



Paper from the Conference "INTER: A European Cultural Studies Conference in Sweden", organised by the Advanced Cultural Studies Institute of Sweden (ACSIS) in Norrköping 11-13 June 2007. Conference Proceedings published by Linköping University Electronic Press at www.ep.liu.se/ecp/025/. © The Author.

# **Batawa:** Constructing Identity through Country Music in the Philippine Cordillera

Jimmy Balud Fong
Department of Communication, University of the Philippines Baguio
jbfong@digitelone.com

Media representations of the Philippine indigenous people Igorot continue to exoticize and freeze them in an ideal, primitive past. This paper foregrounds certain cultural products now being produced by the Igorot using modern technology and media. In these self-conscious products, where they exercise agency, how are they representing themselves? In such songs where they use their own languages, they construct who they are and what they have become. Using mostly American folk, rock and country melodies, they tell stories of how they are making sense of their experiences in an unevenly globalizing, runaway world.

## The Philippine Cordillera

The Cordillera mountain range in Northern Luzon, Philippines, is recognized as the traditional domain of a people generically called the still contested name Igorot, or people of the mountains. It is generally known that the Igorot have never been colonized, but it is perhaps better to say that Spain has not succeeded in forcing them to join the tax-paying lowland communities. Because of this, they have been consigned to an inferior position for their refusal to be "civilized," and the binary opposition lowlander/highlander has since been reinforced.

The Americans made the Igorot the centerpiece of their civilizing mission when they bought the Philippines from Spain at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. When a group of Igorot was displayed at the 1904 St. Louis Purchase Exposition, several Filipino leaders who perceived themselves as the proper Filipinos refused or resented that they were represented by primitive, g-stringed and dog-eating people from the hinterlands. The Philippine nation-state has recognized the historical and cultural unity of the people and has now consigned the Igorot into a region whose autonomy is enshrined in the present constitution but which is still not a reality.

## American Country Music

When the Americans came to the Philippines at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, they brought with them their music, both sacred and secular. It is not surprising therefore that two of the most popular melodies being used in the local songs are the hymn tunes "Love at Home" (by J. H. McNaughton) and "Amazing Grace." Based on popular recognition and use, the Bontoc Kankanaey song "Nan Layad Nenlikatan" (The love that we struggled for) sang to the modified tune of "Love at Home" is probably the Cordillera pop song.

Even when the Americans officially left the Philippines in 1946, American popular music continued to dominate the Philippine airwaves. The people of the Cordillera happen to particularly like the folk, rock and country genre which is also closely associated with the rustic "Western" and cowboy lifestyle. Today, the Mountain Province Broadcasting Corporation's DZWR claims to be the only FM station in the Philippines dedicated to the playing of folk and country music. Claiming to have pioneered the "legendary western sound" and the country music authority in the Philippines, DZWR puts on air every week ABC Radio's production of American Country Countdown produced in Nashville, Tennessee, from the Cordillera region's only city, Baguio, which is also an American construct having started as a U.S. hill station. Other pop music radio stations in the city also have country music programs.

Aside from country music, there is also a tendency in the area to follow cowboy-associated fashion: jeans, leather boots, plaid shirts, leather jackets and Stetson hats. No wonder even at the secondhand shops which the city of Baguio is also now known, there are some shops where there are collections of such fashion elements.

## Stockpiling Local Versions of American Folk and Country Music

Jacques Attali (1985) uses stockpiling to refer to the phenomenon of using recording or sound technology not to record or preserve an excellent, presumably public, live musical performance but rather to produce a recording as a substitute for a live performance. Stockpiling therefore allows for the infinite possibilities of repetition of an exact, same virtual performance anywhere, anytime, on demand, without the physical presence of the musicians. The conditions of this possibility are in themselves interesting.

