

EXPRESSING IBAN COMMUNITY'S SPIRIT OF PATRIOTISM IN POPULAR MUSIC AND FILMS

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ABSTRACT

Popular media such as music and films provide great repository of knowledge should we study from, just to name a few, socio-cultural and political lens. In conjunction with rapid lifestyle changes as a result of socio-cultural development as well as the demand for political consciousness for the formation of a newly formed nation, popular music and films had rapidly embraced both modernity and nationalism to the detriment of traditional practices in culture in order to adapt themselves in the era of modernization. Using the concept of modernity, historiography and textual analysis method, we will then look at differential transformation within Iban music industry and Malay language films in responding to agents of socio-cultural and political changes in Malaysia. From the song lyrics and film textual analysis, it is portrayed that popular songs and films are used as a medium to express the socio-cultural identity of its people. It is shown in the popular song lyrics how the Iban react and reflect in adaptation of modern demands of change as a result of the effects of historical processes on the social, cultural, physical, economic and political environments. Meanwhile, the Malay language films chosen also reflect on the political demand of state, soon after it obtained its independence from the British. Hence, the aim of this paper is to examine how modernity has historically framed the development of Iban and the Malay people and how they responded to the modernity and the socio-cultural environment during 1950s to 1970s through the use of popular song and film as a medium to express their spirit of nationalism.

Keywords: Patriotism, Iban Film, Iban Popular Music

1. INTRODUCTION

From the colonial period to postcolonial era, Southeast Asian nation states have gone through dramatic historical developments and experienced political and economic changes. But looking at the history of popular music and film through the lens of the nation building, existing research do not respond to the expression of patriotism among the Iban people. This paper will review the songs and films produced during the 1950s-1970s; the spirit of patriotism could be seen through popular media.

2. BACKGROUND

Past research focused mainly history of film making in Singapore and Malaya, and paid very little attention to localize film making and even exhibition in Sarawak let alone on film with Iban as a subject matter. Whereas in Iban popular music, it is not created for commercial purposes as in film. Popular is created as a form of propaganda, expression towards nation building during the period of psychological warfare.

On the other hand, through the lyrics analysis, the historical context and socio-cultural of the songs had been done by 'peeling off' in order to uncover the layers and levels of meaning in the context of modernity. The Iban tradition of being a *Bujang Berani* and *Keling*, who is legendary Iban warriors commemorated in the folklores as well as Rentap, who dared challenge the Brooke monarchy had deeply influenced the Iban as reflected in the song lyrics. It shows the traditions had always been a source of motivation, inspiration and encouragement to the Iban Trackers, Sarawak Rangers, Ranger Regiment, Border Scouts and Police Field