# GENRE LOCALIZATION IN CURRENT POPULAR MUSIC OF THE PHILIPPINES

**Li Jia** [李嘉]

Contact: lijia@sxnu.edu.cn

## Abstract

This paper focuses on the process of genre formation in the evolution of popular music of the Philippines'. From the phenomenon of the perception discrepancy of popular music genres among different stakeholders, this paper gives to attention at providing an alternative theory to explore how the Philippines' popular music genres have been established. Applying Joe Peter's theory of cultural hybridism, this paper specifically attempts at exploring how foreign genres have been fused with local cultures and musical components, aiming at a vocality of expressing the Philippines' national identity, which is key in articulating Philippines' popular music genres in their actual sense. Rather than a parodic emulation of foreign music products, genre fluidity is a unique reflection of the artistic wisdom of Philippines' musicians in the pursuit of forming a voice of their own, a continuation of their nationalist movement in their popular music idioms.

## Keywords

Cultures of the Philippines, Genre, Popular music, Localization

## INTRODUCTION

Popular music genres have been among the most elusive, flooring, and confusing concepts in musicological researches, especially when dimensions such as culture, gender, market, music behavior, and other dimensions are leveraged into the definition and boundary towards a specific and concrete theoretical construct. This paper looks into this subject matter from the perspective of genre and national identity in the Philippines. In doing so, especially due consideration is given as to how popular music genres emerged and advanced in this historically colonized country and how the role of the sentiment of nationhood developed within the cultural and spiritual movement that has been causing an impact on the population of this region.

Different theorists tried to define the term 'genre' from different angles and viewpoints. In a 1981 article for *Popular Music Perspectives*, Italian scholar Fabbri defined musical genres based on shared social understandings. For Fabbri, a musical genre is "a set of musical events (real or possible) whose course is governed by a definite set of socially accepted rules" (Fabbri,1981:1). Fabbri classifies the generic rules of genre identification as formal and technical rules, semiotic rules, behavior rules, social, and ideological rules and economic and juridical rules. Later on, Fabbri further defines genre as "emerg(ing) as names to define similarities, recurrences that members of the community made pertinent to identify musical events." (Fabbri,1999:10).

However, Drury (2000) refutes such a definition identifying the concept of "radical contingency" as pertinent to such exploration. He states that the culture's dominant ideology dictates the values about genre. Furthermore, they are dependent on the socio-political framework of the culture being primarily used to create dividing and defining lines between groups rather than to any basic transcendental human meaning, any intrinsic connection to human experience, perception, or psychology (Zorn, 2000: 336).


**DOI: 10.30819/aemr.7-3**

Music is a clear “cultural case” rather than an “empirical case”: when dealing with different types of music, within a framework of cultural norms, a reference point is needed (Fabbri, 1999:1). However, such information becomes clouded as music can also denote technologies and economies as well as composers, managerial choices, and aesthetic elements. (Kemp, 2004). Kirss (2007) states that the definition of a genre can vary from community to community, and they constantly evolve. Characteristics or criteria ascribed and acknowledged by a community may define a Music genre. Their definitions are connected with codes, which support communication in the community. Therefore, the problem to define a genre is its subjectivity.

The term subjectivity denotes that music can be approached from a variety of dimensions, as a cultural agency, political enfranchisement, sexual autonomy or expressive freedom. For example, in the case of early female blues singers, voice used to be treated as a metaphor for textual authority and denote the reclamation of female blues singers' own experience. Their cultural self-expression, music lyrics and subjectivism of their existence as artistry of embodiment, forge a subjectivity in the milieu of their racial, ethnic, and gender discrimination within the social context, to reach out to their own identity. As concluded in Silverman, “the self as difference is read as fragmented and decentered, affirming multiple values rather than a single set of unitary self-determination; the subject is embodied ontologically, gendered, and culturally charged” (Silverman, 1993: 4).

As observed so far, the term ‘music genre’ is approached from different angles. For Fabbri, genre is a social, conventional, and a rule-based entity that is used to depict musical events. This indicates that the term genre is applied to describe groups of similar music events separately. Whereas for Kirss, a genre is encompassed within the boundary of a community and it aims at communicating, Drury understands genre as a culture and a value-based term, which cannot be separated from its social-cultural milieu. Regardless of the perspective, all (genres?) allude to a perception discrepancy phenomenon towards the popular ‘music genre’ to be analyzed later. To bridge the gap of perception discrepancy of popular music genre in the Philippines, a new theoretical model should be established. This measure clarifies that the localization process, which is key to understanding any popular music genre formation, is to promote the genre perception in a scholarly sense as well.

## Perception Discrepancy in Popular Music

From radio formats and record store bins to the graphic interface for iTunes and the way musicians and fans talk about music, categories of music genres play a central role in the production and consumption of popular music. Many of these categories, for example, R&B and country, connote a demographic group usually assumed to be the primary audience for that type of music. Yet the use of these categories, back then and today, highlights numerous contradictions, foremost of which is their inconsistency in musical terms, as many recordings/songs that are musically, similar are classified differently. Furthermore, the audiences for a given category often do not match their demographic connotations, and members of a given demographic group often have divergent musical tastes. (Brackett, 2012). The discrepancy in the perception of music genres has widely been approached from a somewhat ‘static’ perspective, which presumed certain established categorical schemas as emphasized above. However, the term ‘music genre’ is also diachronically developing. This made the socio-environmental situation of music perception more complicated. As a categorical depicting term for musics, music genres have also been in constantly ongoing and a changing status, during which numerous sub-genres, sub-sub-genres, and fusions of these genres pop up to the fore.

To Adorno, popular music is characterized by its market orientation and commercialism, and consumerism as being a core value and foundation of its systematic operation. Adorno criticized modern pop music as being produced by an organized monopoly (Adorno, 1991). In other words, popular music can be regarded as a standardized product with interchangeable parts, and follow the rules and conventions which were laid out by the monopoly's powers over the popular music industry. This is especially true in the case of the Philippines. Genre labeling has been a market strategy for the power players in the scene of the local popular music industry. It left the consumers to be easily manipulated and put at loss and confusion.[1]

The term 'genre' in daily life has been practiced as how the meaning of music is shared and communicated. Social media have been playing an important role by providing the platform for such discussion and communication of mass consumption. This can be well exemplified by numerous online fan forums, fan zines, as well as online music retailing outlets. The complexity during the whole transmission process creates a high perception discrepancy among various stakeholders making any definition of popular music genres a challenging task.