It was in the 1970s when Filipino musicians started to assert themselves in relation to the dominant American popular music. The category Pinoy rock began to appear and the national self-regulatory body of the Philippine broadcast industry Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster ng Pilipinas adopted a rule about Philippine broadcast stations giving airtime for Original Pilipino Music (OPM), mostly songs in the Tagalog-based Filipino language.

The early part of the 1970s could also be identified as the period when the first big batch of country-style local songs were produced and distributed in vinyl discs mostly through record stores based in the city of Baguio. All the studio recordings were done then in the Philippine national capital, Manila. Most of the songs were in the Ibaloy language, the language of an ethno-linguistic group in the southern portion of the Cordillera region who have been stereotyped as a shy group of people. The themes of the songs revolve around the idea of unrequited love. The very first Ibaloy recorded song was an adaptation of the tune and lyrics of Hank Williams' "Blackboard of my heart."

The 1990s marked a resurgence of a new generation of local recording artists. The number of local languages used in the recordings, now in cassette tapes, has increased and the themes more varied. Some of the recording artists claim they have only been recognized as singers in their respective communities after their albums came out. Hitherto, they were not known as singers. Some of the songs produced in the 1970s in 45 rpm records were also reissued in cassette tape formats. At this point, some of the recordings were done in makeshift studios in Baguio, no longer in Manila.

Today, it has become difficult to keep track of the songs and albums being produced, remixed and reissued. Dominant in these songs is the use of popular folk, rock and country tunes or melodies. Others are even attempts to translate into the Cordillera languages American country music. "Listen to our songs/ Most of them are country, country, country, Purely country, country," declares a song entitled "Benguet Country" by RJ Mero.

# Music Video of Benguet "Country"

With human experiences becoming mostly visual, the trend for all music now is also to become visual. Contemporary Cordillera country music is also into the music video bandwagon. *Ivadoy Jen Country Songs* features songs popularized by Cesar Pasiw. Perhaps the most popular song in the video album is the one called *Savong Shi Bahong* which likens a beloved woman to flowers in Bahong (a village in La Trinidad town whose farmers are making it big by contract growing high-value cut flower varieties). The song's refrain goes in part: *Arig moy sabsabong/ Nay-esek shi Bahong/ Manseng-ew tan memapteng/ No kultaen sha/ Ilaw she'd Manila/ Panpipingilan sha* (You are like the flowers/ Planted in Bahong/ Fragrant and beautiful/ Once they're cut/ And brought down to Manila/ Buyers rush for them). Also part of the album is a song called *Nonta Panagbenga* (During Panagbenga), alluding to the politics-ridden Baguio flower festival. In a way, the two songs are staking claims for Benguet as a producer of flowers. Love, certainly, has always been represented by flowers.

The video CD *Kabenguetan* is interesting in the statement it makes that sounds like "This land is your land, this land is my land..." Of course, it is not "From California to the New York islands..." but from the foot of Kennon Road to the tip of the Halsema Highway in Buguias. Rio Felimon Cariño and his D' Friends Band went on location shooting in various parts of the province of Benguet including important parks in Baguio such as Camp John Hay and Mines View. The album seems to stake ownership of places which have long been given up to tourists. The team also congregates at the Benguet Provincial Capitol flagpole which has all the towns represented by gongs. By doing so, they pay tribute to the province that nurtured them and their music.

## Cordillera Country Music Live

The Mountain Province Broadcasting Corporation reports that at least 300 persons auditioned for the 2005 search for the Most Wanted Singing Cowboy and Cowgirl Star. At the grand finals on February 11 at the jam-packed Benguet State University closed gym, Loryza Abanag bested 14 other country music singers with her dramatic rendition of a Dixie Chicks song, complete with braided hair, dangling earrings, mini denim skirt and boots. The series of eliminations that culminated in the final showdown broadcast on AM and FM radio and cable TV could be the biggest musical event in the Cordillera this year.

