraft

[806] SARATOKOWIA published the song ‘World War II’ on their album “Operation Lagoon”. In 2003, I witnessed a performance of this song by TOKOTAKIA with Joel Kaltang, Willie Kala’s grandson, as a lead singer at the premises of the VKS. Before, many stringbands, for example NASONAL, played the song (interview with Jeffrey Thomson 2003).

[807] Other examples of songs which were composed to memorise people are ‘Dawn of February 14’ & ‘Lou Dog’ (DAUSAKE), ‘Memorial Song Philip Naupa’, ‘Song blong pastor Willie Oli’ & ‘Billy Nompuat memory song’ (ERRO STRINGBAND) and ‘Eddi J’ (SARA POKASI).

[808] For example, the songs ‘Dear Papa’ (SARATOKOWIA & MAGAWIARUA) and ‘Oh Jean Claude’ (YOUNG BEACH BOYS).

'Yia 1994' (STONEY BOYS) about someone who never returned with his fishing boat, is also sung from the perspective of the deceased. In 'Mande Monin, 11 May' (ERRO STRINGBAND), the departed seems to speak to us from beyond:

Mande monin long 11 Mei 1981	Monday morning on 11th of May 1981
Mi wekap long beautiful sunrise	I wake up by the beautiful sunrise
Mi no save se hem i las sunrise *b*-i-*long mi*	I do not know that this is my last sunrise
[...]	[...]
Mi livim ol famle blong mi bihaen	I leave my relatives behind

Songs are composed as a reaction to unsettling occurrences such as a tidal wave ('Bay Marteli' by TOKORUA) or on the occasion of a special event such as the opening of a clinic (such a song was commissioned by the person who booked TOTAS LOCAL STRINGBAND to perform at the opening), the opening of public amenities ('Fatumaru Bay' by STONEY BOYS), sports events ('Fes Inta Distrik Gems' by the NOISY BOYS) or the despatch of soldiers of the Vanuatu Mobile Force (VMF). The song 'Goldie River' by ERRO STRINGBAND, for example, is about soldiers who spend some time in an army training camp in PNG shortly before Vanuatu's independence, while another of ERRO's songs is about the presence of the PNG Kumul Force in Vanuatu in 1980.

When listening to COOL SHADOW's 'Vanuatu Tusker', one is reminded (or told) that it was in July 1990 ("*Manis Julae 1990*") when it was opened – which is even more precise than the information given on the brewery's homepage. Besides, one learns from the song that the brewery is situated in Port Vila, that people back then expected it to foster the country's economy, that the tourists liked it ("*hem i switim plante turis man*") and that a carton Tusker was cheaper than a carton Foster's.[809] There is no reason to doubt any of this information. In this way, the repertoire of stringbands includes many songs which are directly linked to the realities of everyday life in Vanuatu. Of course, one needs to be aware of the fact that the songs do not necessarily mirror the opinion of society at large and that the commemoration is biased by today's perspectives.

6.2.2.3 Songs About Everyday Life

When I asked musicians about how they come up with the topics of their songs, one of them replied by giving a picturesque example from the day before that we had spent together with a

[809] When (YANG) SOUWIA worked on their album "Onesua Golden Jubilee" they recorded a similar song, however it was not included on the album.

few other people. We had been dabbling in a basin of a creek nearby, roasted breadfruit and the fish which some boys had previously caught at the reef and generally enjoyed ourselves. This, he told me, is enough for a song. One should include some funny stuff, such as a description of the silly way someone jumped into the creek from above a tree to create something the people can laugh about. And that is it. In fact, there are many examples of such songs, such as 'Northern Islands' from Dausake which is about some young men who went to Luganville. The lyrics contain the description of some mischief that happened during this trip. The unlucky hunt of a wild pig can make a topic for a funny stringband song.[810]

The lyrics are often very descriptive, depicting life from the perspective of an ordinary citizen (the 'grassroots'), for example people who go around town on a mini bus ('Bus driver' by Tokotakia) or a gardener who talks about his crops ('Kriesen: Olgeta man' by Noisy Boys). These songs validate and value life as it is. In 'Akrikalja development blong kaontri', Souwia encourage the listeners to plant copra, cacao and coffee, as well as raise pigs and cattle in order to develop the country:[811]

Man ples ol samting, we yumi mas wokem,	Locals, the things we have to plant
Emi copra coco mo coffe	That is copra, cocoa and coffee
Mo sapos yu wan farma,	And if you are a farmer
Yu mas fitim plante pig,	You have to rear many pigs
Mo puluk blong developen kantria[812]	And cattle to develop this country

'Gud kwaliti copra' addresses problems of the copra production:

Ol Man long oh ova si, oli talem nao ia copra,	People overseas say that nowadays the copra
Blong Vanuatu emi rabis, oli no wantem,	of Vanuatu is worthless, they do not want
Pem copra blong yumi, from copra blong yumi i tody,	to buy our copra because our copra is dirty
I bon i wetwet ino kut, fasen olsem ino stret,	it is burnt, it is wet, it is bad, this manner is not correct
Sapos yu wantem save mo abaot copra,	if you want to know more about copra
Yu save ko lukim agrikalja[813]	You can visit the agricultural department

The improvement of the cultivation of coconut trees or coffee trees is also the subject of the songs 'Coprah long world market' (Makura Tokolau), 'Navara Project' (Lautano) and 'Kofi Projek' (Noisy Boys), while Lukunaeva focus on farm animals in 'Livestock'. The

[810] Especially, Hendry Tari says, "if there are funny things; if you go hunt the pig but then the pig hunts you…" ("[…] *sapos i gat ol fani samting, sapos yu go ronem pig, pig i ronem yu…*"; interview with Hendry Tari & John Peter 2003).
[811] "Sauwia olsem Pifo Side 1", number 39 of Kaltang's list.
[812] Original orthography by Joel Kaltang.
[813] Original orthography by Joel Kaltang.

issue of cultivation is intertwined with the topic of God's creation in the song 'Kriesen: Olgeta Man' from the NOISY BOYS:

Dig-dig-digim, digim graon	dig, dig, dig up, dig up the soil
Pusum yam i go, taro i go, maniok i go	plant the yam, the taro, the cassava
Olgeta kabis mo samfala moa	all the cabbage and some more

'Grassroot Laef' from DAUSAKE portrays simple village life and the daily routine from a woman's perspective (repetitions are omitted):

San i girap mo saenem mi	The sun is rising and shining on me
Had blong mi i wom i stret gud	My heart is warm and all right
I polisim wetem senta blong-o coconut *tri*	It's polished with coconut oil
Adem flavour *blong tiare tri*	I add the fragrance of gardenia
Miksim wetem jus blong-o *navara*	mix it with the juice of germinated coconut
I givim mi everlasting *tes blong*-o *kanaka*	which gives me the everlasting flavour of the Melanesian
O yes, hem i simple *laef olsem nomo*	Oh yes, it's the simple life, just like this
Spendem wetem lav, kea, honesty	Spend it with love, care, honesty
Sapos we klaod i kavaremap mi	When a cloud covers me
Wetem lelebet ren i foldaon	And there is a little rain
Bambae win i blo mo san i save saenem had blong mi	The wind will blow and the sun can shine on my heart
Wokabaot long tudak	I go for a walk in the darkness
Filim kolkol blong-o *munlaet*	I feel cold from the moonlight
Lukim flying bat i hanggri from ol mango tri	I see the flying fox hungry for the mango trees
Delaet i wekemap mi	The daylight wakes me up
Ol pijin oli stap singaot	The birds are singing
Ol faol i ronwe mo mi mekem plan blong ol wok blong mi	The chicken run away and I make my work plan for the day

When the song was finished, the musicians thought that it would better fit to the voice of a woman and thus asked ALSINA GARAE to engage in a unique project – a female lead singer (there are more male voices in parts in the chorus) in a stringband recording. It turned out to be a success.[814]

Stringband lyrics always show a strong connection to the reality of daily life and thus contribute to the formation of stringband music as a national music genre of Vanuatu.

6.2.2.4 Songs of Praise About the Islands

The plenty songs about the islands can be differentiated into:

[814] On occasion of Fest'Nalega, Alsina Garae performed the song together with the stringband (see also 2.2.8).

(1) songs about Vanuatu in general; a subcategory being songs which have been composed for tourism contexts,
(2) songs about the home island of the band
(3) songs about an island of Vanuatu not being the home island of the band, and
(4) songs about other places in the Pacific.

Any song of one of these four types can be written (or rather sung) from the perspective of the person who leaves for home – whether departing from Vanuatu, the home island, an island one has visited, or another place in the Pacific. This perspective can already be found in old songs from the Second World War (an example of such lyrics is published in Lindstrom & Gwero 1998: 291) and a pain of parting is associated with it. Sometimes it seems odd, especially in the case of songs for an audience of tourists, when the otherwise clearly maintained division between 'us' and 'you' is abolished.

Songs aiming at an audience of tourists have been sung since the 1970s in English or a mix of English and Bislama.[815] They portray the charms of Vanuatu ("most accessible live volcano", "white powder beaches", "crystal clear warm tropical waters", "waterfalls", "blue skies" and "*kastom* villages") in an idealized way.[816] "[T]he friendly natives in the Pacific" (FUTUNA MAHTUA), with their "hospitality", are part of this representation and "provide friendly services" for the visitors (DAUSAKE). Some of the phrases used in lyrics are slogans taken straight from the brochures of the tourism industry (such as "Vanuatu – the land of the unexpected" used by the NOISY BOYS in another song).

On the same album there might be lyrics that urgently warn against pollution in the Pacific, as well as others that depict Vanuatu as "the untouched paradise". Within the category of tourist songs there are songs to welcome[817] and to farewell the visitors.[818] Some musicians do not consider such songs important with regard to their transmitted messages but rather use them as fillers for new albums.

"Idealizations of the Primitive" (Keesing 2000: 242) can be observed in the tourist industry in Vanuatu, while "[w]arfare and violence [...] are carefully edited out of these reinvented pasts"

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[815] Examples of this type of songs are 'Beautiful Place' (SARATOKOWIA), 'Tourist' (STONEY BOYS), 'Aelan in the sunshine' (MAKURA TOKOLAU), 'Let Me Sing This Song For You' (VATDORO) and 'To Our Friends' (TOKOTAKIA). As far as the lyrics are concerned, 'Beautiful Vanuatu' by TOROTUA is very similar to the aforementioned song.

[816] These are mentioned in 'Oh my Vanuatu' (SARATOKOWIA), in 'To Our Friends' (TOKOTAKIA), 'Amazing Vanuatu' (NOISY BOYS) and 'Vanuatu the only Destination' (TOKORUA).

[817] For example, 'Tanna Beach Resort' (NOISY BOYS), 'Welkam Turist Bot' (LAEF KASTOM STRINGBAN), a song to welcome cruise ship passengers, and 'Just Fly' (SARATOKOWIA) which promotes Air Vanuatu.

[818] For example, 'Farewell Goodbye' (HUARERE).

(ibid.) at the same time.[819] Some lyrics point to the fact that Vanuatu is a "Christian" and "peaceful country", while a touch of "staged ethnicity" (Tilley 1997) is discernible in others.[820]

The experiences of a stringband in overseas finds expression in the lyrics of 'Taem mi Livim Kaontri' by SOUWIA; likewise, FUTUNA MAHTUA made their participation in a promotion tour to Australia and New Zealand a subject of a song.

There are several songs about the bands' home islands in which the free island life is confronted with the life in town. 'Peacole' [sic] by the STONEY BOYS depicts the placid life in the band's home village. Songs that highlight the beauty of the islands either reflect local patriotism or are a courtesy gesture to the communities that host touring bands (such as 'Tanna Tour' by MAGAWIARUA). MAKURA TOKOLAU's 'When the sunshine to the town' is a lavish praise of Port Vila. 'We Leave Our Homes' is a tour song by VATDORO and expresses the group's happiness about being in the capital, while their song 'Vanuatu Our Country That Wen [sic] Love' is a song of praise for the nation of Vanuatu.

'Sweet Home Lelepa' (DARA ROIA DONGA STRING BAND), 'Luli Village' (MAGAWIARUA /SARATOKOWIA), 'Peacole' [sic] (STONEY BOYS) and 'Vauleli Vilij – Ples blong mi' (DAUSAKE) are examples of songs about a particular island and village. In a song by the NOISY BOYS, the first-person narrator of the lyrics identifies himself proudly as a "Tanna boy". HUARERE's 'My Home Vanuatu' is a simple song about Vanuatu and 'Santo Bay' a similar one about a bay in Espiritu Santo, while the group makes an invocation to help developing the country in 'Country Blong Vanuatu'. Band members Edgar Hinge and Ben Siro told me that it is important to make songs which call upon the peoples' pride in their home island to secure their support (interview 2002). In these songs, villages, islands or Vanuatu as a whole are often addressed with the second person pronoun; a practise, which Webb also observes in songs in PNG.

6.2.2.5 Songs About Technical Achievements and Development

Many stringband lyrics address technical accomplishments or development in local or national contexts. The first photo laboratory in the country, for example, was an important

[819] See also Tilley (1997: 81).

[820] A particularly embarrassing example from this sector was the application of a trypot (a huge pot for the boiling of blubber, used in the production of whale oil) as a 'cannibal's kettle' in a photo studio in Port Vila downtown. Tourists were supposed to sit in the pot, flanked by two 'cannibals'. Fortunately, the VKS rescued the pot and transferred it to the National Museum; however the flames which were painted on the antique artefact, remain as a witness of its misuse.

improvement because now it was no longer necessary to send the films to New Caledonia or Australia for the processing which was perceived by the musicians as a "national achievement" (interview with John Apei 2004).[821] The introduction of the Vatu as Vanuatu's currency ('Vatu Mane' by FUTUNA MAHTUA and 'Planty Years I Pass' [sic] by VATDORO) and a new bridge are other examples. MAKURA TOKOLAU's '*Go raon long Toyota*' (about the first Toyota vehicle on Sulua plantation in Emae) was particular popular in the 1970s and is now a stringband classic. 'Telecomunication' [sic] by DAUSAKE addresses the developments in Vanuatu since World War II and the fact that now there are telephones on every island of the country. The song was published in 2001 and at the time of my fieldwork this was still as matters stood. Nowadays, people are less dependent on telephones shared by the community because of mobile telephones. With technology progressing, such songs are becoming a documentation of their time. This is, for example, also the case with 'Drive In Cinema' (ERRO STRINGBAND) about Vanuatu's only drive-in cinema which is long gone.

In 'Wata Saplae' the NOISY BOYS appreciate the Vanuatu government for constructing a water supply project ("It is like a dream, but it's not a dream, it's real" ("*Hem i kam olsem wan drim, be hem i no drim, i rel samting*"). ERRO STRINGBAND's second album is called "Jaksen Rod" [sic] ("Junction Road") and the title song (Track 33) is about the implementation of junctions in Vila (it is probably not by chance that one band member was a municipal police officer):

[…] *Janksen rod (Oh janksen rod*) […]	[…] Junction (Oh junction) […]
Yu dangerous	You are dangerous
Long Vila mo Santo taon	In Vila and Luganville
Evri ae i wajem yu janksen rod	All eyes are watching you, junction
Evri trak i mas kam long stop	All cars have to stop
Yu askem evriwan blong lukaot gud	You make everyone pay attention
Long evri kona, long evri kona	to all directions, to all directions

Band member John Apei told me that the intention of the composer Allan Lafuki was to present the junction in the song as a dangerous creature which can kill you if you do not stop.[822] The purpose of the lyrics of this song is to create awareness for the newly implemented junction and traffic signs amongst the population. In fact, the aspiration to inform and raise awareness is an important motivation for many stringband lyrics.

[821] Subject of 'Photo Express' by SOUWIA and another song with the same title by ERRO STRINGBAND.

[822] He said literally: "*Allan Lafuki nao i komposem. Hem i komposem olsem janksen rod hem i wan samting we hem i laef, i save kilim yu. Yu mas lukaot gud taem yu kam long janksen rod. Taem we janksen rod hem i talem se yu stop yu stop. Sapos yu go be hem i save kilim yu*" (interview with John Apei 2004).

6.2.2.6 'Awareness-Songs'

One main motivation of the production of new songs is stringband competitions and many subjects of stringband lyrics stem from the themes of competitions. In some competitions, guidelines are given concerning the contents of a new song which the musicians are to compose. They are meant to create awareness in the domains of education and child care, health programmes (such as prevention of diseases and healthy diet), agricultural produce, development and the environment. These songs about public concerns are important to the musicians and regarded as 'meaningful'. By way of staging competitions and commissioning compositions, stringbands are used by institutions as mediators. In 'Sensas', the NOISY BOYS call on their listeners to take part in the census and assure that it has nothing to do with politics but rather that it is important in developing the country. Other awareness songs are about vermin ('Rat Trabol Meka' by STONEY BOYS) or the Red Cross ('Red Kros' by TOKORUA).

'Environment' is a title often chosen for songs dealing with environmental issues.[823] Apart from nuclear tests ('Nuclear Free Pacific' by ERRO STRINGBAND and 'Aelan Moruroa' by LAUTANO)[824] and the issue of pollution and global warming, the topic of natural disasters is addressed in song texts ('Disaster' by DAUSAKE, 'Bay Marteli' by TOKORUA and 'Lake Siwi' by STONEY BOYS). The various forms of natural disasters were probably seldom recited as heartbreaking as in 'Tsunami' by TOKORUA. The song 'Saeklone Uma' (SOUWIA STRINGBAND) illustrates how stringband lyrics function as a chronicle of events:

Namba 7 February ya 1987,	On the 7th of February 1987
Strong saklone [sic] *Uma emi kasem Vanuatu,*	The strong cyclone Uma hit Vanuatu
Emi kosem bifgala [sic] damege,	It caused tremendous damage
Long Efate mo Tafea.	In Efate and Tafea
Oh dia saeklone Uma, […]	Oh dear cyclone Uma […][825]

Such depictions are often combined with a warning and instruction for better behaviour. 'Global warming' (STONEY BOYS) addresses the consequences of the global warming for the Pacific in its refrain:

Grin haos effect *i afektem* whole *wol tede*	The greenhouse effect affects the whole world now
Global warming *i kosem si level i kam antap*	The global warming causes a sea-level rise

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[823] For example, I detected three songs with this title by the stringbands STONEY BOYS, DAUSAKE and the joint album of MAGAWIARUA and SARATOKOWIA "Best of the Best" (published in the years 2002 and 2003).

[824] The members of ERRO STRINGBAND were well aware of the fact that they supported the policy of the VP which was against the French nuclear tests in the Pacific (interview with John Apei 2004).

[825] This is a quotation from the song list of Joel Kaltang. Original orthography by Kaltang.

Hem i wan denja long ol Pasifik aelan from solwora It is a danger to Pacific islands because the sea
I save draonem ol smolsmol aelan Can flood the small islands
Mo yumi save lusum laef long Pasifik And we can lose our lives in the Pacific

The children of George Pakoa, for example, have a different perspective on the environment. They composed a song about the beauty of the coral reef: "Beautiful coral reef, you are very colourful, like nice flowers of the sea" ("Beautiful *koral rif, yu kala-kalaful tumas, i olsem naes flaoa long solwota*").[826] In MAGAWIARUA/SARATOKOWIA's song 'Enviroment' [sic] the appeal to the listener is formulated with phrases like […] we (inclusive) have to recognise the importance of […] (*yumi mas luksave* importance *blong*) and then an enumeration follows (*namba wan…, namba tu* ... and so on). The phrases *wantok* (people from the same language community; in this case as an appellation), *olsem wan pipol* (as one people) and *yuniti* (unity) which are applied in this song are also meant to evoke a community spirit. The song text mentions various institutions and players in the field of environmentalism: the UN, NGOs and the "national and local political agenda". Eventually, "peace and unity in the beautiful Vanuatu" encourages investors.

The topic of health is frequently addressed in awareness songs. The song 'Moskito' is about malaria prevention (Track 35): These are the lyrics (without repetitions and paraphrased in the translation):

Long taem, taem bifo i kam sik-i-nes maleria hem i stap araon
From ples i doti tumas i mekem moskito i stap kam plante moa
Malaria has been around for a long time because of the dirty surroundings; these surroundings attract more and more mosquitos

Long kantri yumi lusum plante pipol blong yumi from sik maleria
Yumi mas folem ol program we hem i stap kamaot long malaria tim
In our country we have lost many people because of malaria; we should follow the advice which is given by the 'malaria team'

Moskito hem i laekem ples i gat fulap doti long hem
So yumi mas klinim ol ples long taon mo ol aelan b-i-long yumi
Blong stopem mama moskito i no dabolem hem k-o-losap long yumi
The mosquito likes dirty places, so we have to clean up in town as well as on the islands to stop the mosquito mother reproducing herself

Man ples yumi mas wokap, yumi mas bonemaot ol doti olbaot
Mo yumi mas katem ol bus mo kapsaetem doti wota i go aot
Locals, we have to wake up, we have to burn the rubbish all about
And we have to cut away the bush and scoop out the dirty water

[826] See also 6.2.2.4.

MAGAWIARUA achieved the first prize in a competition with the song 'Punpun Pikinini' which is about a children's disease and its prevention (interview with Jeffrey Thomson 2003). Many lyrics of awareness songs focus on children who are, as often stated, expected to help "*yumi*" ("us") in the future.[827] Children's Day is an occasion often chosen (for example 'Children Day' [sic] by STONEY BOYS and 'Pikinini' by TOKOTAKIA). Parents are addressed in 'Aelan Kakae' (TOKORUA), a song which promotes local food (also as a way to "protect our identity").

There are overlaps of song categories, for example songs which are about development and are meant to create awareness at the same time. In the case of 'Environment' by the STONEY BOYS the call for good treatment of the environment is combined with religious aspects, as the lyrics begin with the history of creation.

6.2.2.7 Religious Songs

During the missionary work era, religious songs were used early on so as to create new communities and identities. Many stringband songs have religious lyrics or are, in fact, stringband versions of hymns (for example 'Supe tea dodomi ngami' by DAUSAKE). These songs are not confined to church-related activities but are performed at any regular gig, including performances at hotels. Some church songs can be found in the repertoire of stringbands and are modified accordingly as in the Christmas classic 'Silent Night' (Gruber & Mohr) from MAGAWIARUA & SARATOKOWIA on their joint album "Best of the Best", Track 36). Another example is a version of 'Oh When the Saints' from the LUMBUKUTI BEACH BOYS which they fused in a medley with the melody of the American folk song 'She'll be coming round the mountain'.[828]

Often, no specific denomination is mentioned in the lyrics but the identification with Christianity, especially the belief in Jesus Christ, is evident. There are songs about Christian institutions such as the Onesua Presbyterian College ('Onesua Golden Jubilee' by YANG SOUWIA and another song with the same topic and title by LUKUNAEVA) or the song 'Presbyterian Jioj' (YANG SOUWIA), which is about the meeting of the presbyteries of Efate and its offshore islands.

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[827] Examples are 'Education' by STONEY BOYS as well as 'Edukesen' and 'Darkless William' by NOISY BOYS (probably 'Douglas William' is meant). The YOUNG BEACH BOYS even called one of their songs 'We are the future'.

[828] The DARA ROIA DONGA STRING BAND also adopted the melody of this piece in their vernacular song 'Tanakulip' on an album recorded at the VKS in 2001.

This category naturally also covers songs about the fate of early missionaries (see 6.2.2.2). The "conceptual structures of missionary discourse" identified by Kessing – "dualities of Christian light and heathen darkness, God and the Devil, good and evil, white and black" – (2000: 35) can be found in the lyrics of these songs.

There are generally many references to Christianity in stringband songs. Even if the content of a song is not explicitly religious, there might be, at the very end, a reference to Papa God or Jesus, or the guiding principle of Vanuatu – *Long God yumi stanap* (In God we stand).[829]

Songs about Christmas are included on many of those stringband albums which are released before Christmas (such as 'Christmas Song' by STONEY BOYS, 'Hapi Krismas' by ERRO STRINGBAND and possibly the vernacular song 'Jerusalem' by DARA ROIA DONGA STRING BAND). New Year's songs (*bonane singsing*) are occasionally also included on albums. At the performances that I witnessed, there were many religious lyrics in such songs; however, these observations may not be representative and published *bonane singsing* are often sung in a vernacular.[830]

Some songs revolve around characters from the Bible such as Goliath (DARA ROIA DONGA STRING BAND), 'Lazarus' (DAUSAKE) and, of course *Jisas* / *Yesu Kristo* ('Yesu Kristo' by TOKOTAKIA and 'Jesus is my captain' by MAKURA TOKOLAU).[831] Religious songs are either songs of praise ('Everlasting Father' by SHAKURA), give general advice, such as the study the Word of God in the bible as a means to find a way to live a better life ('New Millenium' by STONEY BOYS) or give examples of people turning to God in difficult situations.[832] 'Meriel's poem' by DAUSAKE smartly tells the story of a person who is always in a hurry and who does not find enough time to pray – which brings about her ruin on Doomsday. In contrast, 'Taem Mi Kat' by MAGAWIARUA/SARATOKOWIA is sung from the perspective of someone who gives up on life but who finds confidence through Jesus and, similarly, the lyrics of 'Kalabus' by (YANG) SOUWIA tell the story of a prisoner who is inspired with confidence because of Jesus. 'Mai N' (MAKURA TOKOLAU) is about someone who thanks the Lord for curing him of a grave sickness.

