

## The Festival Extravaganza of Vigan City, Philippines

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### ABSTRACT

*The research examined the growth of the festivals in Vigan City via its historical background, the relevance of the festivals, dimensional features, promotional programs, and the challenges and concerns experienced by the local government in the festival's conduct. The historical research design was used. The primary data collecting methods were interviews, observations, and document analysis. There were 35 people interviewed. This study adhered to and complied with ethical and data collection guidelines. The festivals in the city are the following: the Vigan City Fiesta highlights the well-renowned product of the Bigueños which is the Vigan Longganisa as well as the divine intervention of Saint Paul as patron saint and the rebirth of Vigan into the city; the Viva Vigan Binatbatan Festival of the Arts wherein this summer festival is the goal to cultivate the pride of Bigueños on their unique and historic city; the World Heritage Cities Solidarity Cultural Festival, through this event, a deep sense of patriotism are cultivated to everyone's consciousness to continually shield the beauty of Vigan's historical remnants; and the Raniag Twilight Festival emphasized the concept of reminiscing the memories of their deceased love ones and to radiate the positivity of staying vibrant and enthusiastic in the middle of woes, pains, and struggles. The city's concerned offices may offer song and dance festival workshops and trainings for the community, school trainers, and choreographers for the city's festival system. To have a stronger impact, the city should work with national and international organizations to promote and strengthen the events.*

**Keywords:** *bigueño, conversion, culture, history, relevance, world heritage*

### INTRODUCTION

Fiestas are deeply ingrained in the Filipino people's culture and heritage. Fiestas exist across the archipelago in association with the medieval practice of exalting and venerating a patron saint of a barangay, town, city, or province. Throughout these events, people express thanks to their patron saint, whose guidance and protection from both human and natural tragedies never ceased during the preceding year. As a result, town or city celebrations have traditionally been religious in origin, but have recently evolved into a more civic remembrance.

A celebration is a progression of exhibitions of music, plays, movies, and motion pictures typically coordinated in a similar spot one time per year, a progression of public occasions associated with a specific movement or thought

(Irshad, 2011) and it is considered a goal of sharing and sharing the set of experiences, the remarkable identification and upsides of the spot and individuals to other people and the more youthful ages (Luna, 2015) and the most thrilling and quickest developing industry connected with relaxation, business and the travel industry (Calopez, Gaas, Lleba, Maneclang and Fusin 2011).

There are countless festival celebrations all across the world, with the Philippines ranking first. In the country, it is common for a province, municipality, or barangay to hold a festival.

The Heritage City of Vigan, capital of the Province of Ilocos Sur, hosts four major festivals each year: The Vigan City fiesta on January 25, the Viva Vigan *Binatbatan* Festival of the Arts which is celebrated on the first week of May, the emblazon of the World Heritage Cities Solidarity Cultural Festival held every September and the *Raniag* Vigan Twilight Festival on the last week of October.

For a lucid view and explanation of these major annual historic affairs in Vigan City, the researcher would like to look into the origin, development, and details of the four prestigious festivals.

Being able to trace the festivals in Vigan City from their origin to their full features will give the practitioners and the academicians, tourists, the *Ilocanos* and the *Bigueños* in particular, and future researchers a complete and compact information about the renowned festivals. Thus, this will also create the unique historic identity and authenticity of the majestic culture and traditions of the *Bigueños*. Finally, the information and data gathered are an important historic contribution that will serve as a database of facts vital in tracing these activities.

Generally, this study sought to trace the development of the festivals in the historic City of Vigan. The historical background of the festivals in Vigan City in terms of etymology and creation, and evolution; the relevance of the festivals to the City of Vigan; the dimensional features of the festivals in Vigan City; the promotional programs conducted by the city government to promote the festivals; and the problems and concerns encountered by the city government of Vigan in the conduct of the festivals.

### **Facets of Fiesta**

Historically the word festival derives ultimately from the Latin word *festum* which initially came from two terms for festive events: *festum*, for "public joy, gayness, revelry." And *feria*, meaning "abstinence from work in honor of the gods. Both terms were utilized in the plural form, *fasta*, and *feriae*, which denotes that at that time festivals lasted for many days and added many important events. In

classical Latin, the two terms tended to become synonymous, as the two types of occasion tended to merge (Falassi, 1987).

The Philippines is an archipelago known for its one-of-a-kind festivities. Every region and town in the country has unique cultural events that everyone should be aware of and enjoy.

Religious, social, and geographical groupings can all feel a feeling of kinship during these times of celebration. Modern festivals that focus on cultural or ethnic subjects aim to educate participants about their customs. Festivals were traditionally periods when the elderly told stories and passed on wisdom to the new generation. Historic feasts were frequently used to foster family togetherness and to help people find partners. To honor earlier noteworthy incidents, certain anniversaries have an annual festival (Rosino et. al., 2013).