The music, as an art, has its independent route of development. Nevertheless, neither a new music genre can be incorporated into the social communication completely, nor an act can properly be categorized into a certain type of genre. For that, the mechanism of differentiation among the stakeholders in the popular music industry, their perspectives, and perceptions about the music genre due to their own interests and positions needs to be taken into consideration. In other words, popular music genres can be considered as a culturally shared cognitive scheme consisting of associations between the sound of the music and the corresponding extra-musical concepts. Understanding the similarities and differences in concepts associated with various genres may improve the efficiency with which music genre is used for communication. An undistorted communication should be ideally based on a shared and mutual understanding towards the semiotics of the music taxonomy, which demands a certain level of stability. However, such taxonomic stability seems to still remain as a polemic issue for a theoretical as well as an empirical discourse.

Such taxonomic instability confuses the industrially necessary labeling process. For example, an artist, or a group of artists such as Metallica may be categorized as thrash metal by the consumer owing to the original incarnation of the artists. Rock is categorized by the retailer utilizing a marketing category in which to place the artists, whereas pop might be categorized by the journalist identified through the number of records of a new product sold over a short period. Although such multi categorization distinguishes the range of possible markets, it confuses the musical community as a whole, as in this case the use of identity nomenclature for the consumer, for marketing purposes by the retailer, and for ease of access by the journalist. So, this all confuses the issue of clear genre boundaries (Kemp, 2004).

Any music genre, as a reflection of the understanding and perception of a certain music type, correlates with emotional, cultural, social, and political aspects. Humans are unique information in retrieving and process systems. They have different constructs of these factors, which leads them to the scenario that the approach to defining music genre seems to be based on individual preference. (Fabbri,1999: 2-4). In other words, categories of music (and people, for that matter) are neither true nor false, but rather 'ideological' in that they speak to a shared, tacit understanding. The implication of such arguments prompts the urgency to clarify and unify our current understandings of the fluid nature of popular music genre.

---

[1] This point was further referred to in the written account of Kemp, Kris (2004) 'Towards a Holistic Interpretation of Music Genre Classification'.

Musical genres are constantly in flux as Mitchel (1996) points out in his work exploring the popular music of the last two decades. Consequently, he writes: "In the years since 1986, multiple diversifications of pop music formations and genres have continued to proliferate, often recombining in the process in new hybrid formations, so that by 1995 the range of popular music sub-genres is constantly being extended, and this has become almost impossible to quantify". (Mitchell, 1996:11).

Mcleod (2001) sheds new light into such a social process of the establishment and acceptance of new genres and sub genres that may be categorized as follows:

- *Stylistic evolution*: the new genre is stylistically different from other existing genres.
- *Marketing issues*: New genres can rather be marketed as 'the next big thing' than old genres. Therefore, the definition of a new genre may help to promote the more or less innovative new genre.
- *Cultural differentiation*: Genre terms help to differentiate them from other genres, even if it is only a cultural differentiation when the musical or stylistic variances are not sufficient to divide these genres.
- *Accelerated consumer culture*: Electronic music is highly innovative. This also causes that consumers always expect new styles, sounds and inventiveness.

Robert Walser identified commercial mediation as a propeller of industrial mechanism for popular music genre perception discrepancy among different stakeholders like fans, musicians, historians, record clubs, fan merchandisers, commercial marketing strategists, outside critics, and censors (Walser, 1993).

This intriguing scenario leads us to a clear notion that music genre perception, especially in the setting of a complicated and subtle music creation, should be treated as a discursive formation, which carries a heavy load for its philosophical, historical, social, political, cultural, and economic interpretations and integrations. Different societies with different social conventions, rules, codes and power stratification matrix may contribute to different sets of the way people perceive the music genre as an indicator of both musical and extra-musical meaning. In terms of Philippines' popular music, genre fluidity has been showing a more complicated, radical, ephemeral and epidemic pattern, which need to be examined from the investigation of genre formation in a specific cultural milieu.

## Popular Music Genre Perception Discrepancy in the Philippines

In the Philippines, the genre perception discrepancy seems to be more problematic. This is especially true to the house band industry. In addition to the previously listed causes, historical colonization and the country's cultural heritage provided artists with bountiful sources to forge their popular musics.

Especially important is the task of how to develop a theoretical framework used to define Philippines' popular music genres as a process that is anchored through musical and cultural hybridity as well as the circulation of discourses about music and national identity. There are two main reasons for arguments.

Firstly, there has been a high degree of heterogeneity in Philippines' popular art scene. As a historically colonized archipelago, which was culturally, invaded by Spanish, Japanese, and especially American, the popular music of the Philippines is a mixture of a variety of North American, Latin American, European, other Asian countries and their impact on indigenous cultural features musical elements (Castro, 2001). Meaning to say at the time of constructing a multi-faceted Philippines' popular music culture, these elements of impact have imbued the

Philippines' popular music with different conventions and codes, which makes categorizing a rather difficult task. A single popular song in the Philippines can show the characteristics from several of the above-mentioned cultures, thus a hybrid genre or a crossover appears, which goes beyond geographical and historical imaginations of boundaries. As Irving contends that the active appropriation of music and dance by the indigenous population constituted a significant contribution to the process of hispanization. Sustained "enharmonic engagement" between the Philippines' and Spaniards led to the synthesis of hybrid, syncretic genres and the emergence of performance styles that could contest and subvert hegemony (Irving, 2010:12-15).

Secondly, as a nation with its richness of musical tradition, the desire and struggle to establish an idiosyncratic voice and music representation of a united national identity[2] and fighting off the cultural colonization has been always strong and enthusiastic.

The sentiment of nationhood has been playing a key role in constructing an own vocality of the people. The uncompromising endeavor to re-establish its national identity through new popular musics after WWII has been motivating Philippines popular musicians to transcend the seduction of simply copying Western sounds and genres in their own style and through experimenting with Western popular music advancements as a means to enrich their sound properties.

Without this understanding, the topic of the Philippines' popular music genre taxonomy may easily be misused by political spokespersons rather than academically explored. After having had a closer and deeper look into this mechanism of genre establishment through hybridity, there might be a better understanding of the nature of genre fluidity in the Philippines, and the information behind the different types of new sound around the people which may lead towards a new localized popular music genre categorization scheme. In short, a new paradigm of cultural hybridism in explaining music genre formation serves as a strategy for unifying the genre discrepancy gap in the Philippines' popular musics.