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[829] Webb detected references "to Papua New Guinea as a Christian country, which seems to imply an equation with being "civilized"" in songs. Stringbands in Vanuatu also use such references in tourist songs.

[830] Examples are 'Niu yea song' (ERRO STRINGBAND) and 'Bonne Annee' (DAUSAKE); the latter certainly being a religious song.

[831] The song 'Yesu' by the STONEY BOYS was entitled 'Yasur' on the album's cover by mistake. Yasur is the name of a volcano on Tanna Island. In fact, the song is about the crucifixion.

[832] Examples are 'Mi Askem Papa, Mama' and 'Blaen mi no luk' by ERRO STRINGBAND, both from the perspective of disabled people. They were composed on the occasion of the International Year of Disabled Persons (1981).

6.2.2.8 Love Songs and *mared singsing*

A great deal of stringband songs falls into this category. I classify a song as a 'love song' if the overall topic of the lyrics involves a love story, an episode that happens to a couple, efforts of a person who is in love with someone and other such matters. When a love story is told, it is a true story that has happened to people from the social environment of the one who wrote the lyrics or to himself.

Many love songs have the name of a girl as a title.[833] This is not surprising, as stringband song texts usually are from the male perspective. However, there are also titles with male names such as 'Loving Ernest' (YANG SOUWIA). The song 'Hey Nono' (DAUSAKE) is also a love song (Nono being the male part); however, it is the rendition of a love letter with the first words "Hey Nono" as a salutation.

During my fieldwork, I had the impression that girls from the island of Ambae, some with a fair complexion, as well as Polynesian girls (especially from the Cook Islands) are held in high esteem among (some) young males. This is reflected in some songs, for example 'Maeva' from LUKUNAEFA.

Love letters are a popular source for stringband lyrics. Someone told me that people should burn their letters to avoid someone finding or stealing it and handing it to a member of the local stringband. Otherwise a very intimate document might turn into a nationwide hit, as in the case of 'Hey Nono'. The entire lyrics of 'Hey Nono' are written as a letter. It is the letter of a woman to her lover who is younger than herself. She was giving him money but then he behaved in a way that leads her to suspect that he had somebody else. She feels sorry but is mad at him at the same time. Love letters are often mentioned in stringband songs. The 'sighing interjections' "*Awo*" and "*Awe*" often occur in songs, sometimes in combination with a girl's name. Examples are 'Awe Liza' (YANG SOUWIA), "*Awo Ammona*" in the song 'Ammona' and there are many others (Awo Simix, Awo Glorix, Awo Mwei etc.). A love song's first stanza very often contains the information that 'she smiled at him' which seems to be the typical rousing moment when two people fall in love. In countless songs, the first-person narrator asserts that he can never forget her (and that she shall never forget him).

The love songs from the northern part of Efate Island and its offshore islands often begin with the words 'Lei Aginau' (TOKOTAKIA); "*lei*" meaning "girl" in the vernacular. There are also

[833] Examples are 'Maeva' and 'Ammona' (LUKUNAEFA), 'Juliet' (MAGAWIARUA & SARATOKOWIA), 'Jessica', 'Eselyn' & 'Edna' (TOKOTAKIA), 'Lydia' (TOKORUA), 'Cynthia' (YANG SOUWIA), 'Oh Nicole' (SARATOKOWIA & SOUWIA), 'Joy' and 'Fiona' (HUARERE), 'Priscila' (STONEY BOYS) and 'Lenior blong mi' (LAUTANO).

variations, as in ‘Darling Lei Rose’ (SARATOKOWIA).

The emotions expressed in love songs are predominantly love, longing and sadness. This is an important feature of the genre, just like the theme of ‘saudade’ in Portuguese fado music or the emotional states expressed in many blues songs. However, it needs to be stressed that there are many funny stringband lyrics (as there are funny blues lyrics), even funny love songs – for example, when the emotions mentioned above are exaggerated or otherwise ridiculed. Often, the longing is expressed through expressions like *mi ded long yu* (I am really keen on you)[834] and *mi krangke long yu* (I am crazy for you).

The songs usually tell the story of two lovers, whether with a bad ending or an open but bad ending by tendency; the very least being a feeling of longing without any hints that it will be fulfilled as in ‘Cynthia’ (YANG SOUWIA), a *tri step* version of ‘La Paloma’.[835] Exemplary is the song ‘Laki Aftanun’ from TOKOTAKIA: the narrator is in love with a girl and remembers the shared lucky moments. He longs for her because they are in two different locations (Santo and Vila). Her family does not like him, he is unlucky. The feeling of longing is the determinant emotion in stringband love songs and results from the fact that the lovers are apart whether spatially (as in ‘Broken Heart’ by MAGAWIARUA & SARATOKOWIA), or because the girl does not like him anymore. Another popular option is that her family is against the relationship (for example ‘Awo Simix’ by SARATOKOWIA). Cheating is another reason for unhappiness in stringband songs (for example ‘Oh! my sweetly darling’ by MAKURA TOKOLAU and ‘Awe Liza’ see 6.1). Some lyrics are a fierce payoff with the former lover (and thus actually should be categorised as ‘fall out of love songs’).[836]

On many occasions different interlocutors assured me that the lyrics of a stringband song are taken from real life. One cannot do otherwise but wonder how unlucky ni-Vanuatu lovers must be if – at least according to stringband songs – most of their relationships come to a bad ending. A possible explanation is that the commissioners of songs take consolation from these songs. Evidently, the more dramatic stories are, the more they are regarded as appropriate for songs and thus, there are no songs about fortunate lovers and happy ends.

While love songs surely make up a vast proportion of popular music songs of many styles worldwide, one of the most popular groups of Vanuatu, NAIO (playing *rege*), does not have

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[834] This is the translation by Crowley (1995: 61).

[835] Apparently, the fondness for such stories in lyrics has its analogy in PNG: “Many Central stringband song texts refer to the aftermath of a failed relationship; usually the singer laments the loss of a lover” (Niles 1994: 86).

[836] Examples are ‘Last year long 1976’ and ‘Yestedei mi ko daon long Santo taon’ (MAKURA TOKOLAU).

even a single love song on one of their albums. This is not due to personal preferences but because of the notions of respect and the social dealings with the topic of 'love' in their home community on Tanna Island. The stringband NOISY BOYS, coming from the same area, modified the topic and published a wedding song as well as another song about a young bachelor who sadly unveils that he longs for a companion in life.

Despite the fact that the topics surrounding (reciprocal) attraction probably constitutes the majority of texts sung in stringband songs, sexuality is omitted. Sexual innuendoes are rare and otherwise inoffensive by Western standards. Obscene language does not occur at all and is despised by musicians (at least in songs). Thus, a huge group of themes is out of the question which is crucial in some genres of Western popular music.[837] The members of the all-female MAUNA STRINGBAND play only a few love songs, from fear of exciting the men in the audience (interview with Maria Manua 2002).

'Priscila' (STONEY BOYS) is the story of a boy from West Ambrym who came to stay in the south-eastern part of the island. There he fell in love but was rejected by Priscila. When I asked the band why they did not mention the boy's name, I was told that this was out of consideration for the people in West Ambrym. The STONEY BOYS did not want to record many love songs but "meaningful songs" instead. However, 'Priscila' was already popular on the island and it was clear that many people would buy the album only because of this song. When asked whether a love song could be meaningful too, the musicians answered that the meaning of such songs is especially felt by those concerned. Many musicians do not consider love songs in stringband music as profound; however, they think that they are very popular among the listeners.

Mared singsing are often in a vernacular language which attests to their local, maybe even private character. Often they are plainly titled 'Mared singsing', 'Singsing Long Mared' or 'Mared song'.[838] Tony Alvos explained to me during my interview with LUKUNAEVA (2003) why there are so many wedding songs: "You might find out that in the culture of the people from Efate, stringband music is very important; at weddings, there has to be a stringband" (putting a strong emphasis on the last sentence).[839]

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[837] Obscenities occur in traditional songs (see for example Lindstrom 1998: 706 and Lynch 1923: 196). For the domain of *pop miusik* see 6.3.

[838] Examples are 'Mared Song' by (YANG) SOUWIA, 'Singsing Long Mared' by DARA ROIA DONGA STRING BAND, 'Bigfala Mared' by NOISY BOYS and 'Marriage Song' by MAGAWIARUA.

[839] "*Be ating bae yu faenem aot long Efate se kalja blong Efate naoia hem i stap, stringban hem i impoten, long mared i mas gat stringban*".

6.2.2.9 Other Songs

To put an end to the list of categories, I collect all the other types of lyrics under this heading. Some stringband songs have a funny text which has no deeper meaning or the songs are, in fact, children's songs, for example 'Pupu John' (recorded by DAUSAKE). A special case (because it is the cover version of a Western song) is the song 'The Only Man' which is DAUSAKE's interpretation of LARRY HOOPER's 'I'm the Only Man on the Island'. Stringband veteran George Pakoa (MAKURA TOKOLAU) has the impression that many groups nowadays compose and perform nonsense songs in spite of the fact there are enough serious issues to sing about. However, in my interviews, many young stringband musicians, even without being asked, stressed that one should produce meaningful songs and that the message of a song is important. Besides, there are also older songs with quite plain lyrics (such as 'Liklik Tinfis' by STONEY BOYS).

Despite the fact that there are strained relationships between some stringbands, I did not encounter examples of feuds between groups reflected in lyrics (like in other genres as US-American rap or Nigerian jùjú; see Waterman 1990: 23). On the contrary, a demonstration of unity amongst the stringbands of a particular island or even beyond occasionally occurs. 'Friendly String Band' (LUKUNAEVA) promotes the "sound and style" ("*saon mo stael*") of Efate stringbands, while acknowledging that there are more stringbands to the north and south of the country. In 'Sounds of North Efate' Dausake mention the Fest'Nalega and its venue Saralana stage before claiming that "our local music shows that the stringband genre stems from the people of Efate" ("*lokol miusik blong yumi soemaot se stringban hem i blong ol man Fate*")[840]; followed by an enumeration of stringbands from the area. There are several songs about stringbands and stringband music in general.[841]

With their 'Welkam Song Blong FOL 1979', SOUWIA welcome "white, black and yellow" spectators ("*waeti man, blak, yala man*") who have the opportunity to see "many of our stringbands of the New Hebrides" ("*Yu save lukim plante stringban long yumi Niu Hebridis*"). One song from TUKI IMERE is about a show on the first of May 1982 at the FOL and VATDORO sing in 'I Leave Me [sic] Home' about their participation in a competition in Luganville.

[840] The phrase "*hem i blong*" can also mean "it belongs to"; however, in this context I suspect that the first given meaning is correct.

[841] In one of the songs on the fourth album of the WESTERN BOYS, the lyrics contain a passage in which Richard, the group's lead singer, sings "Many people think that the Western Boys already dissolved (literally: are dead) but this is my voice and the sound of the Western Boys" ("*Plante man i ting se Western Boys i ded finis be hemia nao voes blong mi mo saon blong Western Boys*" (interview with Moses Stevens 2004; Stevens recited the passage from memory and was not sure about the exact wording).

'Sauwia Casette' [sic] is an old song of SOUWIA[842] which was published again by YANG SOUWIA under the title 'Natau 1977'.

Another type of songs is called *welkam singsing*. These are from the perspective of the stringband and address the audience.[843] Welcome songs are composed to greet visitors, such as people who gather at the TAFEA Show ('Tafea Soa' by NOISY BOYS), touring politicians or artists from abroad ('Melanesian Arts Festival' by DAUSAKE). According to John Apei many *welkam singsing* arose in the 1970s when rural stringbands composed them to greet the arriving campaign teams. The stringband's name is often mentioned in 'tour songs', as well as in welcome and farewell songs. Sometimes it is abbreviated and complemented with 'LSB' (*lokol string band*), for example 'LLSB' for LUKUNAEVA LOKOL STRING BAND.

It has been mentioned that some songs from the repertoire of a stringband are taken from their local traditional genres. These songs have been arranged for the stringband and are sung in the vernacular. For example, ERRO STRINGBAND had a song about a council of chiefs, a local authority on Erromango Island (interview with John Apei 2004).

Among yet other topics which have not been mentioned so far are, for example, a song about the language of south-east Ambae (COOL SHADOW STRINGBAND), songs which compliment respected chiefs (composed during their lifetimes), parents (either the mother or the father) or friends.[844] In marked contrast to these, there are songs in which individuals are criticised for bad behaviour in personal matters. The vast majority of such songs address former lovers which are accused of jealousy, contentiousness or unfaithfulness. However, there are also songs such as 'No mata yu laf long mi' (MAKURA TOKOLAU) in which the addressee is not clearly identified. The lyrics of this song are about a disrespectful and arrogant person to whom the objection is brought up in the song's chorus:

No mata yu laf long-o *mi*	Even though you laugh at me
Yumitufala wan-i *kaen*-i *nomo*	Both of us are yet the same

[842] I found it on the list of Joel Kaltang.

[843] For example 'All Friends Hello' by VATDORO, 'Welcome' by HUARERE, 'Welcome Song' by YOUNG BEACH BOYS & 'Strinban Salo' [sic] by LAEF KASTOM STRINGBAN.

[844] In HUARERE's 'From Wanem' it is not clear whether a relative or a friend is meant; anyhow the lyrics are about an important, upright person.

6.3 Lyrics in *pop miusik*

Pop musician DAVID ANDREW told me that music and lyrics have to fit to each other and that the choice of language plays a part in this. He would not sing a vernacular song text in jazz or blues music. Although he has no reservations in this respect, he thinks that some people on the island (the language community) would not appreciate it (interview with David Andrew Iaukou Ruben Holden 2004). Singer ALSINA GARAE holds the opinion that songs of the type *aelan ballad*/*Pasifik slo* should be about the life in the Pacific; consequently, it would not fit to create lyrics about 9/11 for a *Pasifik slo*. For such a song, one should choose rap or hip-hop in her opinion. Everyone, worldwide, thinks of America when listening to these types of music, she says. Instead, a *Pasifik slo* may address topics such as the nuclear testing on Mururoa, oil films on the ocean or origin myths and the ancestors' voyages with outrigger canoes (interview with Alsina Garae 2003).[845] In *pop miusik*, borrowed traditional melodies are occasionally used detached from the original lyrics (for example Henry Toka wrote new lyrics to a *kastom* tune; the song 'Hioaove' by TROPIC TEMPO).[846] Musician Jesse Temar (LONWOLWOL) points out that while the rhythm of a *kastom singsing* may be used in *pop miusik,* its lyrics must not. For example, people in West Ambrym sing songs they adopted from the island of Malekula and thus sing lyrics in a language they do not understand. Their traditional repertoire of songs also contains some local pieces in languages which are not understood anymore. Because of the fact that the meaning of the text is unknown, people would not sing these in public for fear of black magic (interview with Jesse Temar and Ramel Bong 2003).

The use of the English language is a way in which to affiliate oneself to global pop scenes and enables pop musicians to approach international markets. Some popular music in Vanuatu is influenced by international religious music, such as Gospel. The examples from overseas are in English and thus, it seems natural for ni-Vanuatu pop musicians to use English. This is especially true for young female singers such as VANESSA QUAI, LAISA BOEDORO and ELLEN ISSACHAR who follow in the footsteps of their idols. English is the most used language in *pop miusik*, yet there is a forum for French – in marked contrast to stringband lyrics. Francophone

[845] However, love songs and other uncritical lyrics predominate in these pop ballads.

[846] I did not encounter any such case in stringband music. However, *bolo* and *sawagoro* rhythms are used in stringband music of Ambae for 'usual' stringband songs (that is, not only traditional songs played by a stringband).

musicians are more likely to go to New Caledonia (or at least more of them plan to do so) for concerts and recording sessions. Some musicians, such as young Bill und John from the group AMBASSADORS, even sing some of their own songs in French, although they do not have command of the language (they asked someone to help with the translation and pronunciation during the process of composition). In the 1980s, BLACK REVOLUTION sung one song in Spanish, a language which some members had learnt at the Lycée (interview with Jean-Baptiste Kalo 2003). Pop musicians who entertain tourists occasionally embrace suggestions from the audience and thus learn to sing songs in yet other languages.[847] The application of vernacular lyrics in *pop miusik* often carries language ideological connotations, namely an appeal of world music, and this is in stark contrast to vernacular stringband lyrics.[848] Code switching does not occur often in *pop miusik*, the languages are kept more separate from each other than in stringband music.

In 6.1 genre-specific 'key utterances' in stringband music are presented. Reggae-specific expressions are also used in *rege*, namely Jamaican Patois terms which are either used as prominent single shouts or in the flow of the song text. They function as 'reggae-markers' not only in Vanuatu but also in other international reggae music. I found that some are not really understood or are even invented by the musicians who applied them to 'flavour' their music.[849]

Sometimes, Tok Pisin is used in *pop miusik*, and in some cases commercial interests predominate.[850] The BLACK BROTHERS had songs on their cassettes about the fight for freedom for West Papua, sung in Tok Pisin (interview with Leonarnd Willie 2002). In 'Wan Gud Wan' (XX SQUAD) Mars Melto performs a ragga part (speech song) with more or less nonsense text, part of which are made-up words, neither English nor Bislama (Track 37; interview with Mars Melto 2002). I never came across such totally fabricated language in stringband songs. As compared to stringband songs, the insertion of vowels is rare in *pop miusik* ('Wan Gud Wan' being an example, see the quotation of the lyrics below).

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[847] For example, much to my surprise, FRANÇOIS VINCENT AISSAV spontaneously recited the German song "Siebzehn Jahr, blondes Haar" by UDO JÜRGENS when he heard that I am a German.

[848] A pop group which has been a stringband before, might transfer their vernacular stringband songs to *pop miusik* without any ulterior motives with respect to marketing.

[849] At the end of the song 'Hopeless', singer Gero of the group NAIO plays with the popular phrase "Jah bless!", rhyming it with "jobless".

[850] For example, TIM KALMET recorded and published two albums in Port Moresby to interest listeners in PNG (interview with Timteo Kalmet 2003). In contrast, ALBEA NALISA imitated the parlance and upbeat style of music from PNG in his release in 1998 because it was the fashion of the time. However, the album was not released in PNG and he did not target on an audience in PNG (interview with Albea Nalisa 2003).

Some pop groups intentionally refrain from singing about love, a popular example being NAIO.[851] The REAL SURVIVORS wish to shield children from the topic 'love' and refuse to expose couples by singing about their relationship – in contrast to stringbands (interview with Mark Hensley 2004). However, different from NAIO or the AMBASSADORS, a young group of SDA-parishoners, this has nothing to do with either *kastom* or church rules. Generally speaking, however, 'love' is a recurring topic in the repertoire of most pop groups in Vanuatu.

Rege bands often sing about freedom and peace, although not referring to Vanuatu but in more general terms as overriding merits. Politics and *rege* are associated since the BLACK BROTHERS introduced reggae in Vanuatu. Lyrics about love, peace, freedom, unity as well as those critical of the 'Babylon system' are inevitably repetitive and some clichés can be found in many songs. Many *rege* songs refer to reggae music (such as 'Reggae Music' by VATDORO) or a stereotyped and somewhat outdated Jamaican (or global) 'rasta rebel mentality' (such as 'Rastaman Personality' by NAIO). Lyrics of a different kind stick out all the more. The drama group Wan Smolbag composes songs for their plays and films and also publishes them on cassettes. Many of the lyrics are written by the British Jo Dorras, sometimes together with musicians.[852] The necessity that the songs match with the topics of the drama or film projects ensures that the song's lyrics are different from most lyrics written by ni-Vanuatu. For example, Dorras wrote the song 'Shame' about a girl who had been molested by her uncle.[853] Other critical and political songs are contributed by ni-Vanuatu, for example 'Swit Maot' by NEIL NIMOHO (a song about the insincerity of campaign pledges) and 'Bred I No Enaf' by HENRY TOKA. The latter is a song about desire in which also adultery is addressed – however, in contrast to stringband lyrics which take up the subject-matter, it is not framed as an allegation but is from the perspective of the (potential) adulterer. This is the second verse and the chorus:[854]

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[851] According to musicians from Tanna, it is accepted to sing love songs if these are cover versions (for example by BOB MARLEY & THE WAILERS) and not originate from the community. There is another possibility for the band to circumvent its rule of avoiding love lyrics. One of the band's songs is about a town the group visited on a tour overseas. This town is praised and addressed as if it was a person and in fact, the song lyrics are about a girl from that place (personal communication with Jimmy Nakapue Barrett Sampson, the band's bass player, 2003).

[852] Most of them are in English which is required for projects which circulate also in other parts of the Pacific region.

[853] WILLINE TOKA, sister of Henry Toka, managed to convey the message despite the sensitive topic. According to Dorras, she has an unusual, outstanding voice and is also a good composer. Willine Toka now lives in Australia (interview with Jo Dorras 2003).

[854] Original orthography of the rendition of the lyrics in the liner notes of the cassette "Vot Long Pati Ia!".

Mi mi luk ol gel ia long taon	I see the girls there in town
Mi mi wandem gat wan	I want to have one
Oli dresap gud mo oli nais tumas	They dress well and they are very attractive
Mi mi wandem gat wan	I want to have one
Bae mi kasem wan blong mi	I'll take one for myself
Woman blong mi i stap long aelan	My wife stays on the island
Bae i no save wan samting	She won't suspect anything [repeated]
Yu mi evriwan, I hungri from	You, me, everyone hunger for something [repeated]
Bred I no enaf blong satisfaem hungri ia	There is not enough bread to satisfy this hunger

At the time of my fieldwork, XX SQUAD stood out for their critical and political lyrics, for example 'Illegal Connections' (about greedy politicians) and 'Wan Gud Wan' about gossiping (Track 37); this is the first stanza of the latter:

Fulap blong olgeta bambae oli talem-a *se*	Many of them will say
Wanem nem blong yu mo yu blong wea?	What is your name and where are you from?
Sot taem afta bambae yu harem-a *se*	Short time after you'll hear
Ful Port Vila taon i stap tokbaot yu, yeah	Whole Port Vila is talking about you, yeah

The REAL SURVIVORS have a constitution in which they define their vision of peace and unity for people of all cultures within the society they seek to promote with their music (interview with Mark Hensley 2004). When I asked if they would also approach political topics, Hensley said that they would do so on demand.[855] The group wrote a song for the UMP; however, they are also content to do so for Vanua'aku Pati or any other party. In fact, the REAL SURVIVORS do not want to associate with a party in order to stay flexible and to avoid that they are not invited by a community because of their party affiliation.[856] Other musicians, such as the francophone and Catholic members of ALIZE, are indeed supportive of one party (the UMP).[857] In contrast to the domain of stringband music, Vanuatu's independence is no longer a popular topic in *pop miusik*.

Some pop songs relate to the local or regional level, such as NAIO's song 'Tanna International' about Whitegrass Airport on Tanna Island or KROS ROD's 'Tafea' about Tafea Football Club. As there are rarely competitions between pop groups, the typical, awareness-raising subjects of stringband songs rarely appear in pop lyrics. There are, however, songs about the necessity to protect the environment (such as 'Mururoa' by VATDORO).[858] It is striking that specific

[855] He said literally: "*Sapos oli rikwestem*".
[856] This principle of 'neutrality' is established in the group's constitution.
[857] Interview with Gaëtan Telemb 2003. This case is a prime example of the typical correlation between music, politics, religion and language.
[858] This song is from the phase when VATDORO had changed to a pop group.

locations, names of persons and time specifications occur rarely in *pop miusik* as compared to stringband music.

Pop miusik lyrics are clearly less qualified for the purpose of serving as an oral archive than stringband lyrics, as they are often more abstract, ambiguous and/or fictitious. Some lyrics in *pop miusik* express dreams and wishes, while others reflect on life. The topics 'love' and 'religion' are the common ground of lyrics in stringband music and *pop miusik*.

