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Editor's Introduction

Michael D. Pante

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Editor's Introduction

In 1991 Antoon Postma published in *Philippine Studies* the first scholarly edition of an inscription from an archaeological discovery in 1986 that altered drastically the study of Philippine history. Postma's article introduced to the academic community what came to be known as the Laguna Copperplate Inscription (LCI).

Three decades since Postma's pioneering publication, the journal is honored to be the platform for another article on the LCI—this time, one that involves a major rereading of the text that could change the way we understand not only the said artifact but also precolonial Philippine history in general. Elsa Clavé and Arlo Griffiths's "The Laguna Copperplate Inscription: Tenth-Century Luzon, Java, and the Malay World" is a staggering piece of meticulous scholarship. Comparing the LCI with other contemporary epigraphs, especially those written in Malay and Javanese, the authors distinguish their work from other previously published analyses of the copperplate text, most of which tend to privilege a local lens in deciphering the document. Adopting a transregional frame instead, the current issue's lead article highlights the cosmopolitan character of Old Malay (OM), and based on the authors' assessment, "there can be no reasonable doubt about the identification of the language of the LCI as being a variety of OM" (195).

The article includes a lengthy lexicon of the OM words used in the LCI, demonstrating how certain socioeconomic norms and cultural practices diffused in insular Southeast Asia and reached pre-Hispanic Tagalog communities. One such example is the importance of debt settlement, which is the very subject of the LCI's text. The profound implications of Clavé and Griffiths's article cannot be overstated. For one, it points to the need for conceiving of a cosmopolitan insular Southeast Asia where communities were interconnected through Malay, thereby posing a serious challenge to the current notion of the so-called Malay World, whose analytic scope is concentrated on a recently constructed nation-state. The authors assert that the LCI's use of Malay as "documentary language reveals that the parties involved were part of a wider cultural world characterized by a shared legal

and documentary terminology (with lexical items from Sanskrit, Javanese, and Malay), shared documentary and cultural practices (e.g., the engraving of a legal text on a copperplate, debt bondage), and the variety of regional manifestations of these shared elements” (216). It should be no surprise if this rereading of the LCI would become the standard point of reference for other researchers who will work on this topic in the future.

The woman question takes center stage in Julz E. Riddle’s analysis of the Japanese occupation based on the diaries of two women *bunkajin*, or people of culture. The two *bunkajin*, Kikuko Kawakami and Tsuyako Miyake, interacted with notable Filipino women—including prominent suffragettes—during the Second World War as part of Imperial Japan’s propaganda efforts to promote the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere among the colonized. “The Woman Question during the Japanese Occupation in Kikuko Kawakami’s and Tsuyako Miyake’s Philippine Diaries (1943)” does not merely view the occupation using a gender lens. It shows how the encounter between two groups of women, Japanese and Filipino, who had contrasting definitions of gender equality, complicates our understanding of the woman question during the war, forcing us to confront preconceived notions of emancipation.

When a new literary style emerged at the Ateneo de Manila University in the 1960s, Philippine poetry got a taste of radically different ways of articulating human experience. However, for Niccolo Rocamora Vitug such radicalism developed not just in the realm of the text but also from its social milieu. Vitug notes how Bagay’s reinventing of poetry cannot be divorced from the social upheavals happening in the university, which was then in the throes of a Filipinization movement, and the wider Philippine society, which grappled with the political uncertainties posed by a looming dictatorship. In “Bagay: A Structural-Phenomenological Discussion of a Movement,” he rereads the literary contributions of well-known Bagay poets, such as Rolando Tinio and Bienvenido Lumbera, and juxtaposes them with their on- and off-campus political activities. Using both critical discourse analysis and frameworks derived from the humanities, the author interrogates the usual way scholarship defines what constitutes a movement.

Michael D. Pante
Ateneo de Manila University