

Editor's Note

The power of certain intriguing texts (and media), and their resistance to straightforward or singular interpretation has (rather serendipitously) turned out to be a theme of this volume of *Social Science Diliman*.

First in line is a phrase “*Dibidi dibidi*” (DVD) that initially was only ever heard as a conspiratorial whisper in Manila. It can be read as a way for the majority of Filipinos to achieve imaginary ‘middleclassness’ says Rolando Tolentino, and this consumption can only be done illicitly, through the mediation of the now ubiquitous Moro media pirate. Tolentino’s article explores the economic significance of the informal sector, within which Muslims have become racialized and marginalized as an underclass by the State’s signifying practices. Tracing back from the notoriety of the Moros in the colonial era, Tolentino finds that Muslims are still occupying a stereotyped niche as ‘pirates’ in this nation. However, he notes that, paradoxically, there has been a significant shift in their role as raider to the raided.

Next is an enigmatic script scratched onto a controversial piece of earthenware from Batangas. Ramon Guillermo and Myfel Paluga take us through their scholarly and systematic attempt to decode the syllabic symbols making up the famous Calatagan Pot Inscription, which, if we accept the authenticity of the archaeological find, dates back to between the 14th and 15th c. and makes it the earliest known sample of writing in the Philippines. The fascinating text inscribed around the mouth of the small pot has eluded definitive interpretation ever since it was found some fifty years ago, in 1961. The authors’ experiments with paleography, cryptography, and ethnographic comparison lead them to propose a reading of the pot’s inscription as a protective spell or charm written in ‘Bisaya’, with a Javanese mantra. They also offer an explanation for the artifact’s uniqueness premised on historical evidence of migration and the culturally appropriate way of disposing of objects of Power upon the death of their owner.

Moving to the present context of globalization, the third exposition in this issue looks at how messages may be conveyed through the technologies of new media. If ‘the medium is the message’, then what may be expressed with computer-mediated communications between Filipinos and their loved ones that have been separated by the labor diaspora? Examining Marshall McLuhan and Stuart Hall’s theoretical propositions, Almond Pilar Aguila’s

nuanced study discusses how three couples make use of online exchanges to virtually continue their relationships. Compared with face-to-face interaction, it appears that while the technology has strained or diminished possibilities for the maintenance of intimacy and mutual understanding, there are ways by which it can also enhance relationship communication.

Legal interpretation and negotiation is the subject matter of the final article by Lowell Bautista. Here the text being disputed derives from colonial legacy, and concerns none other than the mapping of the territorial boundaries of the ‘Philippines’. Spain and America laid down arbitrary lines in the waters enclosing the archipelago in the historic agreement of 1898 more popularly known as “The Treaty of Paris”. The Philippines, however, along with most of the world’s countries, also signed the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 1982. While the borders currently printed on our national maps date back to more than a century, Bautista concludes, however, that the question is: Can these treaty boundaries be recognized internationally? This issue is highly current and it is hoped that the publication of this article will help to generate more informed public and academic discussion.

The reviews section of *Social Science Diliman* is an important part of the journal as a venue for critique and intellectual exchange. There are two recent works from UP Diliman featured here. Jose Buenconsejo’s film *River of Exchange: Music of Agusan Manobo and Visayan Relations in Caraga, Mindanao, Philippines* is reviewed by another scholar of Mindanao and the Manobos—Augusto Gatmaytan. Ramon Guillermo’s new book *Pook at Paninindigan: Kritika ng Pantayong Pananaw* enjoys a critique of his critique of the approach from younger critic Scheherazade Vargas.

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