Whether the listeners really notice the lyrics of a song surely depends on the context of reception. Singer Julian Ligo (BRATAZ VIBRATION) stated that the chorus is most important. While the stanzas just occur once, the chorus is repeated. Thus, people will hear what is sung in the chorus and this message has to get through, also in terms of audibility.[859] People come to the club to dance because they like the rhythm of the music. At home, Ligo said, they listen more closely and then they perceive your message (interview with Julian Ligo 2002). BRATAZ VIBRATION collect their song texts in a computer at the group's house.

When stringband songs are being recorded, the processes of composition, arrangement and rehearsing usually are already accomplished. In contrast, pop musicians sometimes have the possibility to work differently. ALBEA NALISA, for example, recorded instrumental tracks first and then used this inspiration to create the vocals afterwards (interview 2003).

Musician Bob Kuao hints to the fact that instrumental pieces do not have barriers for the comprehensibility (interview 2003). There is nevertheless not much instrumental music, although there are certainly more instrumental passages in *pop miusik* as compared to stringband music, especially because of there being more instrumental solos.

[859] Musicians such as Ligo and John Kapala (KROS ROD) use the term '*prijimaot*' to refer to the conveying of a message in a song.

7 Stringbands as Social Groups

This chapter is about the concept 'stringband' which is quite different from the underlying concepts and structures of, for example, Western pop music groups. Following a description of some of the musicians' motivations for starting up a stringband (7.1), the names which musicians give themselves and their groups are discussed (7.2). The composition of the groups (7.3) is particularly interesting in relation to the topic of identity. Many musicians in Vanuatu favour the foundation of some sort of organisation to represent them and meet their needs. In fact, there are attempts to organise musicians into music associations; these are briefly depicted in 7.4. Economic endeavour is a crucial motivation for most stringbands; aspects surrounding the topic of earning money with stringband music are discussed in 7.5. Some stringbands manage to get financial or other support from sponsors and politicians (7.6). The chapter is rounded off with a presentation of some of the reasons for ending a stringband (7.7).

7.1 Motivations for Starting up a Stringband

Apart from snorkelling and fishing at the reef, playing football or hunting wild pigs, playing stringband music is a popular leisure activity amongst the male youth in the islands (*kilim taem*).[860] Many stringband musicians belong to groups simply because there is nothing else to do, because of the general popularity of stringband music and/or because of their personal love for music. This latter aspect is often pronounced by young stringband musicians. In other cases, the wish to take part in a particular stringband competition was the motivation for founding a band (for example this was the case with the ERRO STRINGBAND). However, the vast majority of my interlocutors named two advantages of stringband music of their own accord, that is (1) the possibility to earn some money with it ("*winim smol mane*/*vatu*"), and (2), to keep the young men occupied:

[860] Stern makes a similar observation with respect to young people in Port Vila (2014: 7).

> "Maybe one reason why they think of playing is because otherwise they'd do nothing. They are idle but they have the talent to play music. So instead of hanging around they decide that they try to use their talent" (senior member of NAAHU TRIBES, interview 2003).[861]

One of the options for unemployed school dropouts (*SPR*, an abbreviation for the slang expression *sperem pablik rod*, to hit the public road) is to play stringband music because it offers at least the theoretical possibility of earning some money. Founding a stringband to create a decent occupation for boys and young men can either follow the initiative of the youth themselves, or of more experienced adult men. A common motive is to preventing the boys from going astray and causing trouble out of boredom. The case of MAGAWIARUA is a typical example: Initially, only two members had jobs and a regular income. Playing music helped to contribute to the earnings of the bunch of boys (interviews with Jeffrey Thomson 2003 & with MAGAWIARUA 2003). Other motivations to start a group which might come in combination with those mentioned above, are the intention to keep the boys from the island community together, or, as in the case of TOTAS LOCAL STRINGBAND, to commemorate a certain event (see 6.2.2.1).

As has been pointed out in Chapter 3, it is comparably cheap and easy to obtain the necessary instruments and equipment to start a stringband. Yet, there is a need for some money. In the run-up to actual music- making, a stringband-to-be engages its members by involving them in various tasks which yield some cash, so as to purchase guitars and a few other necessary things. Thus, from the very beginning, thorough organisation is necessary. The boys scoop out copra, work in other people's gardens, clear the bush and receive some vatu in return. Senior stringband musician Joel Kaltang reported that as far back as his father's generation (that is, the first generation), stringband musicians started in this way, supporting the community in exchange for a little payment – so to say as the 'youth programme' of former times, as he called it ("*Hem i wan yut program blong olgeta bifo*", interview with Joel Kaltang 2002). Back then, when the payment of musicians was very low, such little jobs also contributed to the income of a stringband. The prospect of earning money with stringband music was in fact the initial motivation to found (the old) SOUWIA (see 2.2.5.5). The first step was to build a committee (see 7.3.2), the second to obtain the instruments.

An agenda of many stringbands is the raising and saving of money until the day that one of its members gets married, this either being a Christian church wedding or a traditional matrimony

[861]"*Ating olgeta, taem oli tingting blong plei… ating wan* reason *from oli stap nating. Oli stap nating be oli gat* talent *blong plei miusik.* So instead *blong oli stap nating, oli* decide *blong oli save traem blong yusum wan* talent *blong olgeta.*"

(*kastom mared,* often simply referred to as *pem woman/waef,* “pay bride price”). The bride price which has to be paid for a traditional wedding can be very high (at the time of fieldwork a standard sum was 80 000 vt (about 570 €) which seemed to have been exhausted quite often).[862]

There are also examples of bands being founded in order to reintegrate those who have become criminal and to prevent them from re-offending. Former francophone teacher and, since 1977, police man John ‘Beri’ Willie from Tongoa decided that he would eventually accede to the work of his father who was a *jif*. As a first step to shoulder responsibility and in order to show his aptitude to the community, Willie wanted to start with straighting things out in his own family. It is fair to say that, in 1989, Willie founded a pop group as part of his preparations in becoming *jif*. The BLUE CYCLE band was employed to reintegrate three of his brothers who were serving their sentence at the time.[863] To make sure that a working group was installed when they were released from prison, he recruited various musicians. In retrospect, Willie feels vindicated: given the fact that his brothers even fought the police (24 years were given to one of them) it means something that Willie’s achievements in taming his brothers are even accredited by the police (interview with John ‘Beri’ Willie 2004).[864]

In most places around Vanuatu, there is no additional need to found a stringband; often, the group is already there and its members simply have to regroup after a pause – the group then often carries the same name.

[862] The national Council of Chiefs, Malvatumauri, had imposed a bride price of 80 000 vt “when a marriage involved a woman from another island”; however, this was stopped in 2014 (Cullwick 2014: 1). If a man has ambitions to become a chief, it can be important to marry traditionally. John ‘Beri’ Willie told me that he preferred to follow in the footsteps of his father instead of marrying in church which would have made him a “nobody” (“*John nating*”, interview 2004).

[863] Willie literally said: “*Oli kakae ol yia ya*” (interview with John ‘Beri’ Willie 2004).

[864] In varying degrees studies about popular cultures and musics stress the unruly character and rebellious energy of these and construct them as ‘counter-cultures’. For the very reason that there are also many examples of popular musics in the world where this is not the case, it should be more often stressed that subversion and opposition – if only in the form of a freakish outlook, respectively non-conformist conduct – are not necessarily part of a popular culture.

7.2 Musicians' Names

7.2.1 Individuals' Names

As with orthography in general, sometimes more than one spelling of a personal name circulates in Vanuatu.[865] Often the unvoiced sound 'k' and the voiced sound 'g' [as well as 't' and 'd' and also 'p' and 'b'] are interchanged. For example, some of my interlocutors would write the surname of Paul Gardissat as Katisa. Speakers of some of the many languages in Vanuatu add additional vowels to names or fit them into words between consonants.[866] Besides, individuals often go under various different names. The following anecdote may serve as an example: the musician Moses Stevens told me that his mother's family name was originally Stephen. He received a ukulele from his mother when he was a child. She engraved this name in the instrument's head with a hot wire but did not know how to spell it properly, so she inscribed it with 'v'. When he entered Malapoa College, only his father's chief title was given, a name he could not use, because this was the right of his elder brother. So he used his mother's name and spelled it with 'v'. Using the opportunity, he added 's' in the ending, so his name became Stevens – like a name he had once come across in a book. Through his usage in secondary school the name became official, although the name Jeneri is used within his family. His passport says: Jeneri, Moses Stevens. Moses used 'Stevens' for his further career at the radio, and within the music scene of Port Vila he is known as Moses Stevens.

The usage of at least two names (first name and surname) is a habit introduced from the occident. Ni-Vanuatu distinguish European names (*nem blong waetman*) from local names. When a child is born in Vanuatu, it usually receives an English or French name and a local name as a first name but European family names are also common. This is due to Europeans marrying into ni-Vanuatu families, for example, in the case of disc jockey Maraki Samuel's family. The incident of the liaison goes back to the blackbirding days. Maraki Samuel told me that his kinsfolk found it difficult to pronounce the European's family name and thus chose his first name, Samuel, as their family name instead.[867] There are other cases of European surnames used as second names (such as my interlocutors with the surnames Daniel, Jacob, Louis, Michel, Martin, Peter and Andrew).

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[865] It is not my objective to discuss ni-Vanuatu names here at length, yet some comments are necessary to avoid misunderstanding and to hint to possible problems with the identification of the persons mentioned in the text.

[866] Paul Gardissat told me that people in Tanna add vowels to given names, like Paulo (Paul), Jacko (Jack) and so on (interview with Paul Gardissat 2003). This corresponds to practice in Fiji, where vowels are inserted between the consonants of foreign names (see for example Ellerich 2008: 40).

[867] Interview with Maraki Samuel 2002.

At least in some communities, relatives contribute names to new born children. David Andrew Iaukou Ruben Holden, who comes from a big family in Tanna, told me that only three of his names are written down in his passport. Apparently names can be chosen quite freely in Vanuatu, so it is possible to meet people with names like George Washington or James Bond (at least as part of their full name). Some people, men and women alike, take on chiefly titles to which they refer as *kastom nem*.[868] Depending on the prevailing local traditions, the *kastom nem* may depend on rank taking which can be connected to certain areas of land (or the right to use them). Many young men use their father's name. Musician John Kapala, for example, uses his father's name, Thomas, but in the domain of music and other things of permanence, he uses his *kastom nem*, Kapala.

The matter is further complicated through the usage of 'music names', that is alias names used in the domain of music, and, of course, nick names. John Willie from Lumbukuti (Tongoa Island), for example, is well known as John Beri, and Joel Malesi called himself JOE MAX since his second solo album, while SAMSON ANDREWS 'FENDER' even carries the brand name of a famous manufacturer of musical instruments in his name. Singer Alsina Garae temporary used the 'stage name' ALSINGLE which she emphasised by also naming a song about herself 'Alsingle' ("Music live on", SINA Recording Studio 2000).[869] The greater prevalence of music names amongst pop musicians as compared to stringband musicians attests to the pronunciation of individuality in the *pop miusik* realm. In the booklet of the NEW ETHNIC's CD album "Roots Man" nick names of the band members are given in brackets.[870]

Such names can also be found in some booklets of stringband cassettes – however for different reasons. Some musicians fear jealousy and even sorcery (*blak majik*). For this reason, pseudonyms are used in some covers of stringband cassettes, or the assignment of names to the instruments in the line-up is interchanged. When I spoke with Jeffrey Thomson about MAGAWIARUA's album "17th anniversary, Vol. 5", he said that people are envious of the

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[868] Some refer to it as *nem long lanwis*, literally "the name in the vernacular".

[869] The artist names SAMMY G, MANBUS, WEIV 2000, PACIFIC BOE and BEEMAN stand also for individual artists. Of course some solo artists use their usual name, for example ALBEA NALISA, REYNOLDS HERERA, ELLEN ISACHAAR and VANESSA QUAI.

[870] Pustat, Eye Kris, Steamer, Sun Down, Rocket, Sumo, D2, Cookie, Comic and Moonlight. D2, for example, came up just because there are two Davids in the group. However, these names are only used within the band and nowhere else in the VMF camp (all the band members are soldiers) or beyond (interview with David Daniel 2003).

stringband's popularity. If the instrument or his function within the group can be related to his name, people might use black magic to ruin his voice, for example.[871]

As can be seen from this subchapter, at least some of my interlocutors had a spectrum of names to choose from when I asked them their 'name', and some told me that they actually use different names according to the context. David Andrew recorded solo albums in Port Moresby, PNG with a backing band by the name of THUNDERBALLS. He called himself FLASH, just because it fitted to their name (at live shows they were announced: "Live on stage: FLASH AND THE THUNDERBALLS"; interview with David Andrew Iaukou Ruben Holden 2004).

7.2.2 Band Names

The groups SOUWIA and STONEY BOYS are examples of young bands which took the name of another stringband that had ceased to exist many years earlier. The idea is to use a name that is already popular instead of creating a new one which nobody had ever heard before. Of course, in these cases there are close family ties between the members of the first and those of the second line-up. Sometimes these groups add 'YANG' to their band name, as the YANG BEACH BOYS, or they add 'II', like SARATOKOWIA II.

The dynamics of such a practice become clearer when contrasted with a different view – Moses Stevens is one of the few who object to this form of tradition. He told me that George, one of the original members of the WESTERN BOYS, practised with some youth and took them to the Shepherds Studio to record an album. They used the name of WESTERN BOYS again. Stevens holds the opinion that they should have chosen a different name because WESTERN BOYS is a trade name with which people connect a certain style. So far others also agree and in fact this is the very reason why they have decided to use the old name. Stevens, media officer of the Vanuatu Football Federation by trade, accepts this for football teams – stars are bought, players change but the name of the team stays the same. Music, however, he explained to me, is a form of art – just like the artworks of Sero, a painter from Vanuatu. Sero's children, Stevens said, could not declare their own works as being those of Sero. With stringband music it is the same: the way particular musicians play is unique. The 'YANG' SOUWIA, an appearance of recent years, is a different group than SOUWIA as Stevens knows the band. For him, SOUWIA's singer is Joel Kaltang, not some other boys.

[871] Black magic is in some areas of Vanuatu more common than in others. The island of Ambrym, in particular, has the reputation of being a place where black magic thrives.

> Elvis is still alive – not alive in person but in his music… no one can stand up in the year 2000 and claim to be Elvis – no! Someone can play a piece of music of the Western Boys, a song of the Western Boys but he is not the Western Boys. Western Boys, that's Richard, myself, […], George, some others, Joel, Sam, John, all of them. […] Souwia, that's Joel Kaltang, [Makura] Tokolau, that's George Pakoa" (interview with Moses Stevens 2004).[872]

If the boys of Makira Island want to start a stringband they should choose a new name, not MAKURA TOKOLAU. This is also George Pakoa's viewpoint. He has experienced disadvantages of the common practice to use old names for new groups and is afraid that people from the community will make demands of a new group's earnings which uses the same name.[873]

Most stringband musicians hold a different opinion. In Bislama, *tim* (team) also means 'band'. The concept of band, the group of musicians, is not closed, with fixed contours but open for the flow of members, often over a long period of time and often also spatial: while a fraction of the band stays on the island, another stays, rehearses, performs and records in town, such as LAUTANO and LAUTANO II (in this case II stands for the second, urban branch of the group).[874]

In 2000, when the boys who constitute the group STONEY BOYS nowadays started playing in their village in Ambrym Island, they did not choose a new name but called themselves OISAL after a stringband formed by their grandfathers long ago. When the boys decided to record a new album, releasing it as a CD, they adopted the name STONEY BOYS from their more immediate predecessors from the same area who had been popular since the 1980s. This choice was calculating, as it was hoped that the onetime fans become interested in the group's (new) recordings. In this case, a popular name, STONEY BOYS, was chosen and preferred over an older name, OISAL.[875]

Sometimes virtually all boys and young men of a village are part of the group. Often, they split up in two groups, the younger ones practising for themselves separate from the older ones. If there are many musicians in one area, different band names are chosen to divide stringbands along age classes and to make competition possible. This was the case on the island of Emae, for example: at the time of independence, the TOYOTA STRINGBAND merged

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[872] *"Elvis hem i laef yet – i no laef* in person *be miusik... so wan man hem i no save girap long 2000 mo talem se mi nao mi Elvis – nogat! Wan hem i save plei wan miusik blong Western Boys, singsing blong Western Boys, be hem i no Western Boys. Western Boys hem i Richard, mi*, […], *George, sam narawan, Joel, Sam, John, olgeta.* […] *Souwia hem i Joel Kaltang. Tokolau hem i George Pakoa."*

[873] This case is discussed in 7.5.

[874] In contrast, differences might arise concerning the name among pop musicians who split up into two groups. When a part of UPB (UNEMPLOYED PEOPLES' BAND) stayed in Port Vila and became popular, the members on the island (Ambae) demanded that the group should use a new name. Thus, the Vila branch was renamed in BROTHERS VIBRATION (later written BRATAZ VIBRATION).

[875] Unfortunately, it is not possible to depict such genealogies in a map such as Figure 1.

into different groups which were now able to compete. The older boys formed DIWOKA STRINGBAND, while the sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds called their group WESTERN BOYS. The even younger boys formed FATAU STRINGBAND, named after a passage near their village.

Stringbands with members from only one village usually use old, established band names. There are also stringbands with members coming from various villages. MAGAWIARUA (Emao) was named by combining syllables of village names: Maga- (for Magarogo, Mapua and Marou), -wia- (for Wiana) and –rua (for Ngurua). Thus, the band name lists where the members come from.[876] When Joel Kaltang assembled a new group from the members of SARA POKASI, TOKOTAKIA and SOUWIA, the name SARATOKOWIA was chosen – this time a blend of band names.[877]

MAUNA STRINGBAND is a chimera of the island denominations E**ma**o and Ng**una** from where the band members originate. The case of NAAHU TRIBES is similar: NAAHU is a blend of two village names and TRIBES indicates that all members are related.

The simplest way of naming a stringband is to use the village's name and just add 'stringband', as for example DIWOKA STRINGBAND (Emae) or EMUA STRINGBAND (Efate). A group in West Ambrym used two different toponyms during their band history: Lonwolwol (which was destroyed by a volcanic eruption) and Lonakon (the place where the people of Lonwolwol moved after the destruction). Although the band members do not live in either location, they chose these names to commemorate the history of their ancestors. Newora village (Nguna) is situated on the shore and the band name LAUTANO describes its location (*lau* = sea, *tano* = down in the vernacular).

ERRO STRINGBAND contains 'Erro', the usual abbreviation for Erromango Island. Although the musicians of a stringband most often are related, there are only few groups which choose a family name for the band. One such exception is MAKAMBO STRINGBAND (later they called themselves MAKAMBO BROTHERS) from Lumbukuti, Tongoa (interviews with Kalo Daniel 2003 & with Leonard Willie 2002).

In Vanuatu, rocks and cliffs are popular references in the identification with a certain place. This can be rock in general, as in the case of the STONEY BOYS who come from a village in Ambrym with nothing but black rock (interview with the STONEY BOYS 2003) or as in the case

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[876] Meanwhile, there are also members from Lausake village. The different provinces of Vanuatu were named in the same way – artificial words made up of a combination of island names.

[877] I assume that the band name of the recent group TOKOSOUWIA (see Diettrich, Moulin & Webb 2011: 99-102) is a combination of the names TOKOTAKIA and SOUWIA (and the band accordingly a mixture of the musicians of these two groups).

of FUTUNA FATUANA; *Fatuana* meaning rocks or rocky island (interview with David Taforua 2003). In the case of LEVIYAMBO, the name-giver is a rock which is connected to evil spirits. 'Stones that produce sounds' is the meaning of the band name VATDORO.[878] While peaks and mountains are the namesake for some groups (TUKUASMERA MOUNTAIN BAND, STAR PEAK STRINGBAND), for others their shadow is enough: "In the afternoon, around four o'clock, when other places are hot yet, the place where we stay is already cool because of the shadow of this hill. That's why we chose 'Cool Shadow'".[879]

Many stringbands bear the name of the southeast wind in their local language. In the vernacular of Makira, 'Tokolau' is the 'good wind' with which the ancestors of the islanders used to sail in the open sea with their large canoes. The name MAKURA TOKOLAU STRINGBAND arose when Paul Gardissat added 'Makura', Makira's colonial name. Gardissat also convinced the band to keep the name after independence, especially because it was already popular. LONHARO in West Ambrym carry the name of the trade wind, which brings a chill breeze and a calm sea.[880] The word for 'good' or 'fresh wind' in the language of Emao is 'Souwia'. All these groups honour the southeast wind with their names while Richard, the older brother of Moses Stevens, coined the name WESTERN BOYS because his village is situated on the side where the sun sets.[881]

The inspiration for the name LUKUNAEVA was taken from the natural environment. 'Lukunaeva' is the name of a river in the northern part of Efate. The band members's fathers also had a stringband which was simply called EMUA STRINGBAND (interview with Lukunaefa 2003). The E'S BOYS, a students' stringband at Malapoa College in the 1970s, consisted of boys coming from islands with 'E' as a capitel letter (Emae, Emao and Epi).[882]

Moses Stevens played in another stringband that he called KUAE BOYS after an island which was once formed of the islands Epi and Tongoa. In the 15th century, these islands were separated by a massive volcanic eruption. They had chosen the name because the band members came from various islands of the Shepherds Group.

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[878] The group was named by Dr. Philip Ilo who also taught them his song 'Vanua Raga'.

[879] *"So taem we long aftenun ya, samples long fo oklok, sam* other places *ya hemia ples i hot yet, be ples we mifala i stap long hem i kolkol finis. From we san i go i mekem sado blong hil ya hem i kam daon. So taswe mifala i putum se 'Cool Shadow'"* (interview with John Peter & Hendry Tari 2003).

[880] The pop group ALIZÉ carries the name of the tradewind, and called its album "Vent D'Espoir".

[881] It is not really in the west of the island but at least more to the west than other villages in their sphere (interview with Moses Stevens 2004).

[882] The group was renamed in FETAKIA STRINGBAND in 1980, when the composition of the group changed.

Some stringbands are named after brand names: NASONAL from Emao (probably named after 'National Battery', interview with Joel Kaltang 2002), SINGER TEAM from Tongoa (named after 'Singer' sewing machines; interview with Kalo Daniel 2003)[883] and the TOYOTA STRINGBAND from Emae. At the time Kalo Daniel heard about the famous BEACH BOYS from California, his stringband, the LUMBUKUTI BEACH BOYS, already existed.[884]

Some band names are based on verbs or activities. '*Totas*', I was told, entails the meaning 'to unite' in the language of Paama. TOTAS LOCAL STRINGBAND uses the word in its name. Ben Siro and Edgar Hinge of HUARERE told me that their bandname has different meanings in *raga*, their local language; one of them being 'to aim for something'. '*Mauri*' means 'to grow' in a local language of Ambae, where the MAURI STRINGBAND emerged.

Several pop groups with a mixed line-up (that is, people coming from different islands) attach such importance to this fact that it is mirrored in their band name: KROS ROD (crossroads), NEW ETHNIC or XX SQUAD (EXTREME MIXED SQUAD/EXTRAIT MIXTE SQUAD). The name of the pop group FLYING CLAQUETTES ROUGES is a combintion of French and English which can be interpreted as an evidence of the group's diversity. Abbreviations are sometimes used in the names of pop groups (for example 4 D MAGICA, XX SQUAD and UPB) but never in the names of stringbands.

One can observe a propensity to regard bands as 'still being alive'. Continuity plays a crucial role in stringband music. Band projects often pause and are revived again or are left to simmer until some performance is due. Then the group starts again with the same name.

7.3 The Composition of the Groups

This subdivision covers the social composition of stringbands which is typically related to the family structures in their home villages. In the following, I touch upon forms of residence, types of relations between the musicians and the social embedding of stringbands (7.3.1). 7.3.2 addresses the organisational structure of stringbands, the *komiti.*

[883] SINGER TEAM contains the common Bislama term *tim* for 'band'. The group existed in the 1960s, however around the turn of the millenium there were many of these machines in use in Fiji and I suppose that they still are in Vanuatu.

[884] Even at the time of the interview he had heard the name but has no idea about the music of this group.