At a preliminary activity at the Baguio branch of SM, the Philippines' biggest supermall chain, the program host asked the audience what they thought the "national anthem of country music in the Cordillera" was. The Kinnoboyan band started to sing "Remember When" by Allan Jackson. Apparently, the song has achieved a status akin to that of a national anthem. But it is also indicative of a Cordillera music subculture that is quite different from the rest of the country.

But not only has country music become a major source of pleasure and entertainment, it has also been used to help people and promote certain causes. For instance, many indigent patients have been recipients of concert proceeds mostly by local country musicians. Country music has also been used to raise funds for chapels and other public buildings. This augurs well for a more cause-oriented future of the local music industry.

The members of the group of musicians who call themselves the Kinnoboyan Originals, Inc. are alumni of country music singing contests sponsored by the Mountain Province Broadcasting Corporation. *Kinnoboyan* is a word coined by locals to refer to a contemporary experience, that is, to behave like a cowboy. At the country music concerts, it may mean the willingness to sit on rough bleachers, or to squat on the floor if there are no more plastic chairs, or to wear boots, leather jackets, plaid shirts and a Stetson hat. It sounds so clear but not quite. "You can come to our house but you must be a cowboy," an invitation to the province may be so stated. It means a person should not to be too fussy about food, eating, sleeping and other domestic arrangements. It means the ability to adapt to local lifestyles, the ability to live well with other people of different folkways and dispositions.

### Cordillera Musicians Sing Against Piracy

The major aim of a concert organized by the Cordillera Producers and Recording Artists Association is to raise some funds to finance what Jun Garcia, association head, calls a local anti-piracy campaign. Garcia says local piracy has so infested the local music and video market discouraging many of the recording artists and producers. Sendong Salvacio, a recording artist from the town of Bakun, Benguet and the night's emcee, also said the people's support against pirates will enable the local musicians to produce more original materials over simple adaptations. "We will be able to produce songs that speak of our own experiences," he makes the assurance.

#### Batawa

Batawa is a word in one of the Cordillera languages referring to the yard or space outside the house. Batawa is also the title of a song that has become popular seemingly because it deploys the catchy word. It has also been recorded by several 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 where much country music singing still goes on. So while the local music producers label their albums as Igorot Country, Ibaloi Country or Kankanaey Country, these are done outside of the national capital Manila, and certainly outside of, and oblivious to

Nashville. That is why the popular song title Batawa, or outside of the house, is an appropriate carrier song for the local kind of country music production.

# Appropriation of American Country

I submit that what is happening here are cases of appropriation and abrogation (Ashcroft et al. 2002). Appropriation is the use of the colonizers' musical language "to convey one's own spirit." And they create their own categories of country music: Benguet Country, Ibaloy Country, Kankanaey Country, Igorot Country. 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.

## History in Cordillera Songs

Rolando Tolentino (1999) says a cultural product may actually be the site of contest of at least three major periods of historical influences on Philippine life. I demonstrate that the form and content of Cordillera songs in general have been shaped and given flesh by the people's historical experiences. My main argument in relation to history is that, by drawing on and foregrounding past events as song materials, the contemporary Cordillera songs have the role of what Erlmann (1996) calls "present-ing the past." In general, the participation of the Cordillera people does not figure in Philippine national history.

Among the historical events and the peoples' corresponding responses used as materials in the songs include the following: World War II and other recent wars, the damming of rivers Ambuklao and Binga, the subdivision of the old Mountain Provinces, the Cordillera regionalization and autonomy issues, a strong earthquake in 1990, the state's punishment of crimes through the death penalty, and gold mining.

The 66th Infantry Battalion of the United States Armed Forces in the Far East (USAFFE) during World War II was composed mostly of Igorot soldiers. It is also in the Cordillera where the treasure-laden Japanese general Yamashita retreated and finally surrendered. The Cordillera region's mineral and forest resources have been mined and exploited during the last 50 years but the six provinces composing the region remain among the poorest in the Philippines.

