

Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

Editor's Introduction

Michael D. Pante

Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints
vol. 69 no. 4 (2021): 493–94

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted in a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only.

One year after its publication in this journal, the final pdf of this article may be uploaded to the author's institutional repository, provided that this copyright page is retained. Republication of this article or its storage in electronic databases other than as specified above is not allowed without prior permission in writing from the publisher.

For any further use of this work, please contact the publisher at philstudies@ateneo.edu.

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>

Editor's Introduction

Circulation is integral to the viability of all forms of currency. What a particular society considers as money needs to be constantly exchanged among individuals for it to gain stability as a conduit for transactions involving goods and services. Hence, the value of a currency, whether it comes in the form of salt, shells, or cryptocurrency, is largely independent of the object used as money but rather is significantly influenced by the community that uses it. The theme of this issue shows this fundamental but oft-neglected link between the social and the economic. It presents a different side of the Philippine economy, evincing how ethnographic and historical perspectives offer valuable insights that allow us to understand currencies and commodities apart from formal economic viewpoints.

One such insight forces us to view funerary customs in a different light, as seen in “Pig Is Money: *Aremag* (Funerals) among the Ibaloy of Upper Loacan (Itogon, Benguet).” A team of foreign and local scholars analyzes how the *aremag* ritual, the first funeral cycle performed by the Ibaloy in Benguet, goes beyond the preparation of the deceased for their journey to the next world. This tradition, which involves the killing of a pig and communal sharing of its meat, includes transactions that can be viewed as economic in nature. Due to the complex practices and taboos that determine how the meat ought to be divided and eaten, the pig “embodies the notion of money” (520). The ethnographic work of Frédéric Laugrand, Antoine Laugrand, Gliseria Magapin, and Jazil Tamang shows that, depending on the context, the animal can represent various forms of economic goods: wealth (for both the living and the deceased), inheritance, luck, bountiful harvests, and gold ore. However, compared with traditional types of currency, the pig prepared during the *aremag* can be understood as currency in so far as “it is exchanged as wealth that socially and economically binds the deceased and the living” (497).

While the lead article dissects what can be construed as a case study of an informal form of money, Lisandro E. Claudio’s article turns to the institution that manages the country’s official currency and monetary policy. It revisits

the career of Miguel Cuaderno, Central Bank governor from 1949 to 1960, and argues that his anti-inflationary policies were aligned with his austerity paradigm, which positions his ideas closer to the monetary conservatism of the International Monetary Fund than the economic progressivism attached to his anti-imperialist reputation. However, rather than focus on formal economic models or treatises, Claudio employs “a textual approach” to understand the governor’s ideas not just “numerically but also discursively” (531), thereby allowing for interdisciplinary dialogue between methods used in the humanities and economics.

As shown in Cuaderno’s case, economic paradigms, like currencies and commodities, are never static and usually follow the global flow of ideas, a reality that has influenced the commercial landscape of the Philippines since the colonial period. For instance, the economy’s shift from mercantilism to liberalism, which transpired from the 1770s to the 1820s, was facilitated by a network of individuals and institutions imbued with the influence of the Basque Enlightenment, especially the Basque maritime trading diaspora. Aitor Anduaga emphasizes the role of the Royal Basque Society of Friends of the Country and the Royal Company of the Philippines as the key agents of this transition, enabling not just a qualitative change in the nature of the tradable commodities but, more importantly, the tectonic shift toward the establishment of a free trade regime.

Like currencies, commodities necessitate a high degree of circulation, as highlighted in Leo Paulo I. Imperial’s study of the Albert Louis Ammen Transportation Company (Alatco). Founded in 1914, the Alatco, being the first bus company in the Philippines, pioneered motorized mobility outside the nation’s capital, in particular, in the Bicol Region. The company’s transport service was critical given that material prosperity in the region at that time was predicated on the shipment of abaca fibers from otherwise inaccessible mountainous slopes to the seaports and train stations that would link them to their markets in Manila and abroad.

In a research note, Carla Gamalinda contributes to the history of the Jesuit press by studying the graphic features of its publications from 1622 until the order’s expulsion from the Philippines in 1768. Gamalinda’s study uncovers how the recurring designs used by *indio* (native) printers who worked for the press reveal patterns and irregularities that prompt a reinvestigation of commonly held notions about colonial-era publishing.

Michael D. Pante
Ateneo de Manila University