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Panel 4.1: Music Bridging Cultures? Towards an Acoustic Geography of Contemporary Asia

The Micro and the Macro in Constructing an Acoustic Geography of the Philippines

Musical appropriation and consumption in the context of the globalized and mediatized present tends to be framed in terms of the macro-, largely focused upon the youth and/or commercial music industry. The 1980s globalization of Freddie Aguilar’s “Anak” (Child) still remains the pinnacle of Pinoy pop international success. How are we to understand it as a bridge across cultures? Or is it simply novelty and grist for an international music industry that is as voracious as it is fickle? I argue that the dynamic of the macro- is only one part of an equation that involves the micro, i.e. small-scale instances of appropriation and consumption. As counterbalance to the macro of “Anak,” I examine the appropriation and consumption of the Hawaiian tune “Aloha ‘oe” by a single rural Visayan church congregation. I ask the same questions: How are we to understand it as a bridge across cultures? Or is it simply novelty and grist for a folk practice that is unapologetically eclectic and hybrid? Finally, I suggest that in the Philippines the micro and the macro draw upon a single logic of practice.