The most significant event that has had a widespread impact on personal and community relations in my community (as well as in other places in the Philippines where soldiers were recruited and where the Japanese Imperial Army held camps) and that still lingers in the memory of community folks is World War II. Up to this time, two songs inspired by the war are still being shared and resurface during community gatherings. Two songs composed in 1945, although the recognized composers are already dead, have become the people's theme songs, a kind of repository of collective memory.

Guerilla warfare during World War II remains an important historical point in the memory of the villagers. Among the war-related experiences of the people include moving out of their homes and evacuating to other places, and to be conscious of and deal with other, foreign people. Many of the present social relations in the village have been shaped by the people's involvement and experiences during the war. Many of the elders in the community are war veterans and this contributed to their ascendance as civilian leaders. In fact, most of the present leaders in the region are scions of prominent WWII soldiers in the area. WWII has also emphasized American benevolence among the people, with some songs including lines of praise for America.

A period of reparation followed the war. The elders in my community remember reparation mostly in terms of foodstuff. They now regret not having demanded for longer lasting reparation goods. These past decades, however, the people have become very much aware of Japanese benevolence through the Japan International Cooperation Agency and other agencies which are actively engaged in assistance and development projects. Infrastructures such as school buildings, hospitals, roads and bridges as well as livelihood and cooperative assistance programs are all over the region. News of many Filipinos, some Igorot included, being sent for trainings and educational visits to Japan also figure in the local media. These, plus the popularity of Japanese technology and product brands, have possibly contributed to the production of songs more for entertainment than for the public expression of feelings of hate and remembrances of the horrors of war. Before, it may have been unthinkable to sing of the war in a fun way.

Certainly, the role of media in spreading awareness, knowledge and images of past and present wars cannot be overemphasized. Global media networks such as CNN and BBC have become the sources of images of war celebrities who are, to quote Anthony Giddens (1999), "more familiar than our next-door neighbor." By now, September 11, Osama bin Laden, the al Queda, the Abu Sayyaf, and Saddam, among others, have become household images and have immediately found their way into songs.

# Space in Cordillera Songs

Tolentino says geography refers to the different spaces or locations implicated in a certain cultural product. This would mean the physical and psychological spaces that are mentioned in the songs. For instance, the spaces invoked and involved have to do with the notions of home, hometown or homeland and other places (far places, the city [Baguio], abroad). Notions of the local, national, international and global spaces then figure in many of the songs, particularly in relation to the overseas Filipino worker or OFW phenomenon.

With the creation of various levels of political boundaries by the Philippine state, including the creation of town, regional, national and international centers and cities, it has now become possible for the people to sing of moving from one space to another and crossing boundaries from one's home or *ili*. Baguio, Manila, the Ilocos, and other places abroad such as Hong Kong and Canada are implicated in the people's life map and songs. "Pride of Place" has long been a dominant theme in Philippine and Cordillera songs.

Home is often idealized in the Cordillera songs. In Josefa Ognayon's *Baley shima shontog* (Home in the mountains, to the tune of "Home on the range"), there is abundance of food at home in the mountains, there is perfect ecology. Aguilar Matsi sings, "At home in Tublay, I can find a woman who will truly love me."

With contemporary life no longer confined to one's village, the imagination of more space beyond one's place has become a possibility through travel and movement. And distance may have its effects on personal relationships, particularly love relationships, in the songs. In Ognayon's song *Karamak dibdibkanan* (Don't forget me), she says, "don't forget me wherever you may be." On the other hand, the space beyond one's community also offers other possibilities of more satisfying relationships than those that have failed in one's village. So Balag-ey sings, "I'm sorry that I may need to go to Batangas (a Southern Tagalog province) to look for a woman to marry, somebody whose language you may not be able to understand" (*Tatang ko, nanang ko*, Balag-ey, *Mr. Bisyo*).

