

Currency As National Narrative: A Semiotic Analysis Of Philippine Banknote Design

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Abstract : This study examines how Philippine banknote designs function as semiotic texts that communicate messages of power and authority, shaping national identity and historical consciousness. Drawing from Roland Barthes' critique of power and Benedict Anderson's concept of imagined communities, the research analyzes the interplay of connotation and denotation in the current series of Philippine banknotes. The study addresses the following research questions: (1) What semiotic elements on Philippine banknotes convey messages of power and authority? (2) How do the design elements on Philippine banknotes reflect historical and political power dynamics in the Philippines? (3) In what ways do the representations on Philippine banknotes shape or reinforce national narratives of power and identity? Using a semiotic analysis framework, the study deconstructs visual and textual elements such as portraits, landmarks, and symbolic motifs to uncover underlying narratives. Findings reveal that the connotative meanings of the banknotes emphasize political authority through the depiction of historical figures and monuments linked to significant events, while denotative aspects project neutrality by portraying these elements as universally accepted symbols of the nation. These representations obscure marginalized histories and present a curated narrative aligning with dominant ideologies. The banknotes ultimately reinforce the idea of a unified national identity while perpetuating selective historical memory. This research highlights the critical role of currency design in narrating national identity and underscores its implications for cultural and political discourse. By decoding the semiotics of banknote designs, this study contributes to understanding how everyday objects mediate power and identity construction.

Keywords : philippine banknotes, power, currency design, semiotics

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