Chapter 1

Magkaisa!
Popular Music, People Power, and the Philippines' Unfinished Revolutions

Rodelio Cruz Manacsa
University of the South, Sewanee, USA

ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to track how the various meanings of the Philippine bayan (nation) were communicated through music. First, an innovative theoretical framework is developed to map out how meanings of cultural texts are formed and how these meanings can shift and lead to political contentions and transitions. Thereafter, the framework is employed (1) to demonstrate how popular songs articulated the disparate ideals of the Philippine bayan and (2) to examine the different forms that the songs took across critical historical junctures. The findings indicate that the Filipino concept of bayan refers not only to a legal-political state independent from foreign control but to a socio-economic imaginary where every Filipino is maginhawa (fulfilled basic needs). Political actors deploy popular music to remind society of this, perennially subverting the existing order with uprisings like the so-called "People Power" revolutions until it is fulfilled.

INTRODUCTION

Filipinos live their lives through songs. *Pinoy[1]* music in the jeepney is a frequent companion to their destinations. A menu of musical variety shows signals their midday. They eat their lunch entertained by music on their phones. After-work traffic becomes tolerable because of the love songs in their ears. And on weekends, the

karaoke sound fills up the streets' air as Filipinos re-live the week and re-enact their highlights. Filipinos live, love, and last because of the power of music.

The early communities on the islands had a vibrant musical tradition with significant regional diversity. Music was central to celebrating collective ceremonies to re-create salient events for the community (e.g., victory in a war or a marriage that linked two clans). Fernandez (2001) noted that the songs and dances "were usually part of ritual; and when outside of ritual, often had mimetic elements of their own" (p. 343). Songs enabled early Filipinos to bring to life to powerful events that shaped their community. They also used them to shape and inform their everyday lives.

This lively and robust musical tradition in the early communities in the Philippines also sustained social cohesion. Memories can generate and maintain identities that have grown around them. They can serve as powerful tools of cohesion and control, enabling communities to survive conflicts and adversities. The comparative historian Craig Lockard commented that in the Philippines, "music of all sorts has played a stronger role in life than in most Asian societies" (1998, p. 116).

However, as tools of collective remembrance, songs can also act as robust scales through which the present can be weighed and judged. The profound presence of the past can perennially assess the present. Since we tend to view the world through the eyes of memory (Booth, 2006), songs can subvert the status quo by relentlessly reminding the community of prior covenants seeking completion in the contemporary. It is critical to point out that this political messaging and remembrance through an entertainment medium is usually not done directly; it is a mediated process. The message to the audience is delivered within the constraints of the artistic genre's form and conventions. Thus, this chapter will first develop a theoretical framework for uncovering political messages in cultural texts and entertainment media.

Thereafter, this study will chronicle how the collective aspirations of the Filipino *bayan* have been embedded through songs. The term *bayan* represents the collectivity that the Filipinos have historically imagined themselves to be. Its meaning has grown from the designation of a common location to a political community (nation), to a unifying socio-political imaginary shaped by a distinct history, culture, and goals. This study advances the extant literature by linking new research on the *bayan* to the music and messaging involved in developing Filipino identity.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

Form and Political Communication Types

The field of political communication has often been criticized for over-emphasizing the study of the political at the expense of communication (Wanta, 2019; Onyebadi,

Related Content

Exploring the Collaborative Musical Experience of Swedish Bunne® Method in Japan: A Case Study Towards the Development of Universal Design in Musical Experience
Akiko Fujibayashi (2019). *Cases on Kyosei Practice in Music Education (pp. 108-136).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/exploring-the-collaborative-musical-experience-of-swedish-bunne-method-in-japan/224491

Preparing for Change: Getting Ready for Offering Online Music Courses
Carol Johnson (2018). *Pedagogy Development for Teaching Online Music (pp. 1-19).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/preparing-for-change/203866

Melodic Query Input for Music Information Retrieval Systems
Richard L. Kline (2008). *Intelligent Music Information Systems: Tools and Methodologies (pp. 50-78).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/melodic-query-input-music-information/24428

Structuring Music-Related Movements
Alexander Refsum Jensenius (2013). *Structuring Music through Markup Language: Designs and Architectures (pp. 135-155).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/structuring-music-related-movements/72438

Towards an Encoding of Musical Interaction
Antoine Allombertand Myriam Desainte-Catherine (2013). *Structuring Music through Markup Language: Designs and Architectures (pp. 80-98).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/towards-encoding-musical-interaction/72435