## The Igorot in/and Modernity

The pop songs show some of the ways by which the Cordillera people are confronting or dealing with change and modernity. The songs express their thoughts and feelings on education, religion, economics, marriage and the family, and the various configurations of

such institutions. The experience of change and development is often evaluated in reference to a certain past, such as when a song persona was younger, or when life was once either simple or hard. Raul Beray has two songs with such theme: "Our staple food used to be *dukto* (sweet potato) when there was no rice" (*Nonta kaootik ko* [When I was a kid], Beray, *Niman ja guara ka*).

#### **Education**

Education (*iskwida*) is sung about as very important. For poor families, it is the only inheritance that can be given to children (*Kaninin eh arem, eskuweda nin nemnemen* [Courting can wait, think of school first], Aguilar Matsi). Education is perceived as good for one's well-being (*pansigshan*) and to secure one's future. Therefore it should be earnestly pursued with utmost patience (*singsingpeten*) and must not be bungled as the biblical prodigal son squandered his material inheritance (*Nanang, si-kak gayam i nankamali* [Mother, it is I that made a mistake], *Eskueda*, Raul Beray).

The songs also identify certain purposes of education that go beyond simply getting educated. One goal is so one can find an easy job (as against hard, manual farm labor), or for job application purposes (*Eskueda*, Beray). Another reason for getting an education, which is related to the idea of the need to travel as an aspect of living in modernity, is so one will not get lost anywhere he may go (as one may be able to read directions or ask questions in other languages). A more altruistic perception includes a social value of education. A person gets an education not only for himself but for the good of others and the community.

Education is pursued mostly in the city (Baguio) so that its pursuit can be distracted or destroyed by the other allures of the city (e.g., vices, *barkada*, peer pressure) that compete with a student's attention, allowance and tuition money.

Perceptions of the city are therefore ambivalent: nurturing the mind and corrupting character, comforting the broken-hearted and destroying commitments. The pursuit of education must also then take precedence over marriage.

### Religion

Because of the potential implications of introduced religion on lifestyle, the attitudes toward it are also quite ambivalent. There are songs that advocate the acceptance of introduced, Western religion which includes getting baptized, praying and reading the Bible. There are others which advocate a middle ground: take on Christianity as a second religion, second to the traditional religion, as a form of social insurance (*Dakdake ay iyaman* [Kankanaey, Many Thanks], Joel Tingbaoen). Then there are songs that conflate the ideas of God and Kabunian (*Kedot*, Roy Basatan). And then there are ideas about sticking to the practice of tradition as a marker of identity, being Igorot (*Ogadi'n ebangonan* [Practice one has grown up with], Jinggo A. Calomente, *Nonta July 16, 1990*).

Certainly, introduced religion has not been met with full acceptance by all. The preference for and embracing one religion over another only foreground the various reasons or motivations for the choices made.

### A different, Difficult Life

Many of the songs express the people's awareness of change, change in systems and modifications in lifeways. But the most noticeable change has to do with the economic difficulties that the Igorot, and Filipinos in general, are experiencing. This is not to say though that there was a time when they were in a better economic condition. In conversations with the people, anecdotes about a single centavo being worth something in times past would be compared to having a lot of money in the present but not being able to buy anything substantial.

Several songs foreground the difficulty of living in the present, and present fear as to what will happen in the future. The hard life is accepted as a valid reason for movement to other places in pursuit of gain or a better life (to meet basic needs) and thus separation from husband, wife, children and home. This resignation to overseas contract work and its corresponding personal and social costs are captured in a song (*Biyang ni enta paninaravian*).

The awareness of cross-cultural encounters once a person moves out of his/her own village is perceived to have some effects. In the aspect of a love relationship, this may lead to a change of heart, as in this song: "We were classmates. We used to put our lunch and papers together. When it rained, we shared your umbrella. One windy day, you even placed your head close to mine. But when you became a *marikit* [lady], you went abroad, to Canada. You came home and said you don't know me anymore. What did you eat, that you forgot me? What did you drink that washed my name away from you heart? *Ensahit nemnem ko* [my mind hurts]" (*Angsan et ngo* [That's too much], Balag-ey).