7.3.1 Types of Relations Between the Musicians

The migration to town already started in the 1970s with mostly young people looking for jobs and wishing to escape the monotony of island life. However, the rents were high, "[s]o people from the same island community clubbed together to buy plots of land in cheap areas away from the centre of town and built shacks out of corrugated iron and waste materials" (MacClancy 2002: 150).[885] Strong solidarity among people coming from Ambae, for instance, emerged in the new urban setting, and they also worked together with people from Pentecost. Such alliances still find expression in the mixed line-up of bands with members from both islands. Life in the heterogeneous capital led to the creation of social networks among people from the same island or region within the country. Often, all musicians of a stringband stay together in a neighbourhood or even in one house (for example TOKOTAKIA), while some stringbands live distributed around town. If the young musicians live in a commune, the membership in the stringband clearly affects many other aspects of life. Whether they live together or not, the members are usually all related, come from the same village or the same area.[886] There are exceptions if the members of the stringband anyhow form some kind of community. For example they are all students of the same school, work at the same place (like a ship crew) or are close because of a common experience, like the members of TOTAS LOCAL STRINGBAND, who were all vicitims of the violent police operation 'Klinim Not'.

Some rural groups come to Vila to participate in Fest'Napuan and then stay to record an album. Some members leave to spend Christmas and New Year's Eve at home, while others stay in Vila with their relatives and play some more concerts at the turn of the year. Male school dropouts sometimes try to prolong their stay in the capital and look for a job. If they stay longer, a 'Vila-branch' of the group evolves. Thus, there are two 'pools of musicians' in two different locations. Depending on where they are, individual musicians take part in the rehearsals and concerts of either band, in town or in the island. These groups also share the repertoire which makes it easy for the band members to switch between the groups.

Only few pop groups live together as a band. Most members of the pop group BRATAZ VIBRATION live in a rented house. When I was told that the group rehearsed in the house for Fest'Napuan, I dropped the remark that most home owners in Germany would rather not rent

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[885] For example, one part of town in Vila is referred to as 'Seaside Tongoa' because so many people from Tongoa live there. See Petrou 2020, Lindstrom 2011 and Kolshus 2017 for more recent perspectives on migration to town.

[886] For example, DAUSAKE come from the three villages Malaliu, Matoa and Mere on Nguna Island.

out to a band. Charlie Tari said: "No, I think in Vanuatu people do not have yet this concept about musicians as loud people. I suppose here in Vila, people like the company of musicians. We do not have any problems at all".[887] BRATAZ VIBRATION also host cousins and friends of the band members. The house is open for any boy who needs a refuge, Tari says, for example, if they have trouble at home.[888]

Family bonds are of greatest importance in the composition of stringbands. In general, all members are related, whether as brothers, cousins (*kasen*), or *ol tawian* (in-laws).[889] During fieldwork I noticed in many situations that the young men, who are the active members of a stringbands, refer to older males. These can be composers, former band members or members of the committee (see 7.3.2). Kinship amongst a band's members ensures that the earned money remains in the family and protects and develops the particular musical style of the group. The sons and nephews of the original founders of a band continue to play the same repertoire and proudly pronounce this continuity.[890]

When I spoke with Tony Alvos, elected president of the committee of LUKUNAEFA, about the concept of 'stringband', he explained: "It is a community matter like many affairs in Vanuatu" ("*Hem i wan komiuniti samting olsem plante samting long Vanuatu*"). For this reason, he says, the *jif*'s opinion is important and the band members cannot just do what they want – at least not without the *jif*'s approval. In contrast to pop groups such as KROS ROD or NAIO, the musicians' own bands (that is, 'owned' solely by the band members), stringbands belong to the community. LUKUNAEFA was named by a *jif* who functions as an advisor and someone who gives inspiration. In cultural concerns it is important, Alvos states, to have the support of an elder who has more power than you yourself.

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[887] "*No, mi ting se long Vanuatu ol man oli no gat* concept *yet* about musicians *olgeta ol man blong noes. Ating long ples ya long Vila ol man oli wantem gat* company *blong ol musician. Mifala i no gat eni problem nating*" (interview with Charlie Tari 2002). This might apply to Port Vila, however, in Luganville a strict nighttime peace was imposed since 'Operation Klinim North' in 2001 (see 6.2.2.1).

[888] BRATAZ VIBRATION have a female ni-Vanuatu drummer, Lynette; an extraordinary exception in Vanuatu. She did not stay at the house of the group, her parents would not allow (and possibly she did not want to). Her parents also prohibited her from playing at Club Vanuatu. Thus, Charlie Tari, singer of the group, has to play the drums and sing at a time. If the band plays other concerts, Lynette performs with the boys. She also played with the rock group LOW BROW in 2003. Lynette is a student of the University of the South Pacific.

[889] Brother-in-laws or sister-in-laws, "especially of the same generation" (Crowley 1995: 243). Sometimes *tawian* is used interchangeably with *kasen*. According to Crowley (1995) *kasen* in Bislama denotes a cousin on mother's side; more precise a *kasen brata* (or just *brata*) a male cousin on mother's side and a *kasen sista* (or just *sista*) a female cousin on mother's side (Crowley 1995: 114). However, occasionally my interlocutors also qualified their father's cousin's son, as their *kasen* (father's mother's sister's son). To relate to the cousin-relationship as described by Crowley, ni-Vanuatu might use phrases like *stret daerek kasen* or *klos kasen*.

[890] Joel Kaltang's grandfather used to play stringband music as did Kaltang himself also, and now his son is a stringband musician too (interview with Joel Kaltang 2002).

Some stringbands continue to exist because their members regard it as a way of keeping a group of friends or a family, usually people from the same island/place, together. People perceive a collective, local identity. The all-female MAUNA STRINGBAND constitutes a way of retaining the companionship among its members, women from Emao and Nguna who are married to men from other places. In public perception they are henceforth assigned to the place of their husbands. Thus, the group is an opportunity to meet friends from home.
Being part of the stringband is very similar to being part of the community. A member of MAGAWIARUA says about the significance of stringband music in their lives:

> "To play in a stringband is [an important] part of our lives. […] I may make up my mind and go to the island but I am still part of the band [literally: my name is still in the band]. No matter if I stay on the island for two, three weeks, or three months, or one year, I will still be a member of the band".[891]

Usually there is a change in the composition of the band when stringbands convert to pop groups. Some members leave, while others join in. When MAURI STRINGBAND from Ambae became the pop group EX MAURI, only three original members of the stringband line-up continued. The stringband which was a family-based band changed its composition and became open for anybody (interview with Mark Hensley 2004).

7.3.2 *komiti*

Stringbands are meant as a source of income (and even more so than pop groups). As soon as a group is formed on a regular basis in town, not many would just play for the fun of it. Stringbands are tightly organised and led as a company. The body that makes sure that everything works well is the *komiti* (committee) of the band.[892] When officially founding a new group, it is typical that a *komiti* is set up before any music is made 'seriously'. When the famous SOUWIA agreed on starting a stringband they settled all administrative affairs before buying guitars (interview with Joel Kaltang 2002). Usually a stringband has many more members than those performing at a time which is an important distinctive feature to pop groups in Vanuatu. Non-musicians are also regarded as band members if they are part of the

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[891] "*Mifala i mekem stringban hem i olsem pat blong laef blong mifala.* […] *sapos we mi mi tingting blong mi mi go long aelan be nem blong mi i stil stap insaed long ban. Nomata tu, tri wik o tri manis o wan yia mi stap aot long aelan mi stil memba blong ban yet*" (interview with MAGAWIARUA 2003).

[892] Paul Gardissat made a joking remark to me, relating to my German nationality and the associated prejudice of orderliness which also applies to the Presbyterian missionaries whose institutional structures were taken over by the early stringband musicians. According to Gardissat this spirit was also perceptible in the organisation of the first stringband competitions. Arutangai remaks that the VP which was supported by many stringband musicians in the 1980s "was better organised than any other political party in Vanuatu" (Arutangai 1995: 60).

komiti: there is a president, a director or a chairman, a vice-president, a treasurer, a vice-treasurer, a secretary and so on.[893] These functions are different and additional to those within the group of actual musicians: there is a leader of the group (*lida blong grup/ban/tim*) but he is not the president.[894] When LUKUNAEFA from Efate (Emua village) perform, there are eight musicians. However, the group has more than 20 members and this is typical for stringbands in Vanuatu. Often but not always, the non-musician members of the *komiti* were previously active musicians. Older members who retire might be part of the stringbands' committee.[895] Some join the boys occasionally for recordings, as substitutes, if there are not enough regular musicians or if there is a special occasion like a marriage within the family. Moses Stevens, speaking about former active members, said: "They join [the band]. They drink a few beers, and then…" ("*Oli kam joen*. Few *bia i go, ale…*"). John Peter (*1949) is a still active member of the COOL SHADOW STRINGBAND which he founded in 1964. He still enjoys playing music although all the others are youth. Occasionally they are joined by Hendry Tari, 47 years old at the time of the interview.[896]

A committee's president makes decisions and reconciles, for example, in case of misuse of money. He also organises fundraisings and transportation. LUKUNAEFA's president of the committee writes an annual report in which finances and the general planning for the next year are presented. His primary task is to book concerts for the stringband, helping the band to concentrate on practising, he says. MAUNA STRINGBAND has a committee of only three persons. The manager and treasurer is also a woman (but not a musician). Maria Manua is a musician and at the same time is the president of the *komiti*. She books concerts and organises the performance of the group at the Radio and at competitions. If there is much to do, the secretary helps. TOTAS LOCAS STRINGBAND has a six-member committee (president, treasurer, secretary and their deputies). The secretary protocols the meetings, keeps the accounts and controls the treasurer who administers the funds. Each year these administrative tasks are allocated in an election. One committee member of DAUSAKE acts as a promoter, in which he, for example, tries to organise a slot for the group's music clips on TV. Another task of a stringband's *komiti* is to choose songs for the recordings of the next album.

[893] In fact, most committee members are non-musicians.

[894] The first leader of HUARERE, Samson Tugu, was in office from 1959 until 1981 (interview with Edgar Hinge & Ben Siro 2002).

[895] Only few keep on playing at the age of 30 or even older.

[896] Another example: A relative registered the LUMBUKUTI / YOUNG BEACH BOYS at the Fest'Napuan although most members had returned to the island. Thus the elderly Kalo Daniel had to perform with his nephew and a bunch of children (interview Kalo Daniel 2003). Even young boys can be part of stringbands. The VUSI BOYS of Ambae also have a wide age range.

Some of the stringbands I interviewed have a policy (such as MAGAWIARUA), others plan to compose one in the near future (such as LUKUNAEFA). According to the members of MAGAWIAUA, their policy was soon to be approved in court. One of the important pharagraphs in a stringband's policy is the definition of who benefits from the group's revenue.[897]

Since the foundation of LUKUNAEFA in 1993 or 1994, an annual assembly is held, in which the report is read out and the committee is elected. In these general meetings all members, musicians and non-musicians, are present, and apart from one person, the members of the committee are not active musicians. The next goals of the group are discussed and strategies of how to reach them are devised. A major goal for the time being is the production of an album. In order to pursue this project, a 'production *komiti*' is installed. The duties of this sub-committee are to take care of the duplication, the marketing and the distribution of the cassettes.

Joel Kaltang reports that SOUWIA's *komiti* was well organised. He compares stringbands with pop groups and observes that they are not as thouroughly organised and that they are not so mindful of financial matters and thus have nothing to show if they split one day. VATDORO and HUARERE, he says, are so popular because they started off with "*lokol miusik*" (stringband music) and still have their good *komiti*. Hence, he argues, the committee is paramount and should be the first thing to be established. The terms need to be agreed on and the objectives set.

My interviews with stringband musicians, as well as participant observation indicate that the committees are important to control the members of the band: if the youth want to achieve something or fulfil the contract at the hotel, there is need for a certain degree of discipline. Philip Louis remarks: "*I kam olsem wan wok nao*" – "It becomes a profession". (YANG) SOUWIA/LAURUA meets twice a month. These meetings are important, Philip Louis explains, to make certain that the members want to go on with the stringband.[898] His father Lui Philip regards himself as 'general director' who is above the *komiti*. His task is for one thing to make sure that the studio recordings turn out well (especially as a musical director), for another thing that he finds solutions for problems. If a band member needs money or advice, he comes

[897] Many pop groups also have a *komiti* (such as BRATAZ VIBRATION), some even a constitution (such as the REAL SURVIVORS and the dance and music group NEMINAMEL).

[898] He said literally: "*Kipim spirit blong plei*". DAUSAKE's *komiti* meets once a month, and every three months there is a general meeting with all members (interview with Kalo Malesu 2003).

to see him (interview with Lui Philip 2003). Stringbands keep structures available to help its members in need.

Several musicians told me that it is of advantage to have a *jif* in the group's *komiti* or at least as a spokesman to act as a mediator to the community and also to those of the community who are established in Vila. Depending on what the matter is, groups are required to ask the permission of local authorities.[899] NAAHU TRIBES, for example, have someone in Vila who looks after the interests of the rural stringband in town. He organised the group's performance at Fest'Nalega and also tried to find a studio for recordings (interview with NAAHU TRIBES 2003).

The inclusion of respected elders and all the administrative bodies mentioned give a structure to the stringband which is not a hierarchy in the first place. The meetings are rather a forum for discussion amongst all band members (musicians and non-musicians), whose decisions are implemented by the committee. The issues are discussed at length and decisions come about by elections. These processes take time.[900] The cause of the fussiness or bureaucracy in the processes sometimes lies in the family structures that underlie the groups. A musician told me about the secret voting of a band name which was quite sophisticated. It had to be a secret voting to ensure that it was really democratic – otherwise people would not dare to reject suggestions of respected family members.[901]

I have the impression that the stringband committees are good preparation for responsible positions in other social fields. Ephraim Bule, director of the Vanuatu Nasonal Yut Kaonsel, for example, only has education up to primary school level. However, he has many years of experience as a leader of youth activities (football, gardening), was the president of a youth council and, of course, member of a stringband (VATDORO; interview with Ephraim Bule 2002).

There is some control of older members (of the committee) over the musicians who are usually younger. VAKE is not a stringband but a dance group; their committee on their home island Tanna consists of some male villagers who do not dance themselves. I quote VAKE because their case is a plain example of how elders keep youth on a short leash: VAKE had already made public performances before Charlie Iawantak became aware of the potential of

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[899] NEMINAMEL, for example, killed a pig in October 2002 to ask the chiefs of Wala and Rano (Malekula) for permission of their project. The case is similar with TROPIC TEMPO and a community in the Banks Islands. Both groups acquired the right to rearrange traditional songs.

[900] Sometimes, says Paul Gardissat, the groups spend more time with the organisation than with rehearsing.

[901] 15 members had to close their eyes and another counted the votes. Each member had a vote for each suggestion. There were altogether 25 different names (interview with Julian Ligo 2002).

the group. He suggested becoming 'team manager' to their leader Sam, which was duly accepted. When the group came to Vila, they were accompanied by Iawntak and *jif* Malia who, by virtue of his authority, set himself to look out for the boys and prevent them from getting into trouble. The two adult men collected the money which was earned through the shows of the young men who only received some pocket money for Christmas shopping (interview with Charlie Iawantak & Jack Malia 2002).

While popular culture in some contexts helps to create a sphere of free unfolding for the young (in other countries), music in Vanuatu is subject to power relations between the youth and local authorities. Sometimes, musical practices of young people are incorporated into the adult world by being instrumentalised as cultural novelties and possible future trademarks (even as sources of income for the community) as in the case of VAKE (invention of a new dancing style from Tanna). In other cases, their practices are completely deviced by adults as in the case of NEMINAMEL (a fusion of *kastom* music and popular music to interest young people in *kastom* and stage a performance for tourists at the same time). While these dynamics are diverse with respect to groups playing pop *miusik*, stringbands usually have established structures at the interface between the group of musicians and their embedding into the wider community: the *komiti*.

The album "Best of the Best" (2003), a collaboration of the groups MAGAWIARUA and SARATOKOWIA, has a long history. In 1992, when MAGAWIARUA came back from a tour to Australia, there was a dispute about the use of the band's instruments and a car which were taken by some musicians from another village without the permission of the committee's president. The group SARATOKOWIA was no longer in existence at the time. The accused, angered, left the band and founded SARATOKOWIA anew (or SARATOKOWIA II as some people call them; only one band member of the first line-up was part of this group). A third group from Emao, SARA POKASI, was also part of the problem. The musicians even went to court and it was decided that, indeed, the instruments were taken without authorisation – due to MAGAWIARUA's guideline which is recorded in writing (in Bislama). After this decision, there was a reconciliation ceremony; however, the members of SARATOKOWIA were still angry. Over ten years later, the presidents of MAGAWIARUA and SARATOKOWIA took up the affair again and there was a second big *kastom* ceremony, where the idea was formed of producing a joint album with the musicians of Wiana village. A special treasury (*basket*) was established

for the money that accumulates from this project.[902] Reconciliation ceremonies among bands can also be found in the field of pop music. During the time of my fieldwork there was such a ceremony involving the groups NAIO and NOISY BAND.[903]

7.4 Music Associations

Many stringbands are highly organised within themselves; however, there is no overarching institution. Joel Kaltang perceived this as a deficiency and founded the 'Malamow Miusik Asosiesen', an affiliation of stringband musicians of the island of Emao. If this form of organisation proves successful, Kaltang imagines that the association might extend to other stringbands from Efate or even across the whole of Vanuatu.[904] The members of the all-female MAUNA STRINGBAND get help from the experienced stringbands of their island Emao to improve their musical performance even without any formalised structures. MAUNA consider themselves to be part of the tradition of Emao stringbands.

The biggest music event in Vanuatu which needs structures of organisation among and for musicians is Fest'Napuan. The VKS hosts the Fest'Napuan but the idea was that after the first Fest'Napuan, representatives of some music groups of Port Vila should join and take over the organisation for the next festival. Various musicians founded the 'Nasiviru Miusik Asosiesen'.[905] As a result, Isabelle, the inventor of the festival (see 2.2.7) was joined by Henry Toka and some young musicians, especially francophone men, in organising the event in 1997.[906] These were referred to (and referred to themselves) as *SPR*. For some of them, the festival was a springboard, with job opportunities arising from their experience in staging the

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[902] When I spoke with Jeffrey Thomson (interview 2003) and others over the matter, it was not yet clear what this money would eventually be used for. It is to be hoped that problems will not start all over again.

[903] Part of the problem was that a band member, Jack 'Marvin' Maravi, left NAIO and joined the NOISY BAND (formerly NOISY BOYS). The reconciliation was even recognised in the newspaper. Such ceremonies involve the presence of the *jif* and the exchange of gifts, usually a pig, traditional woven mats, kava and sometimes also money.

[904] One of Kaltang's goals is to publish a song collection with the songs by the various stringbands from Emao. Maybe one day this association, Kaltang says, will even include pop musicians – as long as they come from Emao and as long as they play the old stringband songs (in a *rege*-version, for example; interview with Joel Kaltang 2002). More research on the reasons for the foundation of this association might provide insight into the micropolitics of the various stringbands from Emao which include quarrels and reconciliations.

[905] *Nasiviru* is the Bislama name of a small colourful parrot, the rainbow lory. John 'Beri' Willie told me that he was the one who had the idea to name the association after this bird, because it is so loud. Visual artists (carvers, drawers etc.) are organised in a similar association, called 'Nawita'.

[906] In 1997, the Fest'Napuan committee felt the urge to have an anthem. Henry Toka wrote the song 'Yumi go' which was performed with musicians of the various participating bands including musicians from the Solomon Islands and New Caledonia (interview with Henry Toka 2006).

event. Ralph Regenvanu writes about them: “Their participation on the festival committee gives them skills and experience in office management, administration, logistics and event organization, which greatly improves their prospects for later employment” (Regenvanu 2001: 37). One of them, musician Mars Melto, could start working at the Alliance Française after successfully organising the Fest’Napuan. He told me in an interview: *miusik nao i givim wok long mi* (“it was the music that provided work for me”).[907]

The elected president of Nasiviru, Jean-Pierre Nirua, is not a musician himself but was President of the Port Vila Football League and is now General Director of the USP Campus in Vanuatu. He was the kind of prominent figure who could and did lobby for the Association (interviews with Jean-Pierre Nirua 2003 and Ralph Regenvanu 2003). Him and his vice president, *jif* John ‘Beri’ Willie, were able to move politicians of various parties to convince businessmen to support the musicians. Many politicians still owed a favour to *jif* Willie because he played a lot with his BLUE CYCLE BAND at their election campaigns. For example, politician Hilda Lini, sister of Vanuatu’s first Prime Minister Walter Lini, helped to organise public works issues (interview with John ‘Beri’ Willie 2004).

Without the commitment of Henry Toka, there would not have been a Fest’Napuan in 1998.[908] Nirua was still president of Nasiviru but his main occupation was to write letters. Mars Melto, Toka’s right hand in the previous year, was away, working in Tanna. Although Toka had no office and had to do all the work on his own, the 1998 Fest’Napuan was again a success. The audience especially appreciated the performance of this year’s newcomer NAIO.

When Nasiviru Music Association ceased to exist because of the diminishing commitment of its members, the Fest’Napuan committee took over in 1999 – all things considered, a need for a follow-up festival was felt. Toka had started to work at Vanuata Productions as a studio technician but offered his support to a new organising body and Mars Melto then became chairman of the new committee. In 2000, he passed the office of the chairman of the committee on to Ralph Regenvanu.

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[907] Melto was part of the ni-Vanuatu diaspora in New Caledonia and came to Vanuatu in 1994. His interest in music was awoken when he witnessed the first Fest’Napuan in 1996. He thought that he should play at the festival himself the following year and told his cousins about this plan. They laughed at him first but they eventually became members of his group BLACK MAKA and played on stage with him at the Fest’Napuan in 1997. Some of the boys were part of Meltos’ later groups YOUTH VIBRATION and/or XXSQUAD (interview with Mars Melto 2002).

[908] Toka, together with Isabelle, had a newly born son, so Isabelle had no time to organise anything. Henry Toka himself entered the stage as a member of the groups FLYING CLAQUETTES ROUGES (1997 and 1998) and TROPIC TEMPO (1996, 1997, and 1998).

According to Melto, his band, XX SQUAD, is not only a pop group but the committee of the Fest'Napuan at the same time. Indeed, some of the band members by then had not only love for music but also responsible posts: David Nalo (Further Arts), Macka Silona (VKS Productions), Alain Jemmis (high-ranking position at the TBV) and Richard Shing (staff of the VKS). Although the National Museum and the VKS studio are situated in Port Vila, the VKS staff reach out into the island communities by documenting celebrations and Mini Arts Festivals. There is a small dependency on Malekula Island. At the end of 2010, the European Union granted 100 000 € (13 mio. vatu) for the funding of the TAFEA Kaljoral Senta (TKS) as main branch of the VKS in the outer islands of Vanuatu. Its activities include the promotion of regional video, music and theatre creation, as well as the promotion of regional cultural, scientific and artistic cooperation with New-Caledonia.[909] There are also musicians' associations on a regional level such as the Malampa Music Association.

7.5 Economical Aspects

Stern points to the fact that "[i]n the traditional system of Vanuatu, music brings prestige and marks hierarchical status" (2014: 12).[910] In fact, she writes, "[…] music recordings are made not so much for money, as for prestige, respect and recognition they bring to the musicians, their families and communities" (ibid.). Even so, money, that is, the costs (such as for recordings, music clips or transport) and the revenue of a band were generally quite important to my interlocutors, especially to stringband musicians.

Before there was popular music in Vanuatu, traditional songs were bought, and were paid with mats or pigs. This kind of song exchange continues to the present, although occasionally, stringband songs are also bought for small sums of money.

During the early decades of the genre, stringbands were badly paid. This changed during the 1970s. Jeffrey Thomson, founding member of MAGAWIARUA, told me that it is no problem to start a stringband, the point of the matter is the marketing. Thomson had worked at two hotels in Vila but then became unemployed:

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[909] The fund of the European Union represents 58% of the total amount of planned expenditure. 27% are contributed by the Centre de Recherche et de Documentation sur l'Océanie (CREDO) in Marseilles and 13% by the VKS (email by Marc Tabani on 20th December 2010 to the Vanuatu Research Interest Group).

[910] Music and especially dancing can be related to the authenticisation of artefacts which increase in value on the international market by being "used" and "walked"; that is "[i]n the islands, "authentic" equals "used" (DeBlock 2019: 87).

> "I did not work anymore at Le Méridien, I stayed at home. […] But we just cannot do anything, can we? I had to look for a possibility to earn some Vatu, because there were three of us. George and myself, we did not work. Only Don worked […] When we went to the cruise ship [to play stringband music], we could win some Vatu. Alright, we bought a bag of rice for us to eat […] We saved the half of the money. We bought some strings and some stuff that we needed".[911]

When MAGAWIARUA started up in 1987, and for a number of years following, the band members had to provide for their families by doing additional jobs, as all of the earnings of the stringband were saved to buy a car (see below). The group has been paying a salary to its members only since 2002. At present, MAGAWIARUA is one of the financially most successful stringbands in Vanuatu.