## Genre Hybridism in Popular Music House Bands of the Philippines and Some Remarks on Nationalism in the Philippine's Music

The Philippines may be described as a nation in search of its identity. Because of the long occupation of the country by colonizers, the Western influence is so deeply rooted. Hence, one would presume that they may have changed their own identity to some level. This is simply observed in the naming practice/system that is predominantly westernized. The national identity has long been an issue for anthropologists and other researchers because of the many

[2] National identity is a person's identity or a sense of belonging to one state or to one nation (Ashmore et.al, 2001). As a collective phenomenon, national identity can arise as a direct result of the presence of elements from the "common points" in people's daily lives: national symbols, language, the nation's history, national consciousness, and cultural artifacts. It is the sense of "a nation as a cohesive whole, as represented by distinctive traditions, culture, and language (Kelman, 1997). Sorensen defines nationhood in the context of the modern state as a people within a territory making up a community based on citizenship including political, social, and economic rights and obligations, and on a 'community of sentiment'. In other words, I refer to a common language, and a common cultural and historical identity based on literature, myths, symbols, music, and art. (Sorensen, 2004). Nationhood is about land, language, and culture (McAdam, 2015). Especially for a nation with a long history of colonization, the loss of its cultural traits calls for an urgency to revitalize its national norms and traditions to reestablish its ideological independence. Music, as a social transformation power, can serve this role perfectly.

resemblances and similarities between their culture and that of others like those of the Spanish, American, and neighboring Asian cultures.

Sorensen defines national identity as the community of citizens sharing linguistic, cultural and historical bonds that distinguish them from other groups (Sorensen, 2004). National ideology, as a system of ideas and ideals, forms the basis to establish the nation's unique economic and political mechanism and provides the unifying power to define the cultural superstructure that makes its people distinct. Cultural nationalism, in which music nationalism is a central part, is a key process towards Philippine's nation-building movement and it leads to 'epics' that depict a modernist history (Castro, 2001). Popular music is a tool for local artists to look for a way to expedite that nationalist movement and to construct their music narratives that capture the essence of the nation-building. It furthermore, tells a story of the people's enthusiastic search for national identity.

Nationalism, seen as a tradition in the Western context refers to that "great romantic movement," which happened in the nineteenth century, from 1825 to 1900, during which period the people were engaged in a struggle for liberation (Winold, Delone, & Christ, 1976). In terms of style, this particular tradition is distinctive due to its individuality and "intensity of expression," compared to the "classically mannered, measured and poised" style of the preceding period (Winold, Delone, & Christ, 1976). However, music has the power to convey an epistemology of national identity and nationalism through specific aesthetics (Castro, 2001).

Essentially then, nationalism in music was an "ideal, involving the use of folk and traditional elements in an attempt to create an atmosphere or a mood alluding to the composer's native land" (Hila, 2004). Hila defines the nationalist tradition in the Philippine music as a heritage that was formulated by musicians such as Francisco Santiago (1889-1947), Felipe D. de Leon (1912-1992), Antonio Molina (1928-1992), Nicanor Abelardo (1893-1934), Lucio D. San Pedro (1913-2002), and (Hila, 2004). Ramon Santos' essay on Nicanor Abelardo in his book, "Tunugan" discusses how Abelardo, who is rooted in European art music stands out as a nationalist who is composing in a genre of "the Philippines' classicism", so, definitely in the realm of classical music (Santos, 2005). The concept of the nation and expressions of nationalism should be considered as potent interventions to Philippine identity (Castro, 2001).

The birth of the nationalist tradition in Philippine music was a much welcome development. At a time when the cultural fabric of the mass was facing the threat of oblivion, the shaping of such tradition was a heroic, relevant response to the cultural and political circumstances that as a result of the colonial experience. This tradition has afforded meaning to the collective cultural life of the people, providing them a strong sense of belonging and national pride that triumphed over the threatening dominance of colonial culture. Today, this tradition is still forming an active part of the Philippines' contemporary national cultural life.

## LOCALIZATION AS PART OF THE NATIONALIZATION PROCESS

From a geographical perspective, a region is not a nation. However, a nation as a political concept consists of its parts in a region. From a cultural perspective, nationalism happens in various parts of a territory, and all the local endeavors contribute to nation-building. In this sense, music localization in a regional scope should be regarded as part of the cultural nation-building since the outcome will be shared and appreciated by the people in the nation. The local concept does not only apply to the nation as a whole but also to the various parts of the nation (Muhlstein,2014).

Subsequently, I will firstly present the "cross mode" of popular music genre formation consisting of three processes, namely hybridizing foreign genres as genre transplantation, genre transformation, and genre transmutation, which shows how Philippines' musicians imbue and combine foreign popular music genres with local music and social cultures through creating new

popular music genres. Then, the discussion will further present the "mix mode" which carries two dimensions of formulating the new Philippines' musics based on its traditions. Both of these two access discussions show a coexisting duo process as can be observed in the popular music genre development of the Philippines.

## "Cross" mode as Reflected in the Philippines' Popular Music Genre Formation

Peter talks about the cross mode, but he did not elaborate on how this happens specifically in musical life. He rather discusses a broad cultural perspective. The popular music development in the Philippines can be better, presented from a genre formation framework that follows the row: genre transplantation-transformation-transmutation. Some terms dealing with 'in-loading' and 'trajectory', will be discussed in the following section. In Peter's model, Philippines' popular music can be realized in this manner. It is necessary to be cautious about this matter, since it is not a simple depiction of Philippines' popular music history. It is rather an observation of the ideological contextualization of influencing popular music genres into a localized cultural representation with a reinforcement of the Philippines' national identity as the final target. In this sense, it is a framework, which is based on epistemology rather than being mechanically sequenced.