The difficult life is also offered as a good reason to doubt the practicality of and to forego the expensive traditional wedding feast (*kalun*) of carabaos, cows and pigs, or even a church wedding. Balag-ey challenges his fellow bachelors: "So men, if you like a girl, go ahead and tell her so you won't be like this old bachelor. Never mind the marriage feast because we have reached a difficult time. The registration of the marriage at the *munisipio* will suffice. For look at those who did not have a wedding feast, they have a good and happy family." Josefa Ognayon (*Rolan*) tells a man: "*No kastos mo ketekutan, niman kuno niti, eboliwan i ugadi. Angken papil basta mansinmekan kitten shili*" (If it's the expenses you fear, times/customs have changed. Even if it's just a piece of paper so long as we will love each other well). After attending an apparently expensive wedding feast, Marvin Thompson prays, "God, have compassion, return their expenses so they won't get too hard up" (*Pamahasha*, Farewell).

Aside from the economic reasons for moving or going away from one's ili, the songs also present other motivations for movement. One recurring reason is rejection by the women of interest in one's own hometown. So a guy goes to Manila, to seek comfort/consolation, in order to forget. "I'm leaving to look for a girl/ I tried looking for one here at home, but she is choosy, so what do I do? But I'm not blaming anybody, because I'm poor, and I'm not handsome either.../ I'll try Batangas/ Forgive me if I'll bring home someone whose language you will not be able to understand/ For our *kailian* (townmates) do not have mercy, they do not desire me..." (*Tatang ko, nanang ko*, Balag-ey).

The potential effect of distance, as a result of movement, on a love relationship is also expressed in another song (by RJ Mero: *No amtak ja en-aravika/ Eg taka koma sinsinmek* [Had I known that you were going away/ I shouldn't have loved you].

#### Reunions

The pursuit of better lives somewhere highlights the significance of family/clan reunions, calls and announcements for which now dominate the public service announcements sections of the local media. Such reunions are also now understood as the substitute for the traditional prestige feasts, but the reunion is more egalitarian because everyone contributes to the food.

For the people then, the family reunion has become a substitute for or a continuation of the expensive feast of old which was shouldered by a single person or family. Now the feast has become everybody's responsibility through a uniform (but negotiable) contribution of cash and rice. The participants are often advised during the reunion program to still attend despite the inability to give the contribution, as next year perhaps, when others are unable, then those who are able will pitch in for those who can't give.

The significance of reunions is also recognized as important at a time when people meet in the city assuming everyone is a stranger. Reunions make people realize that some persons met in the city are actually relatives so that love relationships should be avoided, or in workplaces, infliction of violence should be avoided. Pertierra (1997) calls this the tendency to carry over village relations of personal reciprocation to the city where we deal with contemporaries and strangers, not village mates and consociates.

Family reunions have become an annual activity in many parts of the Cordillera, something unheard of (on radio) before the 1990s. The songs say it is good to have reunions. You'll get to know your kin and kindred, even from distant places. The significance of reunions is also recognized as important in a time when people meet in the city where everyone is assumed a stranger. Reunions make people realize that some persons met in the city are actually relatives so that love relationships should be shunned, or in workplaces, infliction of violence should be avoided (*Kasingsing*, Basatan). In my case community, a person reportedly boxed a cousin (as established in a recent reunion). The victim reportedly retorted by shouting, "Stop reunions!" (*Enog et reunion*).

The engagement of the people in politics has also made reunions a potential source of votes. Persons with political ambitions are now organizing reunions for the purpose of introducing themselves and courting the clan's or kin's support and votes. In my case community, however, election results have turned out to be independent of organizing or participating in reunions. This has led to comments by losing candidates to comment that reunions have no use (*enchi gayam ulog ni* reunion).