LUKUNAEFA financed the production of a music clip by performing at fundraisings and kava bars in Anambrou (a neighbourhood of Vila). They also organised a *kava naet* in the north of Efate. These earnings through performances have to be supplemented by fishing on the reef (by day or by night) and then selling the fish in Vila. LUKUNAEFA live in Emua village, come to the capital for the gigs and stay overnight (interview with Tony Alvos 2003). The band members of LONWOLWOL from West Ambrym produced copra to finance the necessary equipment for the conversion to a pop group which was purchased by and by. The royalties which the band received from Jean-Marc Wong for stringband albums which had been sold, also contributed to their income (interview with Jesse Temar 2003).

In contrast to pop groups which are costly to operate (because of the necessary equipment and power supply), the stringbands enable young musicians to earn some cash, which is always scarce because of the lack of job opportunities. Moreover, it is possible to play in a stringband even without any school education. However, the musicians' earnings most often are not given to them in cash but rather put aside *long wan basked*, as is the usual phrasing (in one casket/chest/basket which is actually often a bank account). A small part of this money is used to pay for uniforms, new instruments or maintain the equipment. The groups also need money to pour into their next recordings. However, a major part is used for village community expenses. Hence, the money itself is less important for the individual band members than is the feeling to contribute to the common good. Many of my interlocutors mentioned the *jif* as

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[911] "*Mi nomo wok long Le Méridien, mi kam stap long haos. […] Yumi no save stap nating, e? Mas lukaotem wan samting blong mekem smol vatu long hem. From mifala tri ya. Mi mo George mifala i no wok. Don nomo i wok.* […] *Taem mifala i go stap long turis bot, ale karemaot smol vatu. Ale, karem wan bag raes blong mifala i stap kakae* […] *Haf mane mifala i stap sevem. Pem string mo sam samting we mifala i nidim*" (interview with Jeffrey Thomson 2003).

an authority who receives the stringband's money or at least some of it. Successful stringbands in Vila purchase a Hyundai or Toyota van which is deployed for public transportation, referred to as *seves bas* in Bislama and which usually bears the band's name inscribed on the front. Thus, they create an opportunity to improve the economic situation of its members.[912] This particularly applies to the popular stringbands from Emao, who can afford the vehicles because of their contracts with the big hotels in Port Vila. SARATOKOWIA operates a *seves bas* in Vila and SOUWIA has even two. In 1999, SOUWIA bought a Hyundai and in 2002 a Toyota van. Three previously unemployed older men from the family thus got jobs as drivers. MAGAWIARUA bought a Hilux and a bus and also operate both as taxis in town.

Some stringbands in Port Vila who have a car of their own are picked up to go to rehearsals or gigs if they do not stay in the same place. The driver knows where each boy stays and goes around town, bringing them to the hotel where the group is to perform. Until a group has its own mini-bus, the members need to take care of themselves, which sometimes involves much walking if they are short of cash.[913]

Some stringband even buy property. SARATOKOWIA bought a piece of ground for 1.6 million vt – paid from the earnings of the stringband (interview with Joel Kaltang 2002). HUARERE also bought a piece of ground.[914] Rural stringbands purchase chest freezers, invest in a small store or buy a generator instead of a vehicle, for which there is not much use in the islands without proper roads.[915] Of course, saving for larger purchases such as these takes a few years. If a group operates a *seves bas* and a store, the stringband itself is only one of several pillars with which to generate an income. Stringbands are perfect as a first venture because they hardly need any capital to start by. Some groups even have several accounts to deposit money into for their various ends.

Pop musicians are usually paid individually for each concert, although some pop groups also save up for something together. In 2002, the REAL SURVIVORS from Luganville, Espiritu Santo, earned some money by playing at Club Vanuatu. They spent it, 325 000 vt (2 320 €),

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[912] Every stretch within town costs 100 vt (0.70 €). The duration of the trip is variable, depending on the course the bus driver takes as he goes to the various destinations requested by his customers. 'Bus driver' by TOKOTAKIA is about a *seves bas*.

[913] In comparison to groups that play *pop miusik*, stringbands are well off with respect to transportation. Pop groups face many more problems concerning transport because of the equipment needed.

[914] Nowadays, HUARERE performs as a pop group most of the time. Their success as a long existing stringband enabled them to become a pop group. Meanwhile, the band also has buildings on their premises. HUARERE is one of the few groups which eke out a living on music, at least at the time of fieldwork (interview with Edgar Hinge & Ben Siro 2002).

[915] "In rural areas only 3.0 percent of households own and use a vehicle" (National Population and Housing Census 1999: 32). 9% of rural households share vehicles with the community (ibid.).

for a piece of ground in Luganville. The plan is to build a house for their rehearsals and the storage of their equipment, maybe also a guesthouse if they have enough funds one day. For now, they have planted cassava (interview with Mark Hensley 2004).

One strategy for attracting potential customers is to use references to their home islands on album covers. The title of the album "Lake Siwi" by the STONEY BOYS relates to a lake on the island of Tanna. Mount Yasur, a volcano on the same island, is depicted on the front cover. This is surprising, as the band members come from Ambrym (an island with its own volcano) and not even all of the members have been to Tanna. When asked about this, they explained that they hoped people from Tanna might then also be interested in buying their CD. At the same time, the title and the cover are a tourist trap: Tanna is a popular destination and if people visit the place they might also be interested in this CD. DAUSAKE chose a similar approach by publishing the popular children's song 'Pupu John' in the hope that children would urge their parents to buy the cassette.[916]

The most important marketing strategy of stringbands consists in releasing the albums around the independence celebrations and, first and foremost, shortly before Christmas. Apart from the fact that tourists come to visit in their Christmas holidays, ni-Vanuatu are more likely to spend money and buy the new albums for their parties during this festive period.[917]

When Maria Manua had to justify her idea about an all-female stringband, she quoted that the group would be an opportunity to earn money for unemployed girls and women who have no other options. Her group, MAUNA STRINGBAND, was not founded because of a love for music: Maria Manua first approached the hotels to ask whether they were interested in an all-female stringband and only assembled the band afterwards, as she suspected there to be little motivation if the women knew that the hotel was not really interested.[918] MAUNA STRINGBAND entertains on two nights a week at a hotel and receives 4 000 vt for each. A portion of the 8 000 vt (57 €) per week is paid into the bank by the band's manager.[919] This money remains there unless the group needs some cash for fundraising, for example. Some of the cash is also given to the members, so as to signalise that being part of the group is a way of making

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[916] Band member Kalo Malesu literally said: "*Mifala i harem, o ating i gud blong yumi putum i go long kaset, ol pikinini oli laekem. Fosem papa blong karem kaset from singsing nomo*".

[917] Tony Alvos (from LUKUNAEFA) said: "It's like a tradition" ("*hem i olsem wan tradition*"). Stringband music is played extensively in private houses, especially on Efate, at this time of year.

[918] In contrast, pop musician Charlie Tari prefers playing without any earnings because he does not want it to become a job he is obliged to do. However, he was outvoted by his fellow musicians (interview with Charlie Tari 2002).

[919] The group has ten members (musicians), a manager and two composers (interview with Maria Manua 2002).

money. This is to encourage girls to appear in public and to follow MAUNA's example if they are jobless.

Due to the composition of stringbands – there being many band members and not necessarily always the same line-up at the concerts – it is easy to lose track of which band members played at which occasion. To avoid complaints, some committees have a rigid discipline. After Joel Kaltang had left [OLD] SOUWIA and founded SARATOKOWIA, he kept a time sheet for each musician (interview with Joel Kaltang 2002). On the 30th of July each year, Kaltang handed the list to the treasurer, who counted out how many gigs each member had played at, and 300 vt were accordingly given for each appearance. A new list was then started which went until Christmas; thus, the members of SARATOKOWIA received a payment twice a year. If someone from the band marries, the group contributes 30 000 vt; whether in Vatu or in kind; for example, the stringband might buy a cow). Thus, the system of SARATOKOWIA stipulates a payment for each appearance, as well as a contribution as needed. MAGAWIARUA also pay for marriages of their members or for the school fees of their children. However, the sum is then deducted from the band members' salary. Joel Kaltang, their colleague from SOUWIA, had predicted to his fellow musicians that music can be a resource to make a living – back in the 1970s they did not believe him. Nowadays, MAGAWIARUA, top earners in stringband music receive about 8 000 vt (57 €) a day and their payment was even better before the management change of the hotel (Le Lagon).[920] Playing in the stringband has become the sole occupation of some members.

(YANG) SOUWIA is another example of a stringband that is going well.[921] The band entertains at Le Méridien (once a week) and receives 16 000 vt (114 €) a month.[922] They also have a contract with the Iririki Island Resort, where the payment is better, namely 24 000 vt (171 €) a month. In addition, the stringband performs at weddings (8 000 vt) and kava nights (6 000 vt). For friends, they lower the fee to 3 000 vt (21.50 €). The pool of musicians that constitute SOUWIA also makes up a second group, LAURUA, which was initially founded to increase chances of winning at competitions. This concept was maintained and thus it is possible to split the members in case there are two gigs at the same time.[923] The proceeds of the two buses

[920] This sum includes several performances, not all of them as a stringband, see 4.5.2.
[921] Philip 'Fany' Louis kindly provided insight into SOUWIA's financial management.
[922] MAUNA STRINGBAND also entertains at Le Méridien. The payment for both groups is the same, 4 000 vt per night, and MAGAWIARUA receives the same sum for their performance on Sunday nights at Le Méridien.
[923] MAGAWIARUA even splits the stringband into three or four groups at a time, without giving them different names (interview with MAGAWIARUA 2003). In the case of SOUWIA and LAURUA both names are maintained in

are spent on fuel, spare parts and the salary of the drivers, the rest going for the deposit.[924] The group has about seven bank accounts for all these different pots of money (an account for entertainment, another for fundraisings and so on). SOUWIA still have to pay off the vans. Once this is accomplished, the members will be paid either weekly or monthly. For the time being, this only happens at Christmas: 10 000 vt (71.40 €) per member. Interestingly, the drivers have a regular income while the musicians receive some pocket money once a year.

SOUWIA also acts as a lender. If a band member desperately needs money, he writes to the president of the *komiti* that he is short of cash and what sum he needs. He signs and can then lend some money (usually from the entertainment account because he directly contributed to these savings as a musician) which he has to pay back later on. Weddings of band members are the most likely occasions for payouts, however stringbands also contribute when band relatives die.[925]

When popular stringbands such as SOUWIA, HUARERE and VATDORO toured the islands in the 1980s, they used to travel by plane. The fee of SOUWIA was calculated in such a way that it covered the airfares (interview with Lui Philip 2003). Hendry Tari from Ambae, who used to book (*oderem*, *haerem*) the stringbands HUARERE and VATDORO from neighbouring Pentecost, paid for the outward journey, while the groups paid their journey back themselves (interview with Hendry Tari 2003).[926]

The highest fees are probably those of the country's most popular pop musicians who also perform a lot overseas, first and foremost VANESSA QUAI. At the time of my interview with Vanessa Quai, in February 2003, she was only fourteen years old. In 1999, she won 6 000 US dollars at a children's song competition in Cairo, Egypt. Nigel Quai, her father, background singer and manager told me that the minimum fee for concerts in New Caledonia, PNG, the Solomon Islands and Fiji is 40 000 vt (285 €). In Vanuatu, the Quais charge 30 000 vt (214 €) for Vanessa and 15 000 vt (107 €) for each musician of her backing band, THE GOOD NEWS PROCLAIMERS.[927] The highest-earning pop groups in Vanuatu are probably NAIO, HUARERE

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order to achieve member commitment to their group and their taking up responsibility (interview with Philip 'Fany' Louis 2003). Even in Vanuatu, it is not imaginable to split up a pop group in this way.

[924] According to an advert in the Trading Post, Asco Motors in Port Vila sells a Toyota for 3 690 000 vt as a special offer. A warranty is granted that covers twelve months or the first 20 000 km. It can be concluded that a *seves bas* in Vila runs approximately 20 000 km per year (TP Issue No. 905 March 15 2003).

[925] This solidarity can also be found with several pop groups. BRATAZ VIBRATION is one of them. The band pays for the school fees of Leonard Willie's children (interview with Leonard Willie 2002).

[926] My impression is that urban stringbands do not travel as often as before to the islands but that rural stringbands rather visit the towns.

[927] Airfares are at the expense of the event organisers (interviews with Vanessa and Nigel Quai 2003).

and KROS ROD. However, pop groups cannot perform as frequently as stringbands; thus it can be assumed that a popular stringband earns more than a popular pop group (which plays within Vanuatu). When UPB, for example, perform at a fundraising event in the eastern part of Ambae, they charge 6 000 vt (43 €) plus food and transport costs. The organiser of the event has to play for the generator and the fuel (interview with UPB 2004). The dance group VAKE charges 5 000 vt (36 €) for a full day (several shows distributed throughout the day) and 2 500 vt (18 €) for half the day. These fees apply to the town; as money is scare in the islands, they set the prices lower there (interview with Charlie Iawantak & Jack Malia 2002).

The fact that stringbands generate income that is used by a far greater group than the active musicians is not appreciated by all. There are young musicians who object to this practice (without being able to change it) but also older musicians such as George Pakoa of the famous MAKURA TOKOLAU is against it; he stresses that he did not win much money for himself from the stringband. The royalties for a cassette, for example, were divided amongst people who played in the stringband and others who did not. When I asked him how many people made demands, Pakoa replied that they derived their claims simply by belonging to the island community. He says: "We helped many people, many families who had a problem. Cases of deaths, weddings. Many individuals came and took money for themselves".[928] The young people liked to party and around Christmas they used the money to buy beef to roast and drinks, whereas Pakoa himself did not smoke and drink alcohol or kava. It was precisely the *komiti* with its treasurer and so on who misused the group's assets. As Pakoa reports, his friends did not appreciate that he sang and composed many songs; after all, the audience wanted to see him. If he was not there when the stringband performed at a party, the crowd was not pleased. Pakoa did not complain because he was alone without any siblings and did not want the other young people to dislike him. Besides, he did not have to worry overly about money because he had a job at the airport. Once, however, the others suspected him of having withdrawn some of the group's money from the bank. In a big meeting (all boys of Makira Island came) the matter was discussed and eventually they took away all bankbooks from him. This money was lost forever for Pakoa. Actually, Pakoa had taken out a loan to purchase a small motorboat but the others did not believe him. When he bought a cheap second hand car, the gossip started again.

When Pakoa recorded a cassette with a stringband in 1986, this group was called NEW

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[928] "*Mifala i helpem fulap man, plante famle we oli kasem wan problem. Long ded, long maret. Plante individual i kam karem mane blong oli yusum*."

TOKOLAU to avoid such problems (apart from himself there was no other original band member of MAKURA TOKOLAU) and to retain a part of the popular name at the same time. However, more gossip was the result. Pakoa's children are about to set up a stringband. He advises them not to choose the name TOKOLAU again, otherwise claims from many people could be the result. 'Tokolau', he says, encompasses the whole island of Makira.

Even TOTAS LOCAL STRINGBAND, which is an exception because the band members are not related, saves up the revenue in order to be able to support individual members when the need arises. Again, the two main reasons for a payout are weddings and deaths.

ALBEA NALISA has played in a stringband and also as a one-man band at a hotel. He even tried to live solely on music for two or three years which worked as long as he was on his own but with a family he could not keep it up. The necessity to procure money for the school fees is a major challenge for him as well as many others. The fact that musicians do not receive any pension also speaks against the idea of making a living as a professional musician (Albea Nalisa interview 2003).

Generally speaking, stringband musicians in Vanuatu have a marked interest in going on with music-making, despite the rather bad earning opportunities. For many young males their musicianship is their only occupation and their only opportunity to earn money. Joel Kaltang sees great potential in stringband music as a source of income for young people. He is convinced that one day, when Port Vila becomes a city, there will be a great demand for local stringband music in the entertainment business at hotels.

7.6 The Role of Sponsors and Politicians

As finance is a critical issue, it is not uncommon for musicians to look out for sponsors. Some, like the guitarist BOB KUAO, told me that they have enough songs ready to record several albums, if only they had a sponsor to pay for the production costs. And indeed, musicians sometimes get sponsored by high-ranking politicians.[929]

Members of parliament (MPs) and ministers are frequently addressed by musicians who need financial support for instruments, equipment, recording charges or travel costs. Pop musicians

[929] The fact that the New Hebrides Cultural Association constituted the nucleus of the New Hebrides National Party illustrates how intensely politics and culture correlate in Vanuatu (see Van Trease 1995: 20 f.). Voters follow their local leaders – if the latter change party affiliation, the voters may do the same (see for example Van Trease 1995: 62).

(especially individuals) have to hope for the generosity of the MP to cover their expenses from their own pocket, which makes sense if one takes into account the fact that those approached are from the same province, island or even community, i.e. the politicians feel obliged to promote their supporters.[930]

For the stringband genre, patronage plays an even more important role because it is more likely: in contrast to pop groups, stringbands are accepted as a community-related activity for the benefit of the public (such as sports clubs). Thus, requests of stringbands can be funded from the official budget. According to former MP and minister of foreign affairs Vital Soksok, this allocation fund amounts to about one Million Vatu per year and MP (interview with Vital Soksok 2003; this sum was also mentioned by Leonard Willie in 2002). Requests have to be submitted in written form and have to serve the community. In many cases, only those applicants from the home community of the politician who holds the office have the prospect of approval. In the cases I recorded, stringband musicians openly admitted that they vote for the same politicians they ask money from. If the funds are granted, the musicians perceive the transfer as a win-win situation. LUKUNAEFA from Efate requested funds from the high-ranking politicans Donald Kalpokas and Maxime Carlot Korman.[931] The latter had already paid for many instruments of the group in 1994. They would never request money from an MP of Tanna because they know that this would be in vain (interview with Tony Alvos 2003). Korman launched a fund for requests from communities which was financed with poker machines of the casino (interview with Vital Soksok 2003).

The fact that close links to politics can promote musicians was demonstrated by the BLACK BROTHERS who, when they came to Vanuatu and opened Vanuwespa Studio, not only had good marketing skills but were also well connected to important politicians, such as Barak Sope who used to come by in the afternoons, drank kava and listened to the music (interview with Andy Ayamiseba 2003). Sope supports the movement for independence of West Papua.[932]

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[930] Among the pop groups who received such aid are UPB, BLUE CYCLE and NAIO, who received a drum set from the provincial government when they started in the late 1990s (interview with George 'Gero' Iaviniau 2003). The REAL SURVIVORS want to buy another pair of Yamaha-speakers (145 000 vt per piece) at the Sound Centre. The Ministry for Youth Development and Sports pays for them since the manager of the band successfully made an application (interview with Mark Hensley 2004).

[931] At the time of the request, Korman was MP of Efate rural. The Korman stadium, a venue of big concerts by foreign musicians such as MAKOMA, is named after him. Many stringbands do not just take on sponsorships but support the election campaigns of politicians in return by entertaining the crowd.

[932] Sope is also in contact with other musicians. At the time of fieldwork, he visited a member of a famous stringand in prison and promised him to bring along a keyboard for him from Australia.

There are also many examples of pop groups who work in a give-and-take relationship with politicians. The pop group ALIZE supported the campaign of Maxime Carlot Korman and the UMP for about two weeks and received a full set of new instruments for it (interview with Gaëtan Telemb 2003). On their album "Vent D'Espoir" a song is called 'UMP' (in Bislama and English, while they use French in all other songs). The dance group VAKE was sponsored by Willie Posen, Minister of Infrastructure and Public Utilities who roped the boys in for his election campaign in 2000. Later, Posen paid for the passage from Tanna to Vila and helped organising a performance of the group at Club Imperial (interview with Charlie Iawantak and Jack Malia 2002). In a newspaper article about VAKE, the Ministry was even given as a contact address for the booking of the dance group.

According to Paul Gardissat, the politicians do not forget the stringbands but rather encourage them.[933] Many were stringband musicians themselves, such as Prime Minister Natapei.[934] The organisational skills, the sense of responsibility, the interest in public welfare and the team spirit are all features which are important both for stringbands and the field of politics.

The sponsoring of sports clubs by politicians is common in Vanuatu; the payment of a set of new football shirts being the classic donation.[935] Guitarist Leonard Willie complains that politicians foster sports more than music and he is of the opinion that the government should set up a recording studio, led by ni-Vanuatu. He acknowledges the government's support for sports because sportspersons from Vanuatu represent the country at the Melanesian Cup or the South Pacific Games. However, musicians should be supported in the same way when they represent Vanuatu at Arts Festivals (interview with Leonard Willie 2002).

Politicians also help music groups with visas for overseas travels. Vister Rialuth Serge Vorhor, then Deputy Prime Minister, and his advisor Father Ismael William arranged everything for the REAL SURVIVORS to leave for Australia. However, due to a reshuffle in the government the plans were annihilated and the trip cancelled (interview with Mark Hensley 2004).

Some musicians of the pop group KROS ROD are related to high-ranking politicians. They do not ask their relatives for money because they do not want people to gossip about favouritism

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[933] In contrast, some musicians complain because of the little recognition they receive, see 2.2.5.

[934] He was a member of FUTUNA FATUANA and took part in the first commercial stringband recording by Gardissat in 1979. Gardissat smiled when hearing that the same person lately had breakfast with President Bush of the USA (interview with Paul Gardissat 2004).

[935] Courts for basketball or pétanque are other examples for funding in sport.

and they also want to show that they are capable of achieving things without parental support (interview with John Kapala 2003).

Some businessmen sponsor musicians. The Commercial Centre in the southeast of Ambrym belongs to the brother of one member of the STONEY BOYS. He was willing to support the stringband by funding the production of covers for cassettes. Since he did not yet have the money available, he asked his colleague Raphael Worwor who owns the Commercial Centre in west Ambrym to advance the necessary sum. However, the stringband did not ask Worwor as a businessman but approached him in his function as the Minister of Education, Youth and Sport (interview with the STONEY BOYS 2003).

On the front cover of the cassette "Close Your Eyes" from SARA POKASI (Vanuata 1995), a battery is pictured with the inscription: "*iusum* National Batteries – *hemi nambawan*" ("Use National Batteries – it's the best"). TOKOSOUWIA list their sponsors in the closing titles of their music clip.[936] The main sponsors of the Fest'Napuan are usually the Telecom Vanuatu Limited and the energy-supplying company UNELCO, and sometimes Air Vanuatu.[937] As mentioned above, one of the causes for the first Fest'Napuan was in fact a political crisis. Nowadays, politicians do not appear at the event itself but are sometimes asked by musicians to arrange sponsorships or help in some other way to make the event happen. The commitee's report of Fest'Napuan 2002 mentions the Ministry of Youth and Sports as a sponsor. There are in addition many smaller sponsors (see also 2.2.7). Some are administrative institutions like the Port Vila Municipality, others are private businesses from around town. Some restaurants and hotels, as well as the community of Mele, a village outside of town, help in non-financial ways. They look after the participating musicians from overseas without charging for room and board.

When XX SQUAD recorded an album at the VKS studio, the Alliance Française paid for the ticket of an Australian sound engineer; this was arranged by David Nalo of the agency Further Arts.

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[936] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tjdpkwveJJI&t=27s, last accessed on 5 April 2020.

[937] Air Vanuatu also sponsored the tickets to New Caledonia for the VMF band NEW ETHNIC.

7.7 Reasons to End a Stringband

Some stringbands stop after a while and disband (*go wanwan, split*), either because too many members move out, or because there are inter-personal differences. People in the village might continue to play stringband music but not with the aim of releasing albums or winning competitions. Then, after ten years or more, a band from the same family or village appears again on the scene, often using the same name, although there might not even be one member of the original line-up left.

Young men in Vila who play part-time in a stringband might leave the group because they lose their job, find it hard to cope with life in the capital and hence go back to their home island. Often, I heard people say that they are tired of life in town (*"Mi taet long Vila"*) and prefer staying in their island communities.

Musicians recurrently quoted disputes over misuse or mismanagement of money as to why a group broke up. Such quarrels can also affect the relationships between several stringbands, as in the case of the small island of Emao. When SOUWIA returned from a tour to Australia in 1981, they received a payment which was used up by only some band members.[938] Finally, in 1986, the band dissolved because other members realised that there was no more money left. The fact that one band member founded another stringband, SARATOKOWIA, also contributed to the discord between SOUWIA's and the other stringbands' members.[939]

In another case, a former stringband musician supposes that another member of his group withdrew about 200 000 vt to buy a property in Anambrou. A band member of ERRO STRINGBAND took 30 000 vt from the stringband's capital to buy a car for the community as well as for the passage to the island. Although in principle, this was a good thing, he did not discuss the matter with the others beforehand. The (old) STONEY BOYS stopped playing after their third album in 1990. According to the members of the newly founded [YANG] STONEY BOYS, this was partly because of mismanagement, and partly because some members had got married. LUKUNAEFA and MAKURA TOKOLAU are other stringbands who had quarrels about finances.