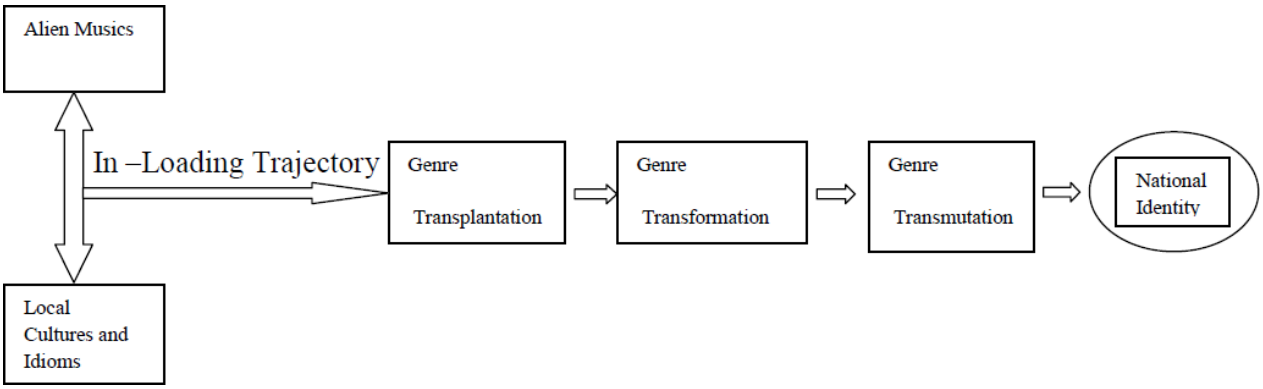


**FIGURE 1: "Cross" mode in Philippines Popular Music Genre Formation. (Scheme by the author).**

### Genre Transplantation

This is a stage of learning, copying, and emulating of the foreign cultural language and artistry. An originally alien (especially following an imagined western) popular music genre which to some extent can be regarded as a certain phenomenon of cultural colonization to the National Ideology or a cultural force of "westernization", is firstly copied or covered by the local talents. During this stage though, mass media provides the Western version of original material and texts of listening.

The local cover bands play a vital role in providing the very first "localized" version of such genre to the local folks. The question to what extent the cover bands or "house bands" have been contributing to the installment of certain alien popular music genres as well as to the new locus of cultural reformation and colonization in the Philippines setting remains. Nevertheless, without a doubt, we need to accept the fact that a local "cover band" industry should be treated as the first stage of the contextualization of foreign popular music genre into the local culture consumption system of the Philippines, through the image and the voice of its own people. The reason lies in the fact that it has been blossoming since the end of American Colonization to become the driving force on Asian popular music stages today.

## Genre Transformation

The second stage of genre transformation is the taking over and implementing of genres known through historical contacts and mass media as the Philippines' genres in a developmental sense. In other words, at this stage, the emphasis is on the "changes" brought to the existing genres that are foreign to the Philippines. This showcases a clear picture of national identification with the 'otherness'.

First of all, the lyrics are often in Tagalog or any other language native to the Philippines. One example is a mix of Tagalog and English which local folks called Taglish[3].

As mentioned previously, language is a pivotal part to define nationhood. By using local languages (Tagalog as the most representative), the localized version of popular music genres was imbued with the traits of immediacy and an imagined authenticity of expression which are indispensable in the construct of the national identity of the Philippines. Most of the people in the Philippines use their mother tongue in everyday life. The local lyrics make, i.e., songs more approachable to the mass, bringing the 'nearness' and 'ownership' to them and making it their own.

Through the native forms of lyrical expressions, the new localized genres were able to transcend the predicament of being translation-dependent. They led the audience in an artistic experience of roots and existence, which would never be detached, from the sense of national identity. We can see this in either rock or country music. Two of the most widespread rock genres distinguished by local dialects are Bisrock (Bisaya Rock) and Kapampangan rock.

The former uses Visayan dialects in their lyrics. The term Bis came from the Cebuano word for Visayan. This subgenre started in the 1980s and was popularized locally by musicians from the University of San Carlos to call for the awareness and support of the Cebuano rock scene. It gathered considerable popularity in Cebu and Mindanao until the genre faded out in 2009.

The latter draws on Kapampangan dialects that are widely used throughout central Luzon. Inspired by what the locals call 'Kapampangan cultural renaissance', Angeles City-born balladeer Ronnie Liang rendered Kapampangan translations of some of his popular songs such as "Ayli" (Kapampangan version of "Ngiti"), and "Ika" (Kapampangan version of "Ikaw") for his repackaged album. In terms of country music, even in Cordillera Region, one can see such genres as Benguet Country, Ibaloy Country, Kankanaey Country, Igorot Country (Fong, 2007). Fong illustrated two approaches in this linguistic localization process in the Cordillera region (Ashcroft et al, 2002; Fong, 2007). Appropriation is the use of the colonizers' musical language to convey one's own spirit. Abrogation happens in the Cordillera musicians' total disregard of copyright in the use of tunes, translated or adapted lyrics and even recorded accompaniments (minus one). The songs then serve as forms of self-representation, as "revelations" of local, contemporary cultures. The song lyrics serve as a rich cultural resource on the contemporary life and psyche of a group of minority indigenous peoples who have also been appropriated and misrepresented by others (Fong, 2007).

Secondly, rendition-wise stylistic changes have been greatly prompting the musical sound to be more easily identifiable to the mass as coming from their 'own' people rather than from

[3] However, despite the growing clamor for non-Tagalog, and non-English music, and greater representation of other Philippine languages, the local Philippine music industry, which is centered in Manila, is unforthcoming in venturing investments to other locations. Some of their major reasons include the language barrier, small market size, and socio-cultural emphasis away from regionalism in the Philippines. Multiculturalism advocates and federalists often associate this discrepancy with the Tagalog-centric cultural hegemony of the capital city of Manila.

'outsiders'. Both vocalists and instrumentalists have been experimenting with new performance techniques, like intonations, phrasing, breathing, or pronunciation, to make the music sound more familiar to the Philippines.

Thirdly, the local talents of the Philippines will incorporate another dimension of musicality in an imagined Western tradition, usually by instilling the use of a local music language and other cultural traditions to enrich their own musical environment. In the case of rock music, even as early as in the 1950's, the instrumentation of a 'combo' has been coming with a catchy and hippie phrase. On top of a basic electric guitar, bass guitar, and drum lineup, the combo tended to use unusual instruments for rock music such as non-electric ukuleles. Unique floor–bass made of a gas tank, bongos, and maracas were used.[4] The establishment of combo groupings had proliferated at the start of the Philippines' rock scene and the 'Battle of the Bands' got established amongst the combos in Metropolitan Manila, Pasay City and as far as Cavite areas from the 1950's to the present time. More recent attempts have been observed by incorporating indigenous instruments, like Djembe, Udan-Udan, Gabang, P'tadjong, Bidjang, Kubing, Budjong, Gangsa. This branch of genre transformation brought about the movement of the Philippines' ethnic-rock. Well-known bands in the Philippines can exemplify the stylistic traits.

