

Bañamos: The Bathing of Spectacle of Travel, Modernity, and Place as Folklore and Performance

Reagan R. Maiquez

The spectacle is a capital accumulated to the point where it becomes an image.

Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*

As a preliminary critique that tries to polemicize the anthropology of spectacle this paper will problematize an “invented” festival as accumulation of images and meanings from valued, capitalized, and contested space of mobility and contemporary travel and tourism. It is also a folkloric reading of the contemporary based on people’s performatives seen through a community during a festive occasion, as this essay examines a particular space and time of travel and modernity that is produced, consumed, and mobilized by different agencies and structures of powerplay in the creation of a contested locality – or even a reality.

The Bañamos Festival, as a folk and modern expression of culture, and a performance as well, of the people of Los Baños, Laguna will be read as a space and time of spectacle to speculate and interrogate the production of Philippine festivals, which have proliferated in the past years. In delivering such argument, this essay explores and exposes not only the flair and flavor of Filipino merry-making but also the dynamics of the cultural production of these festivals as spectacular phenomena that created the local colors and pageantry, underwhich the mobilization of politics, capital, modernity, and tourism happen.

As a critique, this paper seeks to reconfigure such positions through Guy Debord’s propositions about the spectacle (1995) and its process of unifying separateness or the illusion of unity from disparate realities produced by the present capitalist society, which seems to be sustaining its eventual recovery of power, wealth, and ideological production from what Karl Marx had predicted as its actual demise due to its own overproduction. By extending the notion of the spectacle to the concept of performance, we can see the relationship between what is produced and seen (perceived, for that matter), and the community, which creates and consume the contemporary as contentiously folkloric in its seemingly modern and spectacular performance.