In reunions that I attended, some impromptu songs and speeches would carry these same ideas. The homecoming then becomes a song, and the song provides the rationale for the reunion. The songs about reunions capture the issues of diaspora and the need to connect to a home and people, and the sociality of individual pursuits in a modern world. And this is not an experience unique to the Igorot but to all people on the margins. Frith quotes Levine:

The blues allowed individuals greater voice for their individuality than any previous form of Afro-American song but kept them still members of the group, still on familiar ground, still in touch with their peers and their roots. It was a song style created by generations in the flux of change who desired and needed to meet the future without losing the past, who needed to stand alone and yet remain part of the group, who craved communication with and reassurance from members of the group as they ventured into unfamiliar territories and ways.

#### Love

There was a time when most marriages in my case community were contracted between two persons without a period of courtship. A man simply tells some elders that he wanted a certain woman, or he is asked by his peers and elders if he liked one woman, and they all go to ask or even pressure the woman to consent to a marriage. The idea of loving (*semek*) one's spouse is part of the advices usually given by the elders during the wedding feast. Every now and then this practice still occurs. Now the idea that love between two persons is the primary basis of a wedding or marriage is enshrined in the songs. Majority of the Cordillera songs are love songs. Frith (1996) says pop songs actually follow a love formula:

The pop song 'formula,' ... was indeed (as the Frankfurt scholars argued) an effect of market forces. But content analysis has consistently revealed the way in which the pop formula is also dominated by a particular sort of romantic ideology. The pop song is the love song, and the implication, putting these two findings together, is that what pop songs are really about are *formulas of love*.

One analytic strategy that can be adopted, says Frith, is "to argue that these romantic formulas (and, in particular, the way they change over time) somehow *reflect* changing social mores, and thus give us useful evidence as to how 'the people' regard love (and associated social mores)." In relation to this, Giddens (1999) says "Marriage used to be an economic phenomenon, now it's a matter of personal relationships. It means the emotional stakes in

finding a partner for life are that much higher...." The prominence of love, following Giddens, makes marriage an example of a "shell institution." "So while modern marriage can be more rewarding in terms of love shared, fragile emotions bring new anxieties that were alien to previous generations."

The Cordillera songs talk only about heterosexual love. This means the relationships desired are only those between a man and a woman, and it is the man who always initiates a potential relationship. One song complains about the burden of initiating a relationship falling on men: "Women have no problems. They don't need to worry. Men will run after them. They pretend (*mankunkunwari*, nagkukunwari) not to like you because they know it should be the men to make the first move" (Beray). This is not to say that the Igorot are not aware of homosexuality in their own community and elsewhere. I have also noticed several songs that seem to suggest that all persons, especially men, must get married, and staying unmarried is an unnatural and pitiable state.

Notice what formulas of love the Cordillera singers sing about. Some songs include metaphors used to refer to desirable women. A woman is often compared to a flower, sabsabong (Sabsabong, Beray, Niman ja guara ka; Sabsabong shi Bahong, Cesar Pasiw). Beray (Marikit ka eshan na bee, Niman ja guara ka) likens a woman to the moon that brightens the way at night, or like the sun (that warms the body, so that you will not feel cold). In Flora, Talaw ni Karao, Beray calls a certain woman a star that led many men astray (shahel to inudaw). Balag-ey sings, "Oh that you were a body of water. I'd pray to God to become a tilapia so I can swim in you...At night, you are my dreams, at work my thoughts (Seppe, Mr. Bisyo).

When a man gets old unmarried, it is entirely his fault. "He is unmarried because he is choosy. He is the one who changes his mind. Now he regrets not having children who will take care of him" (*Baludahin eg naasaw-an* (Unmarried bachelor), Balag-ey, Mr. Bisyo). Jacildo issues a warning with a song from a first-person point of view (*Dinivayan ko i kinabalbalo* [I remained a bachelor too long]): "I'm too old at 55. My hairline is receding, hair falling. When I try to court, they say I'm old and unable. Good if there is an aged woman who will accept me so that when December comes, I will not crouch so much. Brothers beware!"