**FIGURE 2: The group KADANGYAN. Members: Bhava Mitra - Vocals, Mityapi, Plawta, Gangsa, Kubing Bhakta Raja - Djembe, Udan-Udan, Gabang, P'tadjong Saryo - Drums, Tukatok, Agit – Bass, Govinda - Djembe, Bidjang, Kubing, Budjong, Gangsa. The Cebu-based group Kadangyan continues the legacy of the Philippines ethnic-rock movement with members hailing from different regions of the country (Cebu, Iligan, Tacloban & Ifugao Mt. Province), this group could very well represent the Philippines' diverse cultures and languages in one entity. They combine local ethnic instruments with western, eastern, and African instruments and come up with rhythm-dominating songs topped with hypnotic chants that aim at putting their listeners into a trance. (Photography open source, promotion material).**

Most recent development of this genre transformation branch can be observed from some more expanded and composite works like ethno-rock musicals, such as the 'Ibalong'. This is an ethno-rock musical, a dance-theater musical interpretation of the Bicolano epic adapted for the stage by

Rody Vera. While Tuxqs Rutaquio is director, Carol Bello and Alden Lugnasin are musical and choreographic directors.

More examples can be observed through several other genres that are also growing in popularity in the Philippine music scene, including a number of alternative groups, and tribal bands promoting cultural awareness of the Philippine Islands. Artists such as Joey Ayala, Grace Nono, Bayang Barrios, Cocojam, and Pinikpikan are also reaping relative commercial success while utilizing the traditional musical sounds of many indigenous tribes in the Philippines.

Fourthly**,** the themes of the lyrics are more reflective of the local living styles. One example is the Cordillera country music. In contrast to the Nashville or the Manila sound, the local musicians came up with Batawa sound, which is a word in one of the Cordillera languages referring to the yard or space outside the house. Batawa is also a song title that has become popular and has been recorded by several local artists. For several years, capitalizing on the popularity of the song, Batawa became the name of a country music bar in a street in Baguio, which became a central space for people to listen to Igorot musics. The lyrics of this genre, serving common themes like love in its lyrics, depict various aspects of how local people living in comparatively isolated mountainous regions deal with modernity and changes. The songs express their thoughts and feelings on education, religion, economics, marriage and family, and the various configurations of such institutions. The experience of change and development is often, evaluated about a certain past, such as when a song persona was younger, or when life was once either simple or hard (Fong, 2007). All these elements cast a local identity as Igorots and national identity as that of the Philippines, in contrast to the 'American' dreams as in the 'Americanization' age.[4]

**Genre Transmutation**

This stage is a highly creative phase of the Philippines' musician at mastery of several localized types of genres and mix into a new hybrid or branch of music genres which at the higher artistic level aims to be reflective of the Philippines' national identity. Genre crossover, fusion, and hybridity is the main characteristic of this stage of musicality development.

## GENRE HYBRIDITY

The Philippines' folk-rock is such example. Philippine musicians hybridized the Philippines' rock music with Philippines' folk music, leading to the 1978 breakthrough success of Freddie Aguilar. Aguilar's 'Anak' (Child), his debut recording, is the commercially most successful Philippines' recording, and was popular throughout Asia and Europe. It has also been translated into numerous languages by singers worldwide. Another example can be observed from a Philippines' jazz-rock bands like Dream Carousel that combined and directed two genres, namely jazz and rock into a set of final music events of a Philippines' identity.

There have been local musicians experimenting with combining more localized types of genres and mixing them together into a new hybrid or branch of the Philippines' music genres. A recent development is the fusion of spoken-word and jazz, and rock, chiefly attributed to the Radioactive Sago Project. Other notable names are Bob Aves with his ethno-infused jazz-rock. In 2006, the Philippines' band Kala, appeared in the music scene with its retro-sounding first single, 'Jeepney',

[4] In the realm of rock music, one of the first hits composed by Bobby Gonzales, one of the first popular rock stars of the Philippines, is 'Hahabol- Habol'. The song depicts a strategy of courting a local lady, who holds a cultural nature of being 'pakipot' [pretending to be uninterested]. Even though musically the song is a parody of early rock and roll music, the national identity was well captured by its focus on the depiction of Philippines cultural norms and life in the lyrics.

which became a major hit. According to the Philippine Inquirer, the band revived and redefined the Manila Sound genre through their funk-rock-hip music.

These examples of stylistic hybridity can be regarded as an ecumenical orientation of the Philippines' popular music genre formation, which treats the foreign and local elements on an equal weight while creating new genres being considered as the Philippines' identity. This is a 'cross' mode that is deliberately aimed at creating a new product. The in-loading trajectory can be observed as the two parts of impacting an already existing speak about that work in a by-partisan fashion to achieve a common goal, which is expressing a national identity of the Philippines.

However, there coexists another tendency which exposes an even harder stance in defending national identity in the area of popular musical arts. Hybridising music events happen when the Philippines' music traditions should be treated as the over-arching barrier while the western music genres and technology are rather treated as a servicing role, only to enhance the variety and performance of such events. The mix-mode is pertinent in explaining this process of genre hybridity due to its goal of maintaining the Philippines' music tradition in the main music discourse.

## MIX MODE AS REFLECTED IN THE PHILIPPINES' POPULAR MUSIC GENRE FORMATION

As previously stated, the 'mix' mode is whereby the new musical language rides on the power and propulsion of the main language. This mix-mode creates an on-loading trajectory, with one half bearing responsibility for propulsion of the whole. Under this trend, the new genre is riding over the Philippines' local cultures and music traditions, which bears the main stylistic development responsibility. The foreign genres only serve as the spicing or serving part in this cultural fusion in procuring the music being associated with national identity.

Researches have been conducted about how western popular cultures were adapted and installed as a major industrial standard categorization of genres in the Philippines' mass and youth culture. Yet especially after the spread of Western bands to the local Manila music scenes, for instance, The Beatles, the Rolling Stones, or others, we may note that this is only a small portion of the whole story. The antithesis is that the Philippines had also its own popular cultural tradition with its peculiar independent track of development. Although this development was enriched by western popular stylistic advancements, its cultural function as the narrative voice for the nation's cultural and ideological identity of the nationhood, has never been lost. This creates the Mix-mode of the Philippines' popular genre formation, whereby the new music rides on the power and propulsion of the main music language which is the Philippines autochthonous music idiom, such as Kundiman. This mix-mode creates an on-loading trajectory, with one-half (Philippines local music genres) bearing responsibility for the propulsion of the whole. A rediscovering and exploring how such local tradition has been maintained and expanded will play the key role of revamping the Philippines popular music history being impacted by an invaded and colonized one to a culturally independent and self-sustained one.