When talking to male musicians in Vanuatu, one gets the impression that women are a major threat to the existence of bands. Stringband musicians allegedly attract girls, and some older

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[938]Two former members of SOUWIA described the affair from their respective angles in interviews. See also 2.2.6.

[939] Some musicians left the group TOKOTAKIA and joined SARATOKOWIA. Among these was one of the group's composers, allegedly leading to a drop in quality of TOKOTAKIA's songs at the time.

musicians give the impression that they could tell many stories from their tours. One musician said to me in a conspiratorial tone: "Brother, you're a musician, it's hard to make a choice [isn't it?]"[940] – implying that musicians have a choice of women. However, as soon as a musician was in a relationship, his partner would urge him to stop playing.

In 7.1 I mentioned the raising and saving of money for the bride prices of the band members as one motivation to start a stringband. The motive to start a band, i.e. the wedding (and so also implying the marriage) paradoxically results in the end of the individual membership. There simply is no more reason to go on with making music (at least for economic reasons); indeed, the active membership in the group ends in most cases with marriage or the birth of a child. Those who live with the band in town, move out to start a new life with their new family. The place of the lost member will soon be taken by another youth coming from the island.

Musician John 'Beri' Willie reports that whenever he had a new girlfriend, the first thing she would bring up was that he should stop playing music.[941] For him, making music and having a relationship does not match easily. Willie refers to (male) musicians in general, i.e. musicians worldwide. If one takes a look at the Rolling Stone magazine, he says, one finds that all musicians break off their relationships. One of his girl-friends even ruined his guitar, with the result that he had to leave her.

Even if the tasks and responsibilities of daily life and/or their wives do not force the musicians to stop playing, some simply lose interest in music-making. I assume that this is far more often the case than is stated in the interviews – it is easy and sounds cool to put the blame on the wife instead of admitting a mundane reason for leaving a band. Moses Stevens sticks out as a rare exception: he told me about the support and encouragement he gets from his wife. Before meeting her, he had suffered from stage fright, was very shy and had no self-confidence.

When the lead guitarist of ERRO STRINGBAND got married, he left Erromango and moved together with his wife to Tanna, where she had a job as a teacher. Since the lead guitar was ERRO's trademark and there were disagreements concerning finances among the members anyway, the group disbanded (interview with John Apei 2004). Otherwise, the departure or retirement of individual musicians is usually no reason to stop a stringband.

Occasionally, kava is blamed for having a bad influence on musicians. Older musicians such as Kalo Daniel and long-time patron of stringband music Paul Gardissat observe the

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[940] "*Brata, yu wan* musician, *i had wok blong mekem* decision *blong yu*".

[941] He says "*fes toktok*", "the first thing said" (interview with John 'Beri' Willie 2004).

relationship between kava consumption and stringband music across time. While kava drinking is now claimed to be *kastom* and is fostered as an important marker for ni-Vanuatu identity[942], it is important to note that ni-Vanuatu began to consume kava in larger quantities only after independence in 1980. In colonial times, kava consumption was banned by some churches and – as Gardissat reports – many ni-Vanuatu adhered to this law.[943] Gardissat could record stringband musicians in the 1970s as he did because the youth were energetic and had time to rehearse. Since independence, male ni-Vanuatu increasingly use kava on a daily basis.[944] Since 1980 kava has developed into a blooming branch of business which involves many people. Politicians who speak out against kava are not elected. While kava provides income opportunities for stringbands (when playing at a *nakamal*), it would not be entirely exaggerated to claim that a large part of the adult (and youth) male population is preoccupied with kava after around 5 pm. This is the time when stringbands used to practise and compose. A time allocation study might reveal the validity of this hypothesis. Although perhaps slightly exaggerated, Gardissat lists uncomfortable truths that many male ni-Vanuatu would not admit: constructive discussions cannot evolve because drinkers are unconcerned and feel at ease with anything, the men go to the *nakamal* instead of taking care of their families (including their sexual lives), kava drinkers do not appreciate food etc. In short: contemporary use of kava, says Gardissat, is a way of destroying society, – leading, goes the argument, to a loss of interest in being committed to stringband music. Thus, in his view, the atmosphere of stringband music has all but gone.

Individual band members sometimes leave their group for professional reasons. STONEY BOYS' former bandleader, for example, became a pastor and thus quit the band. I heard of a few cases in which Seven Day Adventists ceased to play music in public except in church. Some band members quit being active musicians but still have a function in the *komiti* of the

[942] This is, of course, not a unique characteristic of ni-Vanuatu. Other Pacific islanders think this all the same, as I was able to assess during my fieldwork on kava in Fiji (Ellerich 2008).

[943] Gardissat recalls an incident when he wanted to taste kava in Ambae in 1964 but the people were afraid of punishment. When it came to light that he was finally given kava, the Australian pastor of the Apostolic Church told him that he would complain about him to the French government because he encouraged people to drink kava. When Gardissat now hears people say that kava drinking is their *kastom* he thinks of this situation and feels like laughing because the contemporary manner of drinking kava (the quantity and abundance) is not 'traditional' in any way (interview with Paul Gardissat 2004). However, these are the personal memories of Gardissat. As I was rightly admonished by Thorgeir Kolshus, this did not apply in many other communities.

[944] This was different before independence and in the more distant past. Speiser (1922) observes: "Kava is drunk very moderately in the New Hebrides […] Also the local method of preparation does not permit a man to drink excessively, and in old times kava-drinking was restricted to natives of high rank and to periods of special festivity, and it is still forbidden to women" (Speiser 1922: 30).

group, or, like Joel Kaltang and others, drive the *seves bas* of the stringband. Even if profession, marriage, kava and denomination do not become obstacles to continue playing, some older musicians prefer to leave the stringband eventually, instead of continuing to play any longer with the young lads whose time has come.

The tendency is (and in contrast to some pop projects) that the driving force behind stringbands arises not so much from the individuals but rather from the community.[945] Generally, stringbands are extremely persistent cultural institutions: they are kept up over long periods of time (up to decades and over two generations) or are taken up again. In some cases, it is hard to tell when a stringband really ceases to exist. If I was told that a stringband is not playing anymore, it was most often implied that this was temporary.

[945] Pop musician JESSE TEMAR decided not to continue with playing music because the production of an album needs much time – something he cannot afford as he needs to work in the garden. In the case that he would, he would do it alone – if there are any problems, they are his own (and do not come about through interaction with others). Whether his former band colleagues for their part record an album or not is within their own discretion (interview with Jesse Temar 2003).

8 Summary and Conclusions

This work constitutes a detailed case study of musical syncretism. While hybridity is interpreted as inauthentic in some reception contexts (Weiss 2014), this is not at all the case with stringband music in Vanuatu. Here, the genre is an example of a musical hybrid which is demonstrably perceived as authentic, and even identity-establishing, thus showing that hybridity and authenticity are not necessarily irreconcilable differences. I argue that the emergence and development of syncretic musics involves processes of acquisition which allow for the identification and thus the construction of identities in local contexts, whereby different layers of acquisition may affect the grade or intensity of identification. My overarching question concerns the ways in which a hybrid music genre constructs and represents social and cultural identity.

My findings are summarised in this chapter and put in a broader perspective, so as to assess to what extent stringband music blends in, as well as differs from other music in the Pacific region – Oceania, and Melanesia in particular, being the natural scope for a comparison (8.1).

Performances have a communal nature throughout Oceania. Subchapter 8.2 gathers the most important facts about stringbands as an integral part of Vanuatu's communities, while 8.3 focuses on the layers of identity which are addressed through stringband music. Unifying Melanesian and even Pacific-wide musical traits have been recognised in the domain of music (see for example McLean 1999), and subchapter 8.3.1 locates stringband music in this regard. It has been shown in this work that some features of the stringband genre do not match with the mainstream sounds and habits of the 'North Atlantic axis' (Hayward 1998) of popular music. The case of the band SANGUMA from Papua New Guinea, recently analysed by Denis Crowdy (2018), provides a more obvious example, and a comparison with the stringband genre (8.3.2) illustrates how genre-specific characteristics operate, while revealing the contrast between two different kinds of syncretic music from Melanesia in connection with nation-building. Stringband music is furthermore connected to issues of kinship, social relationships, local histories as well as particular localities, and thus plays a crucial role at a local level of identity construction (8.3.3).

8.1 Vanuatu Stringband Music and Other Musics in Oceania

Stringband music has evolved through the acquisition of foreign musical influences which were in turn modified and combined with existing indigenous music traditions and new ideas. In the preceding chapters I attached importance to the representation of individuals, and the history of stringband music in Vanuatu exemplifies the important roles individuals play in the processes of cultural construction. Vanuatu shared the experience of profound change in music during the Second World War with other parts of Melanesia and Oceania at large (Lindstrom & White 1998: 25-33, Diettrich 2011: 45).[946] Thus, there was already an established tradition of syncretic music based on string instruments in place when electronic equipment, a carrier of prestige and associated with modernity, became available in the 1960s. Stringband music, however, asserted itself as an independent genre, standing apart from, and mixed very little with forms of popular music. It must consequently be regarded as belonging to a layer of acquisition distinguishable from other, mostly later arriving and evolving syncretic music genres in Vanuatu.

As compared to nowadays, early stringbands had more members and fewer different instruments, i.e. mainly guitars which took over different functions within the arrangement. The musicians most probably sang at a lower pitch and played while seated. Stringband music and *pop miusik* progressed independently and manifested some differences, for example through the development of genre-specific instruments and the use of the label *stringban*. In the course of time, musical instruments were adjusted to the needs of the genre and various percussion instruments were added, especially on Futuna. A modified stringing of guitars made it easier to play the chords, most likely contributing to the wide dissemination of stringband music around the islands. Musicians now perform while standing, enabling them to sing with high, loud and piercing voices. The line-up of stringbands is very flexible and instrumentalists often take turns or change instruments.

The social importance of stringband music increased in the 1970s when it became a catalyst of the independence movement. A second factor that popularised stringband music was a successful radio programme of Paul Gardissat who was also an important figure for the evolving stringband cassette industry from the mid-70s onwards. Since the 1980s, the style of stringbands from the Shepherds Islands and from Efate and its northern off-shore islands has

[946] In *Music in Pacific Cultures* (Diettrich, Moulin & Webb 2011) the authors write passages on the musics of Micronesia, Polynesia and Melanesia respectively. In the following, I quote the contributors accordingly.

been particularly influential. Part of the success of the bands from this region is owed to their proximity to the capital Port Vila, where income opportunities for stringbands and the local music industry are concentrated.[947] After independence, new media arrived and *pop miusik* increased in popularity. Gardissat's monopoly in commercial recording was repealed in the mid-80s when the West-Papuan group BLACK BROTHERS came onto the scene, helping to create a sense of pan-Melanesian unity in popular music and giving the impulse for self-contained music productions.

Most Pacific musics never make it into the global world music marketing networks,[948] and the sale of cassettes is not profitable in its own right; however, some successful stringbands manage to generate a good income through contracts with resorts and even perform overseas on trips organised by the National Tourism Office. Consumption, promotion and marketing do not play a major role in stringband music, as the genre exists apart from the big multinational companies.

Stringbands use the few marketing tools available in Vanuatu to increase their popularity and their commercial success by producing video clips, tapes and CDs. Increased Internet accessibility, the digitisation of music, at least in Port Vila (Stern 2014), and the affordability of digital home recording equipment has promoted the establishment of recording studios by small-scale entrepreneurs in Port Vila since 2000.[949] In Vanuatu, all aspects of the marketing of sound carriers are organised and controlled, whether by Vanuata Productions or by the musicians themselves in collaboration with smaller studios. There has been a parallel development in Papua New Guinea with the emergence of many small, digitally-producing home studios (Wilson 2014, Crowdy 2018: 127 f. & 139) which seem to work similarly to studio operators in Vanuatu[950] and which distribute the cassettes along similar networks (Crowdy 2018: 128). Businessmen of East Asian descent play a crucial role in the music industries of both countries and can also be found in the Solomon Islands and New Caledonia.

[947] Tourism is a source of income for some groups; however, it is not as crucial for the preservation of the genre as compared to, for example, music and dance in Tahiti (Moulin 2011: 134 f., 138).

[948] Diettrich, Moulin & Webb 2011: 5 & Hayward 1998: 2. See Crowdy (2018: 143 f.) for an attempted explanation.

[949] However, as Crowdy points out, in spite of increased Internet accessibility and bandwidth, and despite better hardware and software, a mismatch remains through very high costs and because Western sites concurrently upsize complexity (2018: 144 f.).

[950] However, session musicians are seldom employed (while this was or is common in PNG's bigger studios, see Crowdy 2018: 128). In Vanuatu, this practice seems to have declined with the abandonment of Vanuwespa Studio.

The bands do not specialise in different audiences but address various groups of listeners (such as their own community or ni-Vanuatu in general) with different songs within their repertoire; there is not a separate tourist repertoire, as in other genres. This mixture is reflected in the compilation of songs on albums. Stringband lyrics are either in a local language, in Bislama or in English (with bands often using all three languages), while the musical arrangements do not differ according to language. A number of topics appeal to composers Pacific-wide, and some studies (of various genres) mention subjects which closely resemble typical stringband lyrics.[951] Stringband songs are oriented towards the melody, and composers adjust their wordings accordingly. Compared with this, Polynesian, Micronesian and traditional Melanesian music is often word-oriented (logogenic) and perceived as oral poetry, with the text being the most important part of the performance.[952]
Despite common ground[953] and pan-Pacific musical features (such as the fast Polynesian-inspired ukulele strumming patterns), Vanuatu stringband music is a distinctive genre[954] and Vanuatu's 'soundscape' is unthinkable without it. Stringbands create an outstanding, typical timbre and a characteristic manner of style, including a specific instrumentation and markers of local place through vernacular lyrics, as well as rhythmic and melodic idiosyncrasies. The uniqueness of the genre results from the interplay of various factors, many of which are connected with its place and role in Vanuatu's communities.

8.2 Stringbands as an Integral Part of Vanuatu's Communities

Processes of identity construction have been related to periods of change or of conflict (Rice 2007: 25, Young 1995: 3 f.). I challenge this view by arguing that the formation of identity is an ongoing process, happening all the time (although possibly at a varying pace). The

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[951] With respect to songs from Micronesia, Diettrich mentions "themes of romantic love, travel and separation, and current events; texts are usually identified with specific people and places […]" (2011: 125), as well as commemorative songs (2011: 119, 172); the latter are also mentioned by Webb (2011: 103) with respect to musicians in PNG. Webb also reports on songs which represent "public, nonformal instruction" (2011: 106); that is, songs which conform to my category of 'awareness-songs'. According to Moulin (and referring to Polynesia) "[s]ong content is wide-ranging, but frequently concerns a special person or place; feelings of island pride, homesickness, or attachment to a place; the beauty of a particular island; love for a boyfriend or girlfriend, the homeland, parents, or God; and island nature […]" (2011: 136).

[952] Such performances often include coordinated dancing movements, hand gestures and the use of items held in the hands of the dancers (such as clubs and fans in Fijian *meke*) or even body painting, headdresses or masks (see also Diettrich, Moulin & Webb 2011: 20, 37, 136 f.). All of these are absent in stringband music.

[953] Vanuatu's stringbands are akin to stringbands in PNG and bamboo bands in PNG and the Solomon Islands.

[954] Crowe states that "any similarity to Hawaiian or Tahitian songs is accidental" (Crowe 1998: 140).

stringband genre is an example of this: it reaffirms and reproduces social values, adjusting them slowly as society changes. New members of a community, such as children, are socialised by means of cultural practices, including music. While music lessons at public schools in Vanuatu are very much dependent on the personal interests of individual teachers, religious music is much practised in churches and within families. Confident and loud singing, as well as the ability to harmonise can be found in church communities across the Pacific (Diettrich, Moulin & Webb 2011: 75 f. & 79), and choirs, especially those of the SDA, are the breeding ground for trained singers in Vanuatu. Stringband music is not taught systematically but practised rather as part of the daily life routine, usually involving the elder's example and self-education. Except for written lyrics, no notation system is used. Instead, songs are learned and remembered through listening and constant repetition.[955] The vast majority of musicians start playing in a stringband before turning to other musics. Thus, stringband music provides a basic training in syncretic music.

Popular motivations for the founding (or revival) of a stringband are the intention to keep the boys from the island community together, a competitive spirit when faced with a stringband competition or the prospect of earning some money. The band members are often monitored by older men, and the membership to a group, as well as its repertoire, are quasi hereditary. While some communities find it hard to interest the younger people for their *kastom miusik* and sometimes have to make an effort to revitalise it, stringbands usually have no difficulties in finding young talents. The naturalness in which stringband music is passed on from one generation to the next within a community illustrates how much it is part of the everyday.

Since the media was barely existent in the island communities at the time of fieldwork, live stringband music was rated high in the rural areas. Notwithstanding this, some musicians attach importance to the preservation of stringband music in the form of archiving old stringband recordings, tending to the relationships between groups in associations, and promoting the genre by staging festivals like the Fest'Nalega. Although music competitions and festivals, "a means of modelling unity in the midst of extreme cultural diversity" (Webb 2011: 52)[956] are popular throughout Oceania, big festivals are more important for other Pacific music genres, as stringband concerts are usually small-scale events.

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[955] Many music genres in Oceania are transmitted through participation and imitation; for Polynesia see Moulin (2011: 75), for Micronesia Diettrich (2011: 79) and for Melanesia Crowdy (2018: 107).

[956] See for example for Micronesia Diettrich (2011: 39, 124), for Polynesia Mackley-Crump (2012) and Moulin (2011: 59) and for Melanesia Webb (2011: 52 & 141) and Crowdy (2018: 29), as well as Kaeppler and Stevenson in Kaeppler & Love 1998: 53-59 & Niles, Chenoweth and Kaeppler in Kaeppler & Love 1998: 62-68.

The musical style of a band is linked to identity through the same origin or shared background of its members. The importance of concepts of *ples* is a general feature of music in Melanesia.[957] Thus, the numerous substyles of stringband music result from a strong pronunciation of local particularities and the cultivation of repertoires handed down as 'traditions' within the communities. To engage in stringband music is to engage in the community, and most stringbands feed on family structures. Sometimes, the members of a town-dwelling stringband share a house. The playing styles are jealously guarded by some and the groups generally fall back on the boys from their community to ensure continuity and purity in style.[958] Groups nevertheless copy each other's styles, particularly those of famous stringbands. Popular songs, recorded in Vila and disseminated via cassettes, motivate rural musicians to adjust their vocal and instrumental techniques. Participation in a stringband is supposed to have positive effects on the youth's social behaviour. The musical arrangements, as well as the organisation of stringbands easily allows for the substitution of individual members. This fact does no harm to the identification with the group, on the contrary; band members switch between 'branches' of the same group in town and in the village, or groups split up to perform at two different venues at the same time. Stringbands include more members than those performing simultaneously.

The preceding chapters expound a striking aspect in the conceptualisation of ni-Vanuatu music categories, namely the sharp division between stringband music and *pop miusik*.[959] They differ not only concerning musical parameters, performance practices, marketing strategies and lyrics but also with respect to organisational structures and their roles in the community.

Stringband songs are composed of the musicians' own accord but can also be commissioned by someone from the community, and even purchased. A stringband is a commercial occupancy, providing the opportunity of earning cash, even without formal education. It is a characteristic trait of stringbands that their revenue is not shared amongst their members but put aside and eventually either used for purchases of the group itself or of the group's wider community. Often, the stringband provides for the bride price for the wedding of one of its members. Thus, the group's savings are also used for the benefit of those who are not involved with the band, and sometimes the redistribution is organised or controlled by the communities'

[957] For PNG see for example Wilson 2014, Crowdy 2018: 30 and Gillespie 2010: 123-155.

[958] There seem to exist pan-Melanesian traits regarding the social composition of the bands. Crowdy remarks: "This is a relatively common characteristic in PNG music – younger members will often join in with original members or relatives to carry on a repertoire or style of a particular group – family or clan connections are usually crucial to this process" (2018: 160).

[959] Various differences between the categories are summarised in Table 2.

jif. The musicians interviewed reported disadvantages and barriers which arise from their obligations and the monitoring of the community. Stringbands are more lucrative than most pop groups because the operating costs of the latter (for a rehearsal room, electricity, transport and equipment) are far higher. Sometimes successful stringbands evolve into pop groups, a process which often brings about changes in the composition of the groups: the stringband's collective and community-based character gives way to a more individual-focused orientation.

Considering their importance for the communities, it is a legitimate question to ask whether stringbands bring about a social reorganisation with respect to age, gender, kinship or religion. Usually, this is not the case, as stringbands often rather function as an affirmation of the system in place.[960] Stringbands are not a form of youth culture (in a western sense). The participation usually ends at an advanced age, typically with the marriage of individual musicians, while the band keeps going. Some former active members keep working in the background (for example in the band's committee, or as the driver of the group's taxi), and occasionally some join the lads in performances, in the case of a shortage of musicians or as specialists in studio recordings. Thus, a stringband is a cross-generational undertaking and stringband music is appreciated by old and young people as a welcome entertainment.

In Melanesia's social organisation, gender dichotomies are fundamental and have been the subject of many studies.[961] Gender segregation is an established principle in traditional musics throughout Oceania,[962] with women seldom playing instruments in public performances of syncretic musics.[963] Stringbands hold up to expectations in this regard. For decades, stringband music was an almost entirely male domain and the participation of women can be considered an absolute exception – be it an all-female band, a lead singer or in another field of the industry.[964] Recording studios, for example, are run exclusively by men. However, there

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[960] However, there are exceptions: some groups, such as TOTAS LOCAL STRINGBAND and MAUNA STRINGBAND indeed challenge the social conditions of their surroundings.

[961] Marilyn Strathern's *The Gender of the Gift* (1988) and, of course, Bronislaw Malinowski's *The Sexual Life of Savages in North-West Melanesia* (1932) being among the most famous. For studies focusing on gendered social structures and the status of women in Vanuatu, see the writings of Jolly (e.g. 1994, 2015), Eriksen (2008) and Bolton (e.g. 1999c, 2003).

[962] For Micronesia see for example Diettrich (2011: 20 & 24 f.), for Polynesia Moulin (2011: 67) and Kaeppler (1998: 241) and for Melanesia Webb (2011: 28), Lutkehaus (1998: 245 f.), Weiner & Niles (2015) and Crowdy (2018: 52 f.). For Fiji see Cattermole 2011: 212-216.

[963] Hawai'i is an exception (see Moulin 2011: 16). Singing, however, is more prevalent. There are popular female singers in Vanuatu, Fiji and other parts of the Pacific. Gillespie records a significant increase in singing amongst rural Duna women within the timespan of three decades (2010: 212).

[964] Recording studios, for example, are run exclusively by men. "In acknowledging the gender imbalance in the industry", the Port Vila-based association Further Arts and the organisers of Fest'Napuan initiated the Women in Music Project in 2010, "to encourage greater participation by young women and to provide a safe and attractive

are no universally valid restrictions and the instruments of stringbands are not gendered (see for example Ammann 2011: 156 f.) or associated with supernatural power (as in the case of some traditional instruments in Melanesia). Women are not excluded from stringband performances unless the group performs in the sort of kava bar or *nakamal* where women are not welcome. In the few cases where women appear as protagonists in stringband music, the gender issue is foregrounded (for example, husbands are in the position to give or withhold their permission). The impact of women in stringband music becomes evident in other roles: for one thing, as listeners and audience (and some expect them to be attracted by the musicians), for another they are – once they are the musicians' wives – in the position to prohibit their husbands from actively participating in the band (however, this seems a flimsy excuse in some cases). Women often support the groups' fundraising events by selling food. Both girls and women are the subject of countless stringband songs in which the appeal as well as the problems between the sexes are addressed. With respect to dancing, however, stringband music has made a difference in its establishing *danis teksas*, a couple dance. There is no sexualized image of female ni-Vanuatu in the context of dancing and music, at least not to the same extent as compared with stereotyped images of Polynesian and Micronesian women (see for example Moulin 2011: 133 f. & Diettrich 2011: 152).

