“Suppotte i kuttura’-ta”

contemporary Chamorro music and language preservation on the island of Guam

presentacion si Micah Garrido
Guam / Guåhån

- 210 sq. miles
- ~ 160,000 residents
- Military accounts for 27% of total land and a significant part of the population
- Primary industry is tourism from Japan, overseen by the Guam Visitors Bureau
Historical overview

“Pre-Contact” Guam
- Little to no historical records

The “Latte Period” & Spanish Colonial Guam
- Magellan lands in 1521
- Missionary/trade work begins in the 17th century
- America gains control after Spanish/American War

American Colonial Guam
- Made a territory of the US post-WWII
- Chamorro language banned in schools, places of work, and business transactions
- Cultural practice discouraged, de-incentivized economically
What I thought I would be

Tracing the influence of Johnny Sablan, local musician and cultural activist, on young contemporary Chamorro musicians

The Jon Dank Show
Interviewed about 25 musicians, activists, cultural experts, and university professors about efforts to keep the Chamorro language and culture alive through music and performing arts.

What I actually did...

Attended the Festival of Pacific Arts, a quadrennial celebration uniting 27 countries in the Pacific Islands for cultural exchange.
“It is not as much the Chamorro language that is dying-- though that, too--but the cultural psychology the language generates that is declining the quickest”

- Palé Eric Forbes
Evaluating Chamorro music on the spectrum of approaches to language preservation
Synthesis

Johnny Sablan
Pop/Rock n’ Roll
(1970s-80s)

Defined by arranging older traditional songs or American popular music with alternate lyrics and/or instrumentation for the purpose of appealing to a larger audience.

JD Crutch
Country
(1980s)

Dan de Leon Guerrero
Country (1980s-present)
Johnny Sablan

- Born on Guam, trained and recorded professionally in LA
- “island sound” achieved through trial and error
- Recorded four seminal albums between the years 1968-1974
- Famous for modernizing pre-WWII traditional songs
- Addressed social issues such as skin color-based discrimination in the community and Americanization
Joseph Dueñas  
(JD Crutch)

- Took melodies/chord progressions from American and Canadian country songs and replaced them with his own stories in Chamorro
- Noted for infusing pre-contact influences
  - *Techa* tone of voice
  - Cited *Kantan chamorrita* chant verses in lyrics
- Switches fluidly between languages
- Complicates narratives of island life with nuanced storytelling
- Critiques political structures in a personable and accessible way
- Renowned for translating American Top 40 pop songs into Chamorro, finding cultural equivalents to maintain the meaning of lyrics

Daniel de Leon Guerrero
Evaluation of synthesis

Validations

- Appeals to younger listeners via pop sounds, older listeners via Chamorro lyrics
- Offers a bridge between English and Chamorro language cultural psychology
- Abandons the dualist dynamic of novelty/reconstruction

Critiques

- Because of accessibility, most at risk of commercialization
- Can feature “English thoughts translated into Chamorro,” furthering of the death of cultural psychology
Si yu’os må’åse para ekungo’
Si Richter Trust, Prof. Shanna Lorenz yan Josefina Leon-Falla yan Unibesidåt Guåhån
Kao pregunta mu’?