With the ushering of various Western popular music genres, the hybridity of local music genres such as 'Kundiman'[5] and the Western music idioms, produced a unique "mix" mode, or "on-loading" trajectory of the Philippines' popular music. This is characterized by utilizing Western musical elements and language to enrich the color of original music idioms, and finally became a new type of the Philippines' popular music genres. The musicians maintain the main stylistic

[5] One kind of local love song/s found in the Philippines.

traits laid down by such types of genres through its historical traditions and evolution, but imbue their renditions with new western music exposures and advancements. The end product is a hybrid type of music which is anchored mainly on local idioms as the main language while the foreign idioms function as an auxiliary force. This process of "mix" mode can be graphed as follows:

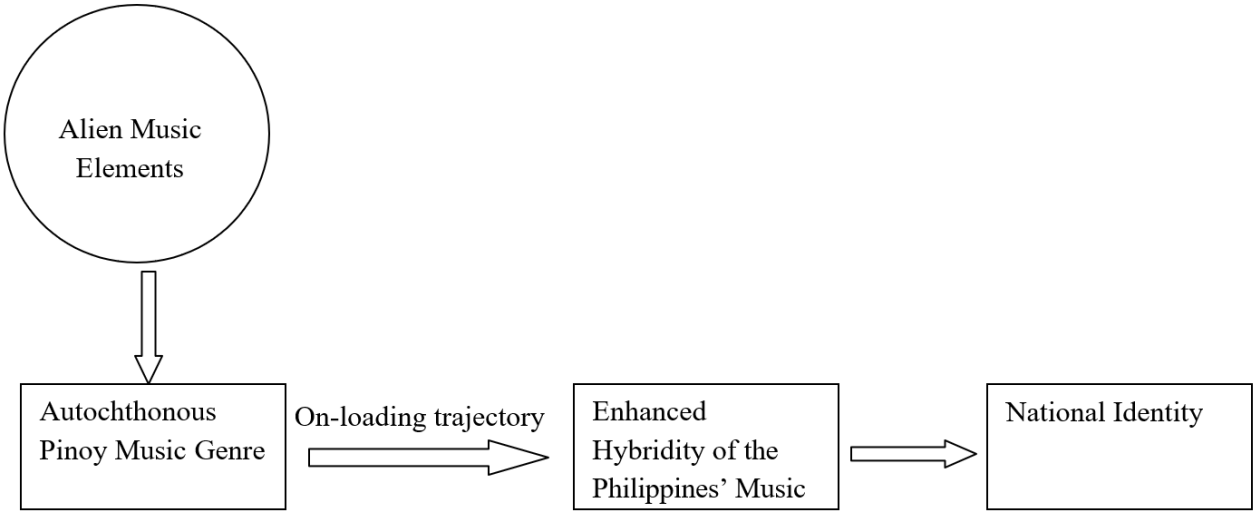


**FIGURE 3: "mix" mode in the Philippines' popular music genre formation (Scheme by the author).**

This mix-mode or "on-loading" trajectory produces enhanced Philippines' autochthonous genres which happen through two dimensions.

Firstly, the musicians use directly traditional elements or some local music or recombine the melodic parts from different local tunes. However, such kind of revamping takes place through a sophisticated "fit" between the stylistic traits of the local Philippines' materials and western popular music genres.

Secondly, the musicians come up with their own material which is based on their imagined national music genres and traditions. The syntax, phrasing and modes are all alluding to their native land, but the melodies are new and combined with modern western popular music elements and production techniques. Both of these two dimensions were historically, supported by the Philippines' nationalism of musical arts. Hence, they should be understood as its modern time continuation in the area of popular music.

## KUNDIMAN

As argued earlier, besides the "cross" mode of the hybridity of Philippines' popular music genre formation there coexists a "mix" mode of hybridity, which was solidly, based on different types of autochthonous music genres. The Philippines' popular culture has been following its own development, by incorporating stylistic technologies as an aiding stylistic mechanism and to enrich their own traditional culture.

One example can be looked at closer. Kundiman is a local idiom of a traditional Philippine love song, which gained popularity and effectiveness as a medium of personal and social expression from about 1915 to 1935 (Hernandez, 1978). Stylistically, it was written in a 3-beat triple-time rhythm pattern and a two parts musical form. The melody is characterized by a smooth, flowing, and gentle rhythm with dramatic intervals. Politically, this genre has been tightly connected with the Philippines' patriotic movements.

As a popular local genre, kundiman went through a thorough transformation. From its folkish orientation during the Spanish regime, it metamorphosed into an art song during the American period patterned after that of the West, as its "melody, text and harmony are intertwined, as to convey a maximum musical expression for the Tagalog text" (Maceda, 1972: 227).

### First Dimension: Enhancing Traditional Music Material with Foreign Genres

The first dimension can be exemplified by the famous patriotic kundiman song – Bayan Ko and its historical evolution. Bayan Ko was composed in 1928 when the people of the Philippines were campaigning for independence from America under the leadership of President Manuel Quezon. The lyrics are based on a poem by Jose Corazon de Jesus. Enmeshed in the song are the yearnings of a people colonized for over 400 years, first as a colony of Spain followed by a colony of the United States.
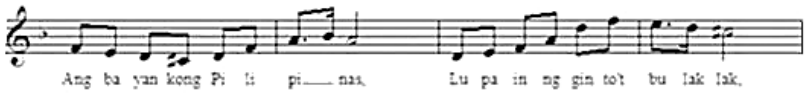
**FIGURE 4: First 4 Bars of Bayan Ko (extract by the author).**

"Bayan Ko", a kundiman, was written at a period when the Philippines were actively clamoring for independence from the United States. The nationalist sentiment expressed by the text has made the song a battle cry against colonialism and oppression at different periods in Philippine history. It was popular during the Japanese regime, and later, in the rallies and protest marches during the Marcos regime that culminated in the 1986 EDSA Revolution[6]. (Gil., 1999).

Cast in slow triple time of the traditional kundiman, this plaintive and melodious love song is dedicated not to an individual woman but to the beloved 'mother country'. In binary form, the first part is written in a minor and the last in the major key. It is the optimistic mood of the last part that speaks of the people's desire to see the country totally free. Music and lyrics build up to an emotional ending that prompts singers in rallies to cap the song with the cry "Mabuhay ang Pilipinas!" (Long Live the Philippines!) (Rama, 1999: 56).