Some communities ban stringband performances for religious reasons, in the majority of parishes, however, stringband music is not regarded as being contradictory to a Christian way of living; on the contrary: chants are part of the repertoire and most groups compose their own songs with Christian-shaped lyrics. Some stringbands were initiated by pastors and some bands feature a pastor among their members. Christianity is not only essential for most communities in Vanuatu but can be termed a "shared Pacific religion" (Diettrich, Moulin & Webb 2011: 4), playing a prominent role in many of Oceania's musics. Christian values are expressed in many stringband songs and correspond with all levels of identity.

atmosphere to facilitate this" (https://www.furtherarts.org/2010/12/03/women-in-music-project/, last accessed on 6 April 2020). However, the steps taken seem to aim at pop musicians. In 2019, the pop group PARAN LATAN from Tanna was the first all-female entry in the Pacific Break competition (https://www.abc.net.au/radio-australia/pacific-break/ last accessed on 6 April 2020).

8.3 Levels of Identity

Stringband music is at home in different settings and has many meanings, functions and specific histories. In the preceding chapters it has been shown that various aspects of stringband music correspond with different layers of identity from Pacific-wide consciousness via pan-Melanesian identification through national and regional consciousness up to local cultural and language identities.

8. 3.1 'Pacific-ness' and 'Melanesian-ness'

In style and instrumentation stringbands resemble other ensembles in Oceania and thus exhibit a musical 'Pacific-ness'.[965] The wider regional characteristics include "an emphasis on group identity, gender separation, and the social foundations of performance" (Diettrich, Moulin & Webb 2011: 162). While a common identity is sometimes evoked by the use of the term *Pasifika*,[966] some stringband songs relate to pan-Pacific affairs by employing lyrics about climate change, pollution, nuclear testing and natural resources.

Pidgins/Creoles, as well as concepts of the 'Melanesian Way' (as set out in Narokobi 1983) have enabled a "[m]odern political unification and an increasing sense of Melanesian-ness" (Webb 2011: 36), with distinctly Melanesian worldviews highlighting Melanesian values but also being directed against misconceptions and misrepresentations of the region.[967] Webb & Webb-Gannon "propose that songs, singing, and music and dance performances, which increasingly are being circulated and consumed in video form, are becoming crucial sites in the ongoing construction of 'Melanesian-ness' and projection of 'Melanesianism'" (2016: 61). Although the impact of Vanuatu's stringbands remains domestic, the genre is clearly part of the 'musical Melanesian Way'.[968] A pan-Melanesian layer of identity is constructed and represented in some stringband songs when regional events, organisations or conflicts (such as the Bougainville crisis) are addressed. Bislama lyrics often comprise Tok Pisin vocabulary and allude to a '*wantok* identity', shared by those speaking a variety of Melanesian

[965] The term refers to "perceived similarities and a sense of shared heritage as Pacific Islanders" and "the music […] that people recognize as […] 'island style'" (Diettrich, Moulin & Webb 2011: 4).
[966] See Webb & Webb-Gannon 2016: 70 f. and Mackley-Crump 2012: vi for another application of the term.
[967] Other Melanesian intellectuals with similar ambitions include Jean-Marie Tjibaou (2005) from New Caledonia and Walter Lini (1980) from Vanuatu. See also Crowdy 2018: 14. Webb & Webb-Gannon list four factors which have lead to an increased promotion of a Melanesian identity in recent years (2016: 60 f.).
[968] Crowdy's term (2018: 16).

Pidgin/Creole.[969] A similar concept underlies the notion of '*wan solwora*' (or *solwota*, *solwara*) which "refers to a shared sense of place and culture, a broader communal identity within the Pacific Islands" (Webb 2011: 143), or, particularly, Melanesia. In Vanuatu, I recorded the application of the term in the announcements of the conférencier at the Fest'Napuan. The lyrics of DAUSAKE's song 'Melanesian Arts Festival' seem like a stringband version of the lyrical mapping which occurs in the Melanesia-related pop songs analysed by Webb & Webb-Gannon (2016).

Compared to stringband music, the idea of *wantok*-ism is even more prominent in the Melanesian varieties of reggae[970] where it amalgamates with concepts of 'blackness' (Webb & Webb-Gannon 2016: 66-70, 84; see also Solis 2014).[971] 'Freedom' (whether in the abstract or concretely regarding the political situation in the Melanesian regions West Papua and New Caledonia), as well as 'unity', are central terms in countless *rege*-lyrics in Vanuatu and "a supreme cultural value across the region" (Webb 2011: 103). Interestingly, the notion of 'blackness' is only expressed in Melanesian reggae (and recently hip-hop), whereas 'freedom', 'respect' and 'unity' are also popular topics of stringband songs. Oceanian and Melanesian identities are constructed and reflected in stringband music; however, national, regional and local layers of identity are even more important.

8.3.2 Syncretic Music and Nation-Building

I argue that one of stringband music's outstanding features is that it is nationally emblematic. The quest of some pop musicians in Vanuatu who seek a national musical expression also evolves in other parts of Melanesia. In his portrait of the band SANGUMA from Papua New Guinea, Denis Crowdy (2018) demonstrates that creating national musical characteristics were an important agenda of this band. However, their approach was very different from the ways in which Vanuatu's stringbands nurture national identity, as a comparison with this well-documented case reveals.[972]

[969] The notion of the *wantok* system relates to supportive relationships from the family and community but also in a broader sense to a perceived kinship amongst Melanesians.

[970] The resemblance of reggae from PNG and the Solomon Islands to *rege* from Vanuatu is great; in musical style, as well as with respect to the production techniques. Among the shared stylistic idioms are, for example, particular sounds of Yamaha keyboards and the Auto-Tune/Vocoder effect which was popular across the popular musics of Melanesia at the beginning of the 21st century.

[971] "Currently, throughout Melanesia the idea of reggae is compelling as an emotive means of identifying with black peoples globally, both spiritually and politically" (Webb 2011: 103).

[972] My comparison aims not at the musical styles which are in great contrast to each other. In this respect, the band TROPIC TEMPO from Vanuatu is most comparable with SANGUMA.

The perceived lack of a national style of pop music as voiced by musicians in Vanuatu was also found by Crowdy.[973] From a European perspective the idea of a 'national musical style' is strange, unrealistic and even problematic. However, the appeal of national cultural forms in Melanesia is explained by the heterogeneity of the island communities that form the nation states (see also Crowdy 2018: 67). SANGUMA was formed at "an urban site of tertiary education" (ibid.: 6), namely the National Art School (NAS)[974], where the musicians were encouraged to create "a pan-PNG style" (ibid.: 27). The band was supported through access to modern equipment and musical instruments, as well as through professional guidance in Western harmony, arranging, improvisation and composition (ibid.: 35). This support even involved the "development of the repertoire, group organization, and the naming process" (ibid.: 23) of SANGUMA.[975] The group merged musical material from various places in PNG and featured band members of different cultural backgrounds (ibid.: 29 f., 42). The band's musical approach, that is to say the fusion of Western musical concepts and music technology with a variety of local music instruments with or without "the traditions associated with them" (ibid.: 102), is linked to values, an ethos and a philosophy which were grounded on ideas of 'Melanesian-ness' expressed by intellectual thinkers such as Bernard Narokobi. The fear of cultural imperialism and of the loss of traditional musical practices, as well as the simultaneous rejection of imitations of Western models played a crucial role (ibid.: 22). SANGUMA who were regarded as representatives of PNG during international tours, had a rather specific audience in their home country: largely urban, usually over thirty years old and one which included expatriates.[976] Despite the international recognition they received and despite their presence in the media, SANGUMA's style was not typical for PNG's commercial popular music.[977]

Referring to the decade between the mid-70s and mid-80s, Crowdy notes that "[e]xisting contemporary music at the time – stringband and rock groups, for example – were [sic] clearly not regarded as appropriate" because it "was imitative of foreign forms" (2018: 22). This is in sharp contrast to the situation in pre-independence Vanuatu, where stringbands have been encouraged by politicians for representing Melanesian-ness, due to the local character of the

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[973] "PNG did not have *a* style that was recognized as being distinctively Papua New Guinean – in the sense that reggae, for example, was seen as distinctively Jamaican" (Crowdy 2018: 37, italics as in the original).
[974] SANGUMA's members belonged to Port Moresby's 'art scene': "The music was performed by formally educated students, graduates, and staff of that institution [the NAS]" (Crowdy 2018: 6, see also p. 20).
[975] See also pages 22, 40, 82, 96, 101 & 106.
[976] Crowdy 2018: 6, 43 & 65 & Kain 1984, quoted in Crowdy 2018: 51.
[977] Crowdy 2018: 6, 37, 61 f., 64, 68, 123 & 141 f.

genre which made stringband music an ideal tool with which to promote unity among the diverse Melanesian population of Vanuatu. The role of stringband music within national politics around independence led to a nationalisation of the genre. The spread of the idea of Vanuatu as a nation (as reflected in songs composed for competitions) and the increased usage of Bislama both by politicians as well as on the radio has led to more Bislama lyrics in stringband songs since the second half of the 1970s. Melanesian culture was pronounced, the groups served as crowd pullers at politicians' election campaigns, and stringband music as a characteristic genre from Vanuatu was fostered and opposed to *pop miusik* which in turn passed for being 'influenced by the West'. Thus, the link between stringband music and national identity is grounded in the genre's history and role for the independence movement. The strong ties between the two are maintained by the constant reference to Vanuatu in stringband lyrics which are used as a channel to publicise awareness-raising activities in ni-Vanuatu society.

The differences between SANGUMA and Vanuatu's stringbands are evident. Except for individual sponsoring politicians, there is no support on the part of the state and no formal training for stringbands. Unlike SANGUMA, stringbands have no affinity for technology. There are many stringband songs about new technologies and the lyrics generally praise development, while the stringband's own technologies are frozen: the instrumentation has remained unchanged since decades for the most part and is easily accessible. The recent digital recording technologies are used to create productions which barely differ sound-wise from recordings made with analogue equipment; a persistence and conservatism contributing to the genre's aura.

Yet other differences are striking. Stringbands only tour overseas in the context of tourism-related events and are used as musical ambassadors by the NTO, while at the same time stringband music is considered typical cultural practice within Vanuatu. Their audience includes people of all ages and occupations, rural and urban, while in former decades only few expatriates were stringband enthusiasts. When stringband musicians seize *kastom miusik*, they make use of elements from their own music culture which is usually the same for all members of the group. The coupling of the traditional and the modern as well as the conjunction between past and present seem more incidental, more organic and natural while less intentional and programmatic as compared to the efforts of SANGUMA and other groups who have a try at 'imagining the future', creating a notion of a 'Melanesian *stael*' and striving for international markets, sometimes by means of applying a 'world music appeal'. The

comparison between SANGUMA and Vanuatu's stringbands illustrates an essential finding of my work: while Melanesian musicians from the domain of pop pursue their agenda of creating 'national' music styles, Vanuatu stringbands already hold this position. In stringband music, the construction and expression of uniquely ni-Vanuatu aspects of identity is not a masterminded enterprise by cultural institutions or the music industry but arises as a result of many factors by default.

I seldom encountered critical positions towards *pop miusik* among stringband musicians – in contrast to SANGUMA and the teachers at the NAS who saw PNG's commercial pop music "as cultural threat" (Crowdy 2018: 141). While Crowdy portrays SANGUMA "as an extraordinary group of people" (2018: 15) and highlights their "pioneering role" (ibid.: 83), stringbands are unexceptional in Vanuatu. With reference to PNG stringband music, Crowdy points out that "there appears to be some cultural cringe, particularly among urban dwellers, about its origins and grassroots status" (2018: 65). Michael Webb writes with respect to stringband music in Vanuatu:

> "Being quite locale-specific, attempts to market it across national borders have been largely unsuccessful. String band still evokes strong feelings of nostalgia in New Caledonia and Papua New Guinea, where it is now a signifier of the local and "tradition" (2011: 103).

Despite occurring change, the stringband genre is subject to relatively static musical and extra-musical structures, and is involved in identity constructions that tend to pronounce continuity with traditions which make it suitable for partaking in a nation-building process. I conclude that stringband music is conducive to the construction of identities and is successful in identifying 'as ni-Vanuatu' because: (1) it has enough 'history' and 'tradition' to be perceived as being 'close to *kastom*' and it is perceived by ni-Vanuatu as 'their own'; (2) it is modern enough to be associated with contemporary Melanesian life; (3) it is wide-spread enough throughout the country to be a national phenomenon and it is rated as a 'national genre' (*nasonal stael*); lastly (4), it is strongly connected to the struggle of independence and independence celebrations, and is thus something ni-Vanuatu can easily identify with.

Now that stringband music has a history since independence which is as long as that before independence, it is apparent that the genre carries more relevance than being instrumental to independence back then and commemorating it afterwards. Stringband music addresses many domains of life in Vanuatu, thus providing authenticity without its being a political genre, as fierce criticism is seldom voiced. The proclaimed common cultural heritage of Vanuatu has

not only acquired “reality […] through the colonial process” (Keesing 2000: 237 f.) but also through stringband music which, as a popular cultural practice, contributes to the building of the nation. At the same time, stringband music plays a crucial role in proclaiming unity amongst the citizens of a province, the inhabitants of an island or members of a language group, while also operating in very local contexts.

8. 3. 3 Local Identity

The history of stringband music provides an example of the evolution and ‘encapsulation’ of a music genre: following initial acquisition processes, further hybridisation took place at a slow pace. As stringband music is successful in identity construction and representation, stringband musicians stay within the genre boundaries and are only seldom tempted to incorporate musical traits of popular music, whereas borrowings of, and mixtures with local traditional musics occur in some areas. Rural stringband styles entail local elements in the form of vernacular lyrics, local percussion instruments and the corresponding rhythms, as well as occasionally the adoption of *kastom* songs. These characteristic features define a group’s style locally and thus play their part in constructing local identities. In some areas within Vanuatu where *kastom miusik* traditions have dried up, stringband music is regarded as a substitute with respect to some of their functions and is actually considered a ‘new *kastom*’. The various local substyles, as well as issues concerning the reception of stringband music are valuable sites for further research.

Some stringband lyrics address topics which are relevant and relatable for only a small, local audience. The song texts commemorate individuals, significant events and technological accomplishments, with the scope of these oral histories being quite local.[978] Many names of bands relate to their local environment in one way or another, for example by choosing a place name as a name for the local group.

It is likely that stringband music will persist because of its musical virtues and its aesthetic impact. The genre provides a soundscape which is perfectly exploitable by the tourism industry and which is easy to market on a grassroots level as it gets along without electricity, and its equipment is low-maintenance. Most notably, however, stringband music is deeply embedded in cultural events of all sorts and in the daily life of Vanuatu’s communities: weddings, baptisms, inaugurations, kava nights, fundraising events, competitions, festivals,

[978] Songs as archives can be found in other societies Pacific-wide; see for example Gillespie 2011 and Lindstrom & White 1998: 28-33.

welcome ceremonies, campaign events and various festivities along a spectrum from Christmas to Independence Day. Stringband music transcends borders of generations, denominations, language communities, dichotomies such as ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’, or ‘rural’ and ‘urban’, while keeping family structures and communities together.

Many years have passed since I re-orientated my field of interest from Fiji to Vanuatu and first experienced a stringband performance upon arrival at Bauerfield Airport. As far as I can see, stringband culture continues to thrive in Vanuatu, however slightly modernised by extensive use of an Auto-Tune effect on lead vocals and occasionally additional synthesizer sounds in studio recordings. Although these new features cannot be realised in live performances and are thus rather superficial, a rapprochement to pop music aesthetics seems to be under way. Nowadays, music videos are more important and more numerous in the field of stringband music. This is not surprising, given the crucial changes in the use and consumption of media in recent years. An assimilation of *stringban* to *pop miusik* cannot be ruled out. There might possibly be the typical ‘sound of Vanuatu’, searched for by some pop musicians in the country. In this case, it is my guess that *stringban* characteristic sounds, patterns and idioms will be part of it.

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Figures

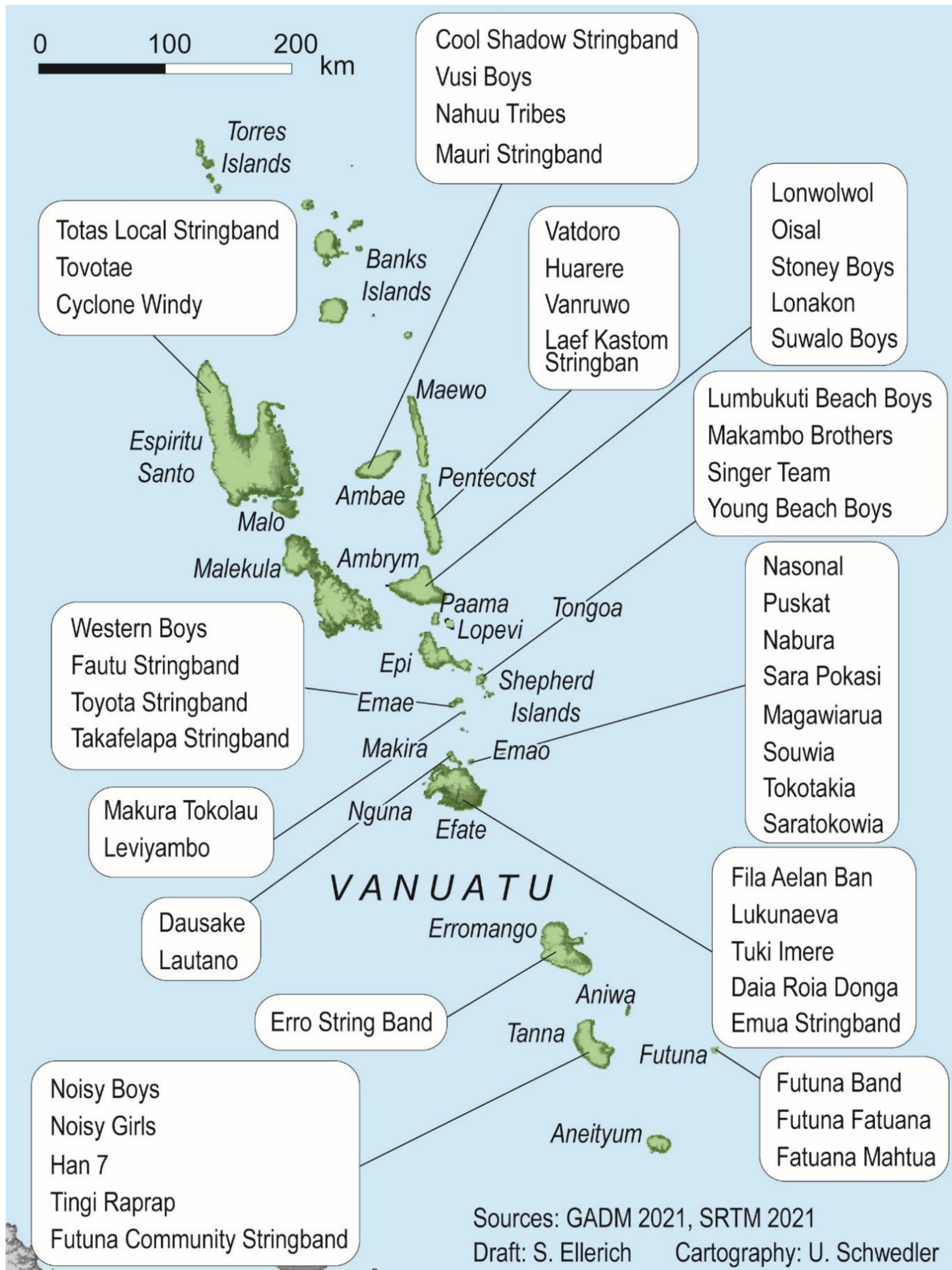


Figure 1: Vanuatu; stringbands according to the island of origin.

Figure 2: *tamtam* ensemble performing during a pig killing ceremony (photograph by the author).

Figure 3: *tamtam* ensemble from Walarano, northeast Malekula (photograph by the author).

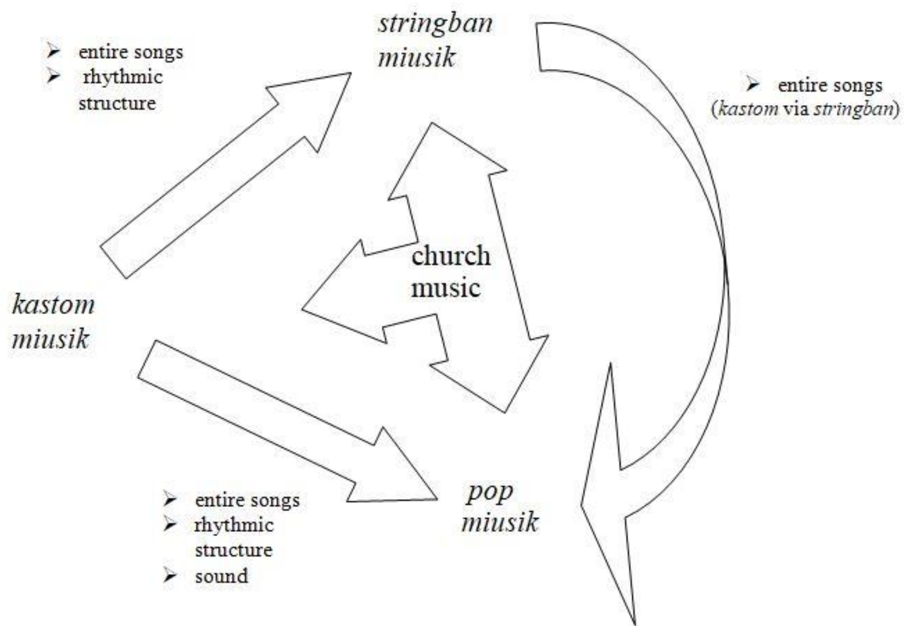


Figure 4: Directions of musical transfer of music genres in Vanuatu

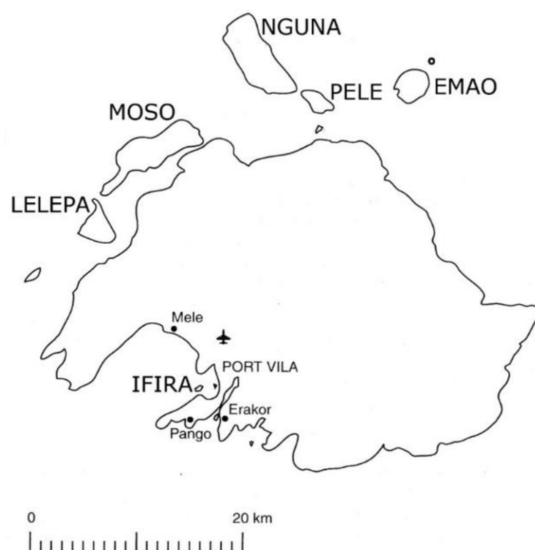


Figure 5: Efate and its offshore islands (contours taken by Van Trease 1995: 350, labelling modified by the author)

Figure 6: Stringband from Futuna performing at Fest'Napuan (photograph by the author).

Figure 7: John Peter performs, Ambae, December 2003 (photograph by the author).

Figure 8: The Owen Hall was taken down at the beginning of 2004 (photograph by the author).

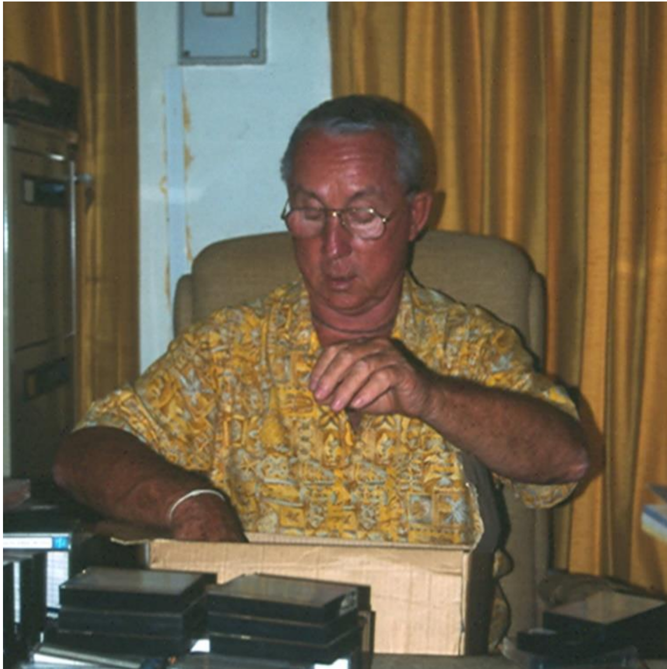


Figure 9: Paul Gardissat in his office at Sun Productions in 2004 (photograph by the author).

olketa man ol i sing sing

WAN PROGRAM BLONG YUFALA, WETEM OL SINGSING BLONG YUFALA. EVRE TU WIK, BAMBAE YUFALA I SAVE LUK FOTO BLONG WAN LOKAL STRING BAN BLONG NIU-HEBRIDIS.