On the idea that feelings or emotions belong to the realm of the private, the expression of private emotions in pop songs makes such emotions public. This also illustrates the idea of private feelings commercialized (Pertierra 1989). The popular song *Batawa* (yard, to the tune of John Denver's "I Walk in the Rain by Your Side") also illustrates an attempt to debate in public (through songs) these public expressions of what were hitherto considered private.

### Conclusion

Although unoriginal in form, contemporary Cordillera songs constitute sign systems for several things. They point to difficult colonial experiences. The local languages used in the songs clarify the dynamic lived experiences of a people exercising their agency in an unevenly American-led globalizing world. We hear the voices of a people in the margins who cannot continue to be represented as frozen to a primitive past, even if perhaps their physical conditions still appear to be. In, other words, the songs constitute an "ethnography" of the producers' and consumers' own cultures. Hannerz (1987) says that "foreign cultural influences need not involve only an impoverishment of local and national culture. It may give people access to technological and symbolic resources for dealing with their own ideas, managing their own culture, in new ways...."

### References

Appadurai, Arjun 1996 *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Mineapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press.

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin 2002 *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-colonial Literatures*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Routledge.

Attali, Jacques 1985 *Noise: The Political Economy of Music*. Minneapolis/London: University of Minnesota Press.

Chandler, Daniel, and Dilwyn Roberts-Young 1998The Construction of Identity in the Personal Homepages of Adolescents (WWW document) URL: http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/short/strasbourg.html (07/07/2000)

Du Gay, Paul 1997 Production of Culture/Cultures of Production. London: Sage.

Erlmann, Veit 1996 *Nightsong Performance, Power, and Practice in South Africa*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Finin, Gerard 2005 *The Making of the Igorot: Roots of Cordillera Consciousness*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press.

Flores, Patrick and Cecilia Sta. Maria De La Paz 1997 *Sining at Lipunan*. Quezon City: Sentro ng Wikang Filipino, University of the Philippines System.

Frith, Simon 1996 *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Giddens, Anthony 1999 Runaway World. BBC Reith Lectures 1999.

Hannerz, Ulf 1987 The World in Creolization. Africa 57 (4).

Lyle, Katie Letcher 1979 Southern Country Music: A Brief Eulogy. In *The American South: Portrait of a Culture*, ed. Louis D. Rubin, Jr. Voice of America Forum Series.

Maceda, Teresita 1980 Pop Music. In International Popular Culture. Fall 1980.

McLuhan, Marshall 1964 *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man.* New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.

Pertierra, Raul 1989 The Practice of Theory and the Theory of Practice: Its Relevance for Philippine Studies. In *Diliman Review* (37).

Pienterra, Raul 1997 Global Localities: Toronto and the Filipino Diaspora. In *Australian-Canadian Studies*. Vol. 15, 2 & Vol. 16, 1.

Reyes, Soledad S. 1997 Ang Puno't Dulo ng Kulturang Popular. In Pagbasa ng Panitikan at Kulturang Popular, Piling Sanaysay, 1976-1996. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press.

Stokes, Martin 1994 Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place. New York: Berg Publishers.

Taylor, Timothy Dean 1997 Global Pop: World Music, World Markets. London: Routledge.

Tolentino, Rolando 2000'Kung Hindi Ngayon, Kailan' Kung Hindi Rito, Saan Kung Hindi Tayo, Sino: Napakaraming Tanong at Isyu ng Tao at Lipunan sa Panitikan ng Pilipinas. *Linangan*. Seryeng Pampanitikan 1. Quezon City: Departamento ng Filipino at Panitikang Pilipino, University of the Philippines.