Hereafter I will showcase how the kundiman Bayan Ko has been rendered through different western popular music idioms, which greatly enriched the projection and variety of the local stylistic traits of kundiman. Such type of fusion of western popular musics as its sound stylistic variables in its genre formation constructs a unique phenomenon of genre fluidity. Though the sound has been greatly modified comparing to original style, the kundiman traits has been remaining the main stylistic elements throughout and as the main linguistic carrier in formulating the new type of the Philippines' popular musics. Elements of foreign music function as spicy ingredients to make the music appear 'up-dated' and exotic, but the cultural identity of kundiman has never been lost but is rather felt enhanced and enriched.

### Bayan-Ko: Kundiman as Approached in Hard Rock

The cover version by indie band RFC is a stylistic adventure of hybridizing kundiman with hard rock. The original 3/4 beat was wittingly changed to a 4/4 pattern, suitable for the rock beat pattern. The distortion guitar provides consistent support for harmonic changes. The voice quality of the singer is unlike the traditional kundiman singer whose sound is sweet and lovely, a hysteric screaming indicating a struggle for an ode to freedom. The melody was also more syncopated which gives the audience a consistent prompt for a sense of the power of the people.

---

[6] Abbreviation of 'Epifanio de Los Santos Avenue' (*EDSA*) in Metro Manila, where main actions took place.

**Bayan-Ko: Kundiman as Approached in Pop/ Smooth Jazz**

In July 1987, a revival version featured pop/jazz singer Jo Anne Lorenzana. The nationalistic campaign, spearheaded by the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company (PLDT), was aired on radio and television for the first anniversary of the People Power Revolution.

Later on, she again sang this at the Inauguration of President Fidel Ramos in 1992 as the 12th President of the Philippines. Her jazz background provides her stylistic skills as a jazz musician in order to fuse the kundiman with a soulful voice of good quality. The introduction paves a groove and funky rhythmic background laid by drums, electric bass, and keyboards. Significant changes can be observed from her freely inserted improvisational phrases on "Bayan Ko" towards the end of the rendition, against the backup chorus and syncopated funky bass line, which leads to the climax.[9] This 'call and response' technique that has been featured in American blues and jazz idioms works seamlessly with the kundiman melody, while greatly enhancing the listening experience of the kundiman and making the lyric title "bayan ko" unforgettable.

**Bayan Ko: Kundiman as Approached in Folk Rock**

Bayan Ko was also rendered in the folk-rock style by Freddie Aguilar and Asin. Both versions were regarded as classics by music journalists and audiences. They provided the kundiman large popularity, which went beyond the boundary of the country. Following this time period, many kundimans became the carrier of patriotic movements.

The Philippines' folk-rock icon Freddie Aguilar's cover is one of the most famous renditions of the song; an often-overlooked detail is that the instrumental section of this version is actually another Philippines' patriotic hymn: 'Pilipinas Kong Mahal'.

Asin is a folk and folk-rock band from the Philippines. They started as a trio in the late 1970s, and were originally known as the 'Salt of the Earth'. They later changed their name to "ASIN", which means salt in a modern Tagalog language. Asin's rendition of Bayan Ko included another work, 'Kay Sarap Mabuhay Sa Sariling Bayan', as a preluding stanza to the main lyrics. Sung mostly by Leftist groups, the stanza is included either as the prelude or the bridge replacing *Pilipinas Kong Mahal*.

**Second Dimension: Composing New Musics in New Genres which use Autochthonous Genres of the Philippines as Main Stylistic Foundation**

The creativity of the Philippines' musicians makes them not only directly using the autochthonous material, but further they come up with their own material which is often based on their national music genres and traditions that express a deep sentiment of nationhood. One example can be observed through the establishment of the Philippines' rock music and kundiman.[7]

This genealogical relationship can be manifested by the first Philippines' internationally acclaimed band of the Philippines rock music, the 'Juan de la Cruz Band'. The desire of the Philippines' pop musicians to produce music they could find which they hoped would get support among the youth first bound expression in Joey "Pepe" Smith and the Juan de la Cruz

[7] Alfredo P. Hernandez identifies that the kundiman has changed, its origin and influences fusing into what it is now, called a distinct ballad of the Philippines. All of these sounds, the Philippines' rock, as it is labeled now, trace their very beginnings from the kundiman. Also, De Leon observed that most of the successful rock songs written by local musicians are those that carry melodies of the kundiman type. The Philippines' composers like Hanopol, Florante, Heber Bartolome, or Freddie Aguilar used the rock rhythms to enliven the Philippines kundiman to become a rock type of music (Hernandez, 1978).

Band's experimentation with hard rock which used plaintive local lyrics. "Ang Himig Natin" (Our Music), performed extemporaneously by the band in 1973, may be considered the first Philippines' slang for a Philippines' rock piece. The song bewailed the lonely struggle of local musicians to have their music accepted by an audience attuned and addicted to foreign music. But it likewise voices the conviction that people of the Philippines would find unity only when they learn to appreciate and sing their own songs.

## Genre Formation as an Agent of Installing National Identity

The national identity of the Philippines reflects the needs, values, and norms of grass-root people. By looking for the music as the representations of cultural symbols that people of the Philippines can identify with, popular music genres were transformed into a discourse of the Philippines' nationhood. The perception of such musical experience can be translated into the categorization of the new genres as a symbolic agent, which aims to produce a narrative of the nation, tell the origins and continuity of the nation, the traditions and the ideas of the original and genuine people of the nation.

The metaphorical implication of 'music' as a narrative voice in the representation of national identity has been a politically sensitive topic. Music and 'nation' can be considered as discursive formations. Their relationship can be viewed as a network of meanings upon a context. Music that has transformed from locally evolving to highly hybridized genres may have to be considered more sophisticated components of genre ingredients. It is through discourse and experience that music can be defined in its characteristics of a people or a nation, which leads in rare situations to essentially elementary characteristics.

Yet it seems clear from historical examples that, while meaning is unstable, music has the power to convey an epistemology of national identity and nationalism through specific aesthetics. In other words, people not only come to know something about their nation through music, for instance, through the lyrics of patriotic songs that are paired with rousing marching music, but they also learn how they should experience nationalism as they make, listen to, and remember music. The question of how music might sound out nation, then, is a "gateway to the history and sociology of a given people". (Castro, 2010: 9-10).