HARRY KINTOR, STANISLAS OLĒKON, VICTOR VAHEKON, BARTHELEMY LENKON, FELIX TIMAKON, FRANCIS TEOLKEKE, JEAN-JOSEPH TOBEL.
" NANA STRING BAN "

Sam yang fala boe blong Olal long Ambrym. Sapos yufala i wantem lesin long olketa - Bambae ol singsing tuesde namba II blong manis mei 1976 ; long kuata tu seven, long Radio Vila. Sapos yu wantem join long program ia, sendem kaset blong yu, o askem kaset long : Paul - P.O.Box 71 - Vila.

Figure 10: NANA STRING BAN from Ambrym in an announcement for Gardissat's radio programme "olketa man ol i sing sing" (Nabanga No. 28, May 8, 1976).

olketa man ol i sing sing

WAN PROGRAM BLONG YUFALA, WETEM OL SINGSING BLONG YUFALA. EVRE TU WIK, BAMBAE YUFALA I SAVE LUK FOTO BLONG WAN LOKAL STRING BAN BLONG NIU-HEBRIDIS.

Jonas Fred, Pierre Kenedy, David Lui, Ronny Jacobas, Suty Moses, Kelpet Kelep mo Wilson.

"SINESIP STRING BAN"

Sam fala yang boe blong Lembinwen velej saot wes bei long Malakula. Sapos yufala i wantem lesin long olketa-Baebae oli singsing long tusdei namba 13 blong manis julae ; long kuata tu seven long Radio Vila. Sapos yu wantem joen long program ia, sendem kaset blong yu, o askem long : Paul - P.O. Box 71 - VILA.

Figure 11: SINESIP STRING BAN from Malekula in an announcement for Gardissat's radio programme "olketa man ol i sing sing" (Nabanga No. 32, July 10, 1976).

Figure 12: The busbes of the group VATDORO (photographed by the author at the group's home village Abwatuntora, north Pentecost)

Figure 13: *yukalele* of good quality, carved from *bluwota* (New Guinea rosewood, *Pterocarpus indicus*) by Pakoa Alick (photograph by the author).

Figure 14: Young musician with a *yuka* carved from the wood of the coconut palm (photograph by the author).

Figure 15: Two sharp extensions at the lower end of the *yukalele* (photograph by the author).

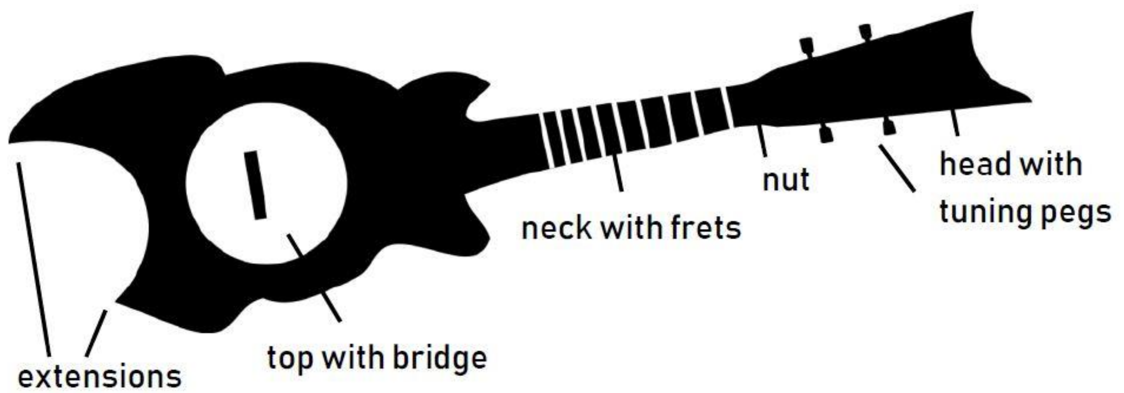


Figure 16: The parts of the *yukalele*

Figure 17: *yukalele* with eight strings, from different perspectives (photograph by the author).

Figure 18: detailed views of the sound hole (left) and wooden string winders (right) (photograph by the author).

Figure 19: Guitar with self-made capo (photograph by the author).

Figure 20: Simple *seka* (photograph by the author).

Figure 21: ***seka***
(photograph by the author).

Figure 22: ***seka*****, built from the machine head of a guitar** (photograph by the author).

Figure 23: bamboo cane used as a *bongo* and hit with a flip-flop
(photograph by the author).

Figure 24: Musician with a *rasras* (left) and a *yuka*
(photograph by the author)

Figure 25: Foxy mo reggae (The Independent/L'Indépendant 2003).

Figure 26: Rural *disko* (photograph by the author).

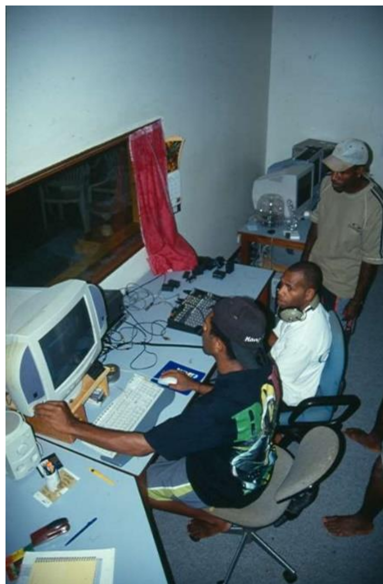
Figure 27: Typical stringband cassette (photograph by the author).

Figure 28: Cassette duplicator of the VKS (photograph by the author).

Figure 29: Jean-Marc Wong at his studio (Vanuata Productions) (photograph by the author).

Figure 30: Benson Nako at his studio (Tropik Zound) (photograph by the author).

Figure 31: Joel Malesi with musicians at Sina Studio (photograph by the author).



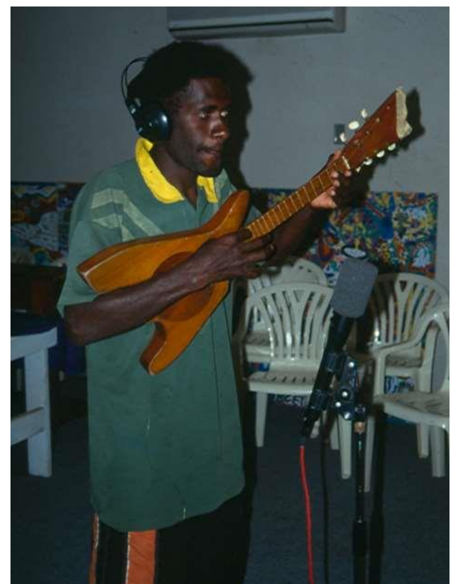


Figure 32: Louis 'Fanny' Philip, Macka Silona and others… (photograph by the author).

Figure 33: … at the VKS Studio… (photograph by the author).

Figure 34: … while recording the *yukalele* player of (YANG) SOUWIA (photograph by the author).

Figure 35: TOKORUA is getting ready to enter Saralana stage at the Fest'Nalega (photograph by the author).

Figure 36: VUSI BOYS in kastom outfit (photograph by the author).

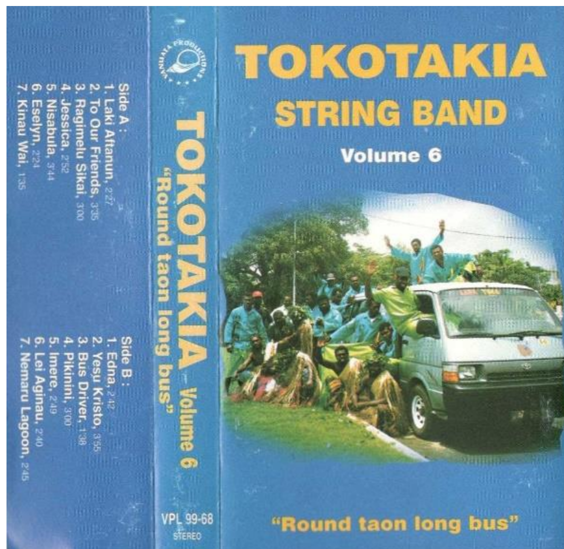


Figure 37: Cassette cover of TOKOTAKIA, "Round taon long bus".

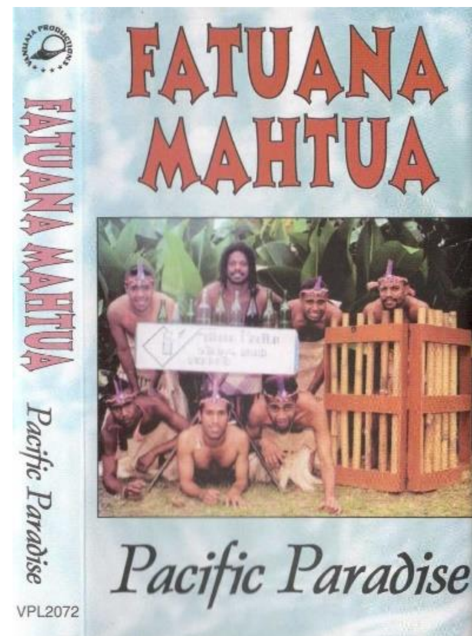


Figure 38: Cassette cover of FATUANA MAHTUA, "Pacific Paradise".

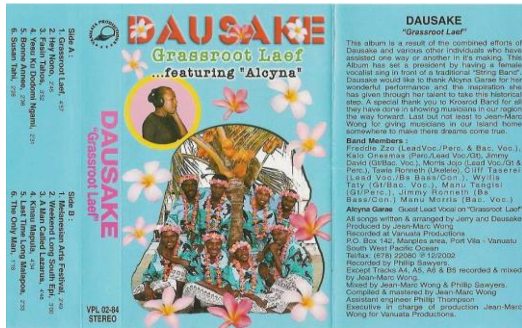


Figure 39: Cassette cover of DAUSAKE, "Grassroot Laef".

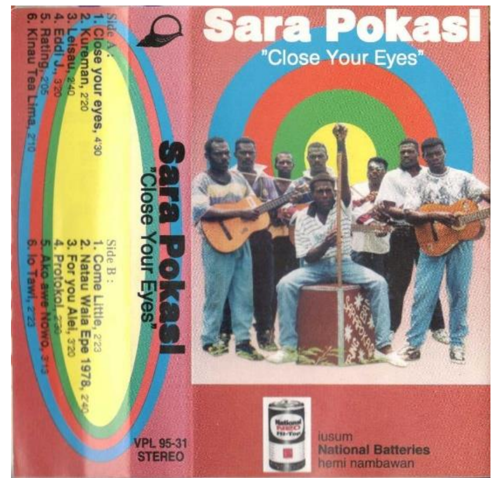


Figure 40: Cassette cover of SARA POKASI, "Close Your Eyes".

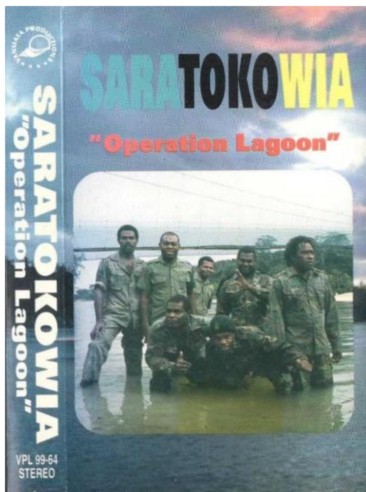


Figure 41: Cassette cover of Saratokowia, "Operation Lagoon".

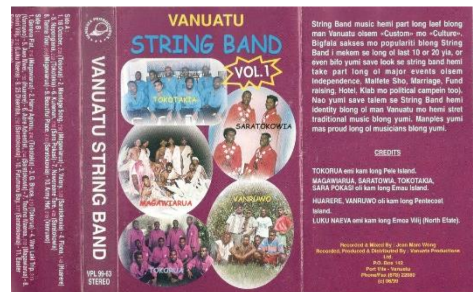


Figure 42: Cassette cover of "Vanuatu String Band Vol. 1"

Figure 43: Cassette cover of MANGAWIARUA [sic] & SARATOKOWIA, "Best Of The Best"

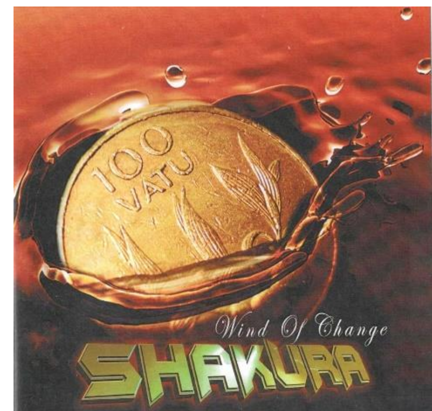


Figure 44: CD cover of SHAKURA, "Wind Of Change"

Appendices

Appendix 1: Tables

Table 1: Prices in Vanuatu (for food and for musical instruments)

In order to convey an impression of the living expenses, the prices for several food items are provided alongside those of musical equipment and instruments. For simplicity's sake, I take the average exchange rate of 1 € : 140 vatu as a basis for the time of my fieldwork. The sums of money mentioned in the text and in this table are rounded.

'Western' food (supermarket)	price in vatu	approximate price in €
1 l long life milk	170 vt	1.20 €
330 ml bottle of *Tusker* beer	200 vt	1.40 €
10 eggs	325 vt	2.30 €
cornflakes	475 vt	3.40 €
180 g tin tuna	110 vt	80 c
newspaper	100 vt	70 c

Food (rural store and else)		
1.5 l water (bottle)	200 vt	1.40 €
2.4 kg fresh tuna	480 vt	3.40 €
piglet (alive)	5000 vt	35.70 €

Local food (market hall and else)		
pineapple	100 - 200vt	70 c - 1.40 €
cassava (small basket)	300 vt	2.15 €
sweet potato (basket)	500 vt	3,60 €
eight coconuts (ripe)	100 vt	70 c
piece of *laplap* (traditional dish)	150 vt	1,07 €
big red pig (for a feast)	40000 vt	286 €*

Sound Centre		
electric guitar *(Pacifica*, Yamaha)	45600 vt	326 €
acoustic western guitar	31600 vt	226 €
set strings (classic guitar)	1800 vt	13 €

*This example is taken from a newspaper advertising.

Table 2: Comparison between *stringban miusik* and *pop miusik**

	stringban	***pop miusik***
utilization of *kastom miusik*	• whole traditional songs are transferred • no 'research' about *kastom miusik*	• either whole songs are transferred or only some musical elements are used • musicians engage in 'research' about *kastom miusik*
instrumentation	• usually only acoustic instruments • no wind instruments used • instruments are largely self-built or built by someone from the community and are improvisational (materials) and modified (guitars) • instruments are comparatively cheap • most groups use a carved *yuka*	• electric or mixed instrumentation • wind instruments are used in a few cases • all instruments have to be bought and are not modified; they are often used over long lapses of time • instruments are expensive • ukuleles are only occasionally used (and not in *rege*)
equipment	• low standards demanded for storage facilities and transport • no electricity required for the performance	• high standards demanded for storage facilities and transport • electricity essential
occurrence	• rural and urban areas	• primarily urban
sound	• distinctive, unique sound without variations from song to song • steady dynamic level from song to song and within songs	• familiar sounds of global popular music in many respects, diversity of sounds • variety in dynamics
tuning of instruments	• oriented towards the singers	• oriented towards the keyboards
singing style	• singing style matches the performance conditions (without amplification) • has to be strong and penetrating	• acquaintance with the use of microphones, more variation in singing styles
arrangements & aesthetic standards	• aesthetic standards of the genre determine arrangements, playing and singing techniques	• more variation in song arrangements; different musical styles, thus more variety

*The comparison focusses on differences rather than on similarities.

(continued on the next page)

teaching & learning	• the majority of musicians first start playing in a stringband before playing popular music • stringband musicians often grow into a working band • 'heredity' of repertoire • no formal education	• musicians usually have experience in church or stringband music before playing *pop miusik* • each generation founds its own bands • private music schools
participation	• the participation of girls or women is very exceptional • band members are usually from the same family / village / neighbourhood • often no fixed line-up, high degree of flexibility and a big pool of musicians (all being members)	• the participation of girls or women is common, especially as singers • band members more often have a 'mixed' background • defined line-up and generally fewer musicians
preservation	• to some, it deems necessary to preserve stringband culture in the form of archives and associations	• there are no arrangements to preserve *pop miusik*
competition	• competition exists among stringbands, sometimes fierce	• less competition and more exchange and collegiality among pop musicians
(improvised) solos	• hardly any variation and improvisation, few instrumental solo parts only at the beginning or ending of songs	• solos of electric guitars and keyboards are common; possible at any position within an arrangement
performance	• instrumentalists often take turns or switch instruments • according to occasion the musicians either face the audience or stand in a circle with their backs to the audience • there is often no stage	• instrumentalists usually stick to their instrument • usually musicians perform on a stage, facing the audience
international attention	• within the context of tourism • sound carriers not available outside Vanuatu	• regionally successful (Melanesia, Oceania) • sound carriers available in the region

Table 3: The twelve most popular songs mentioned by young ni-Vanuatu 2002 – 2004

Position	Title	Artist	Provenance
1	Napesi	MAKOMA	DR Congo / Netherlands
2	One Love	BOB MARLEY & THE WAILERS	Jamaica
	Same Old Cap	NAIO	Vanuatu (Tanna)
3	Freedom	VANESSA QUAI	Vanuatu (Ambae/Vila)
4	Gel Vanuatu	HUARERE	Vanuatu (Pentecost)
	Natamboli	MAKOMA	DR Congo / Netherlands
5	Red Red Wine	UB40	Great Britain
	Island Dress	DAUSAKE	Vanuatu (Nguna)
	Hey Nono	DAUSAKE	Vanuatu (Nguna)
6	Onesua	KROS ROD	Vanuatu (Vila/mixed)
	Vanuan Vatu	VATDORO	Vanuatu (Pentecost)
	Pupu John	DAUSAKE	Vanuatu (Nguna)

Table 4: Possible intentions according to language choice and music genre

	pop-miusik	***stringban***
English	• affiliation to global scenes • commercial interests • relatedness to tourism • practical reasons • influence of international music (such as Gospel); hegemony of reggae • special case: to 'hide information' from elders from the speech community	• relatedness to tourism • practical reasons
French	• political positioning • commercial interests	–
Bislama	• accentuation of the unity of Vanuatu • affiliation to other Melanesian regions where Melanesian Pidgin/Creole is spoken ('*wantok*')	• accentuation of the unity of Vanuatu • to be popularly understood at competitions • to reach out nationwide in order to effectively appeal to listeners in 'awareness songs' • to generate interest in new album releases
Vernaculars	• re-arranged *kastom*-songs; in the first place for people outside of the band's community; appeal of world music	• local connections (e.g. wedding songs) • re-arranged *kastom*-songs; in the first place for people of the stringband's community
Other Languages	• fashion • commercial interests (Tok Pisin)	• humorous effect (Tok Pisin) • relatedness to concrete situations which are connected to the lyrics (e.g. Fijian in a love song involving someone from Fiji) • fashion (Tok Pisin) • to do "something different"

Appendix 2: Biographical notes on Paul Gardissat*

Paul Gardissat was born August 15 1939 in Oran, Algeria, and died May 7 2013.** His background as a "pied-noir" influenced his entire life. Gardissat called himself anti-French and yet French at the same time, citing Albert Camus as an important personal influence. Gardissat worked as a teacher at a primary school but, being French, he had to leave the country although he had supported independence. In Paris, he worked at the theatre and at the newspaper and also became interested in the radio. On January 29 1963, Gardissat came to the Condominium of the New Hebrides to teach at a school in West Ambae (Vilakalaka, Walaha). After six years he went to the Banks Islands, to South Santo, and to Malo. Paul Gardissat spoke several vernacular languages.

He became chief of the Bislama section within the French Radio Port-Vila in 1975 (which eventually became Radio Vanuatu). For his programme 'Kastom, kalja, tradisen' he collected oral traditions throughout the country from the northern Torres Islands down to Aneityum in the south, by interviewing and recording people or by sending tape-recorders and cassettes to the island communities where *kastom stori* specialists recorded their narrations themselves. In the 1970s Gardissat had good opportunities to collect these stories. Later, after independence, people would keep many of them for themselves because the knowledge about *kastom* stories had become important as a proof of land claims. In a programme called 'Contes et legendes des Nouvelle-Hebrides' Gardissat turned the *kastom* stories to radio dramas in French. Different sounds, different speakers and music made the radio plays exciting. As there was neither TV nor video at the time, people would listen to the radio, fascinatedly gathered around the small speakers of the transistor radio, getting goose pimples when the hero of the story encountered a dangerous situation – as did Gardissat himself, the technician during the production. This programme was also aimed at the many French people who lived in Vanuatu before independence. Gardissat wanted to convey the traditions and history of the country to this group of listeners. Occasionally, Gardissat hosted panels of experts who would discuss the historical events on which the oral traditions were based. For example, he would invite an anthropologist, a geographer, an archaeologist, a geography teacher from the French Lycée and the man who

* The information is derived from three long interviews conducted with Paul Gardissat in 2003 and 2004.

** I suppose that he died in Port Vila, Vanuatu. The source of his date of death does not mention the location (https://www.alliancefr.vu/fr/culture/285-paul-gardissat, last accessed on December 31 2018).

had told him the *kastom stori* to discuss a myth about the disappearance of an island in Central Vanuatu. The experts speculated over the location of the sunken island. Years later, Gardissat was satisfied to see that further oceanographic research had revealed the crater of the volcano, thus confirming the details given in the *kastom stori*. Gardissat also recorded traditional musics when he went to the islands and was involved in the first National Arts Festival in Vila in 1979, an important event in the context of the recollection of traditional practices.

As a former teacher, he also wished to transmit educational programmes to his listeners at other opportunities. Once, for instance, some people from North Efate came to his studio with pelicans they had caught. Gardissat broadcasted the sounds produced by the animals and provided information about these birds which are not endemic to Vanuatu.

Gardissat created the popular stringband programme 'Olketa man ol i sing sing', made radio programmes about the big stringband competitions and hosted a stringband live show every Saturday night. He started to produce stringband cassettes commercially from 1979 onwards; first at his private house and at the radio studio, later in the recording studio Vanuata Productions and eventually in his studio Sun Productions.

Gardissat can be regarded as an ambassador of stringband music, as someone who defended the genre against much animosity from his fellow expatriates. Europeans usually perceived the music as uninteresting and monotonous and had no interest at all in any kind of sponsoring. Gardissat worked against this attitude with his stringband-related programmes to provide the context for a proper appreciation of the music. In doing so, he gradually became part of this context himself and, eventually, an important player in the scene for a long time. It is to Gardissat's credit that stringband music became popularized and stringbands encouraged.

At the time of the interviews, Paul Gardissat was however no longer interested in current stringband music, saying that he also never listens to the radio, as he has got other things to do now. Apart from his job as the manager of Sun Production Printers, he managed a landscape gardening firm with several employees.

Notation Example 1

Most common yukalele chords in Vanuatu stringband music

♩ = 120

NAMBAWAN

D6 D D(3rdposition) D7

mf

B F♯ D A

T A B

NAMBATU

G/D Gadd9/D G7(no5)/F G7/F

NAMBATRI

A7/E A7sus2/E A/E

FLAT

E6(C♯m7/E) E7

Tuning

Notation Example 2

Introdaksen 'Awe Liza'

♩ = 86

Intro

G/D

yuka

mf

gita

lid gita

busbes

seka

A7/E

D6

A/E

D

D7 G/D

G/D

A7/E

A/E

Notation Example 3

Yukalele Introdaksen

♩ = 170

Introdaksen David Boe 1

G/D A7/E D D6

YUKA

mf

3x

Introdaksen David Boe 2

Emadd11 D6 B/D♯ D6

mf

Emadd11 D6 D D7 D6 G/D D6 G/D D6

Notation Example 4

STEP - YUKALELE

♩ = 200

STANDARD TU STEP PATTERN

YUKA

mf

WAN STEP BY David Boe, Ambae

D D6 D D6 D D6 D D6

(♫ = ♩♪)

TU STEP BY David Boe, Ambae

VARIATION WITHOUT STOP

Notation Example 5

Ending - Yukalele

♩ = 200

(♫ = ♩♪)

Ending tu step by David Boe, Ambae

Yuka

mf

Ending tu step by David Boe, Ambae

Slight ritardando

(♫ = ♫)

Wan step ending by David Boe, Ambae