

***Musika at Bagong Lipunan: Pagbuo ng Lipunang Filipino, 1972-1986.*** Raul Casantusan Navarro. Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2014, 203 pp. ISBN 978-971-550-681-6.

NAVARRO'S NEW BOOK IN FILIPINO BRINGS to fore music that was used as a powerful propaganda tool to advance the political agenda of Ferdinand E. Marcos and his wife, Imelda R. Marcos, during the Martial Law period (1972–1981) in the Philippines. The book also covers events prior to 1972 to set the historical context, as well as those that led up to the deposition of the Marcoses in 1986 in order to illustrate the emergence of the underground music even after Martial Law was lifted.

It is a fresh contribution to the literature of the Martial Law period, which is dominated by writings on political issues, from lionizing biographies of the First Couple to the fear-provoking accounts of countless violations of human rights. Navarro presents music—particularly the songs commissioned by the Marcos government for the New Society to enhance its propaganda for a modern Filipino nation visualized as free from colonial and external manipulations—as significant social components in the creation of a utopian Philippines. Offering a counterdiscourse to these songs are protest songs stemming from the grassroots of Philippine society in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Navarro deems these songs as the rightful successors of those of the late-19th century Philippine revolutionaries, the *Katipuneros*; they are, for Navarro, music that mirrors the living conditions and horrific experiences under the Marcos' military regime, and their romanticized yearning for freedom from such appalling circumstances.

The first three chapters provide a well-defined contextual background for the discourse on music as a moving force in an evolving culture. Chapter one introduces the *Bagong Lipunan* (New Society) as conceptualized by the Marcos government, from its initial stages to the the implementation of its numerous programs, all of which were enveloped by the overpowering political agenda of the First Couple. The compiled relevant events and programs of the *Bagong Lipunan* clearly shows that their intended results

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were beneficial to the whole country, and that the Marcoses appear to be the caring protagonists. Navarro balances this misguided view by presenting how Marcos manipulated many of the events leading to his re-election in 1969, staging bogus national security problems that would give him enough reason to declare Martial Law, through Proclamation No. 1081, in September 1972. Chapter two presents the New Society under the new military regime, and examines how its programs were transformed to conform to the government's targets. Chapter three highlights Imelda Marcos and her role as the maternal beautifier of the entire nation, emphasizing her cultural programs aimed at enhancing the nation's identity, the crown of which was the establishment and construction of the Cultural Center of the Philippines.

The next three chapters (four to six) focus on music, with chapter four providing a brief background on music created by composers who were trained at the University of the Philippines Conservatory of Music from the 1930s to the late 1960s. Navarro emphasized the role of composers such as Nicanor Abelardo, Francisco Santiago, Antonio Molina, Felipe de Leon, Lucio San Pedro, and Antonino Buenaventura in directing the course of musical compositions and tastes in the New Society. Modernist composers such as Lucrecia Kasilag and Jose Maceda were later tasked to create music that brought to light the richness of Philippine indigenous music. Chapter five highlights the songs of the New Society, those which were commissioned and extensively disseminated to the very core of national development—the youth and their education. The seemingly purposeful songs were used by the government to indoctrinate the population, especially young school children, towards the successful realization of the aspirations of the New Society. These songs emphasized the love of country, the appreciation of the nation's wealth and beauty, and piety towards the nation's president and first lady. The last clearly manifests the political propaganda of the First Couple, which accentuated their roles as the nation's patriarch and matriarch. The study slightly relates the political theories of Marx, Lenin, and Mao to the discussion of reforms instigated by the central government, particularly after the declaration of Martial Law, during which power and control emanated from the center to the people.

Chapter six offers an interesting counterdiscourse to the songs of the New Society: the protest songs from the masses, which represent another facet of Philippine society that was powerfully subjugated by the hegemony of the Marcos government. Navarro traces a long history of these revolutionary songs, starting with two famous love songs (*kundiman*), *Jocelyn ang Baliuag* and *Alerta Katipunan*, both of which were sung by the Katipuneros (members of the revolutionary organization, Katipunan) in their plight against the Spaniards in the late 1890s. It is remarkable that Navarro was able to connect these with the protest songs of the Marcos regime, accentuating the similarities in their experiences and aspirations, even if they were separated by space and time.

No single scholar has compiled these songs in a comprehensive study such as this book. Indeed, the enormity of Navarro's research on the music, particularly the songs, of the Martial-Law era is commendable, as is his clear-cut conceptualization of the substantial function these songs instigated in the shaping of a new mindset among individuals that, when taken collectively, triggered social transformations. The examination of the songs is heavy on textual analysis, as the texts were the basis for the government-sanctioned conditioning of the minds of the population. The author wistfully wrote a disclaimer in his preface that his analysis would not focus on the musical structures, but on the text, as his study centers on the discourse highlighting the role of songs in the evolving cultural and social consciousness of the Filipino people during the Martial Law years.

This research contributes to our understanding of another facet of Philippine society during Martial Law. Navarro's focus on the music of Marcos' *Bagong Lipunan* provides a fresh look at the period which is marred by otherwise unspeakable truths caused by the strong inclination to hold on to power among those who controlled it. This work refocuses our attention to the important and influential role of music in the process of social and cultural transformation.

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