## Conclusion

This paper tries to shed new light on the genre formation process in the Philippines' popular music. I believe that a clear understanding of how genres have been formulated is the key to a new paradigm in redefining the Philippines' popular music, thus solving the perception discrepancy of genre categorization among the different stakeholders in the Philippines. Drawing on Joe Peter's cultural hybridism theory, there two modes were presented, namely the "cross" mode and the "mix" mode that historically coexists in the popular music of the Philippines. This can show a highly sophisticated process of musical hybridity as a cultural phenomenon in the society, which has been a reflection of this nation's historical and social milieu and ideology. The framework illustrated in this paper is not exclusively thought to serve the Philippines, rather those developments may also be observed in other post-colonial nations such as South Africa, Indonesia, or Malaysia. The musical hybridity contributes to the genre perception discrepancy among the different stakeholders, on top of the commercial meditation causes as elucidated by previous scholars such as Walser, (1993). However, the overarching propelling motivation behind such complicated hybridity phenomena denotes an uncompromising and ardent enthusiasm of the Philippines' popular musicians in pursuits of their national identity and people's voice. This is namely a sound that is reflective of culture they may call 'their own', history and idiosyncrasy as

Philippine culture, to recoup their pride, international standing and visibility through sound and mainly text. The Philippines' musicians held this nationalistic tradition diachronically along their political struggle during colonization periods, and this tradition has been inherited and further expounded by the upcoming generation of popular musicians as a tool against westernization. The genre fluidity phenomenon is, rather than a parodic emulation of the foreign musics, a unique reflection of the artistic wisdom of local musicians in the pursuit of forming a voice of their own.

Remark on funding:

This study was supported by the Shanxi Scholarship Council of China.

## REFERENCES


Adorno, Theodor W. 1991. *The Culture Industry. Selected Essays on Mass Culture*. Ed. by Jay M. Bernstein. London: Routledge.

Ashmore, D. Richard, Lee Jussim, and David Wilder, eds. 2001. *Rutgers Series on Self and Social Identity, 3. Social Identity, Intergroup Conflict, and Conflict Reduction. New York:* Oxford University Press.

Brackett, David. 2012."*Fox-Trots, Hillbillies, and the Classic Blues: Categorizing Popular Music in the 1920s.*" Lecture presented on 25 April 2012. Retrieved from http://www.ams-net.org/RRHOFM-lectures/past.php, last accessed: 12th December, 2012.

Castro, Christi-Ann. 2001. *Musical Renderings of the Philippine Nation.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Drury, Stephen. 2000. Against Radical Contingency. A paper in Arcana. Musicians on Music. Edited by John Zorn. New York: Hips Road/Tzadik. https://archive.org/details/arcana00john/page/n7/mode/2up, last accessed: 12 May, 2021.

Fabbri, Franco.1981. A Theory of Music Genres, Two Applications. *Popular Music Perspectives*. Ed. by David Horn and Philip Tagg. Goteborg and Exeter: International Association of the Study of Popular Music: 52-81. Retrieved from http://hugoribeiro.com.br/biblioteca-digital/Fabbri-Musical_Genres.pdf, last accessed 2nd April, 2021.

Fabbri, Franco.1999. *Browsing Musical Spaces. Categories and the Musical Mind*. Retrieved from https://www.tagg.org/others/ffabbri9907.html, last accessed 2nd April, 2021.

Fong, Jimmy B.2007. *Batawa: Constructing Identity through Country Music in the Philippine Cordillera.* Paper presented at "INTER: A European Cultural Studies Conference in Sweden", organized by the Advanced Cultural Studies Institute of Sweden (ACSIS) in Norrköping 11-13 June 2007. Conference Proceedings. Norrköping: Linköping University Electronic Press. Retrieved from www.ep.liu.se/ecp/025/, last accessed 2nd April, 2021.

Hila, Antonio C. 2004. *Music in History, History in Music.* Manila: University of Saint Tomas Publishing House.

Irving D.R.M. 2010. *Colonial Counterpoint: Music in Early Modern Manila.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Hernandez, Alfredo. P. 1978. *Music Rebirth: from Kundiman to RP Rock*. The Time Journal, June 12, 1978: 12.

Kelman, Herbert. 1997. *Nationalism, Patriotism and National Identity: Social-Psychological Dimensions*. Chicago: Nelson-Hall Publishers.

Kemp, Chris. 2004. *Towards a Holistic Interpretation of Music Genre Classification*, Retrieved from https://jyx.jyu.fi/dspace/bitstream/handle/123456789/13467/9513918246.pdf?sequence=1, last accessed 2nd April, 2021.

Kirss, Priit. 2007. *Audio based Genre Classification of Electronic Music.* Retrieved from https://jyx.jyu.fi/dspace/bitstream/handle/123456789/13592/URN_NBN_fi_jyu-2007601.pdf?sequence=1, last accessed 2nd April, 2021.

Maceda, José. 1972. Music in the Philippines. *Musik-Handbuch der Orientalistik*. Ed. by Mantle Hood and José Maceda. Leiden/ Köln: Brill.

McAdam, Sylvia. 2015. *Nationhood Interpreted: Revitalizing nêhiyaw Legal Systems.* Vancouver: UBC Press.

Mitchell, Tony. 1996. *Popular Music and Local Identity. Rock, Pop and Rap in Europe and Oceana*. London: Leicester University Press.

McLeod, Kembrew. 2001. Genres, Subgenres, Sub-Subgenres and more: Musical and Social Differentiation within Electronic/Dance Music Communities. *Journal of Popular Music Studies*,

13: 59-75. Retrieved from https://ir.uiowa.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1001&context=commstud_pubs,last accessed 2nd April, 2021.

Peters, Joe. 2010. *Plotting "Onloading" and "Inloading" Trajectories in an Attempt to Understand Hybridity in Musical Evolution,* Proceedings of the 1st ICTM Study Group Symposium, Singapore: ICTM Study Group on Performing Arts of South East Asia.

Santos, Ramon. 2005. *Tunugan: Four Essays on Philippines Music*. Manila: University of the Philippines Press.

Silverman, Hugh J., ed., 1993. *Questioning Foundations: Truth, Subjectivity and Culture*. New York; Routledge.

Sorensen Georg. 2004. Nationhood and Identity: Community beyond the State? *The Transformation of the State.* London: Palgrave. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-230-21533-7_5, last accessed 2nd April, 2021.

Walser, Robert. 1993. *Running with the Devil.* Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.

Winold, Allen and Delone Ricard, and William Christ. 1976. *Introduction to Music: Processes and Style.* New York: Harpers College Press.

Zorn, John, ed. 2000. *Arcana. Musicians on Music*. New York: Hips Road/Tzadik.