According to American historian John Leddy Phelan, the Spaniards introduced the fiesta in Philippine towns to bring the population (who lived in scattered family group clusters at the time) into one central place, establishing a forum for Christianizing the public. The bright and extravagant spectacle involved with the fiesta, which takes numerous forms, lends weight to the notion (Roces, A and Roces, G., 2013).

Several days before the occasion, a town fiesta builds up. Typically, a novena is held nine days before the feast day of the local saint. People work hard to make their houses as aesthetically pleasing as possible, whether with new paint, new drapes, or just well-scrubbed and polished floors and windows. Bamboo arches and vividly colored paper bunting line the streets. The town plaza is meticulously prepared, and dance is frequently conducted on the night of the fiesta. Amusement booths and sidewalk vendors offering souvenirs, toys, and food add to the noise and color. A segment of the plaza near the church is occupied by carousels, Ferris wheels, and sideshows.

A fiesta is also a homecoming for individuals who are studying or working away from their hometowns, and returning sons and daughters bring friends with them. Everyone in town has worked hard to prepare meals. The religious procession that marks the fiesta in a beach or riverbank town will almost certainly be a fluvial one, with the image carried on a bamboo structure called a pagoda atop a boat.

In diverse places of the Philippines, there are several stunning and significant fiestas. Lenten rites, which are not "celebrations," but pageants honoring Christ's crucifixion, are included in several of these rituals. Nonetheless, Filipinos are a social bunch, and even these occasions wind up with a lot of food and fellowship, ending in a fiesta (Roces, A and Roces, G., 2013).

In the study conducted by Gonzales (2017), festivals aid in the preservation of local culture and traditions, as well as in re-creating the image of a town for it to be placed on the tourism map, where it benefits the tourism business of a certain area. Furthermore, it gives individuals a sense of identity, which helps to nourish Filipino culture and improve economic advantages.

According to Stankova et al. (2015), the major objective of a festival is the identification and construction of chances for sustainable economic, social, and cultural development of such regions, as well as the preservation and transmission of current legacy to future generations.

## **METHODOLOGY**

A historical research design was employed in this study. The study was conducted in the City of Vigan as the capital city in the Province of Ilocos Sur. The respondents of the study involved 12 city employee officials, three (3) festival organizers, and 20 local residents. The primary data came from the City Planning and Development Office, City Information Office, City Tourism Office, and the City Event Promotions and Protocol Office. Follow-up questions were raised during the unstructured interviews which were personally done by the researcher. Furthermore, reading pamphlets and thorough scrutiny of records from concerned offices are executed. Vivid and intense observation and experiences of the researcher were also used as a source of data.

The researcher asked for permission from concerned officers and individuals. Pictures and videos were taken to prove the existence of the things mentioned by the respondents who know the history behind the festivals. Specifically, unstructured interviews were also undertaken.

This study confirmed and complied with ethical considerations. An acceptable level of confidentiality of the study was guaranteed. Full permission and respect of research participants were dealt with. Any nature and class of communication in line with the research was done with honesty and transparency. Respondents were not subjected to any harm.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Historical Background

#### *The Vigan City Fiesta*

##### Etymology and Creation

Vigan City, capital of Ilocos Sur, retrogressed into a component city on January 22, 2001, under Republic Act No. 8988 or “an act validating and recognizing the creation of the City of Vigan by the Royal Decree of September 7, 1757, published by Fernando VI, King of Spain.”

Indeed, Vigan’s rebirth and transfiguration over the previous decades are endowments that every *Bigueño* should be grateful for. This is the very core of its annual celebrations being commemorated every January 22<sup>nd</sup> (the Cityhood day, otherwise known as the “*Longganisa Festival*”) and January 25<sup>th</sup> (the Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul the Apostle, the city’s patron saint), respectively.

##### Evolution and Description

Held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of January each year, the 7-day fiesta celebration of Vigan City is predominantly characterized by carnivals, parades, and the *Longganisa Street* dancing competition that is primarily participated by the different neighboring provinces of the northern region. Melodious and lyrical extravagance and nightly cultural and artistic shows are held celebrating the anniversary of Vigan’s conversion into a city and the Feast of St. Paul the Apostle.

According to Quinn (2006), festivals generate demand for arts in the local destination while also invigorating local life and, in certain cases, helping to improve the local population’s self-image.

*Longganisa* is a trademark of Vigan. A local version of Mexican salami or sausage that has a noticeably different garlicky taste, has become loved by both Filipino and foreign palates. What distinguishes Vigan *Longganisa* from all other imitating external manufacturers is that almost all of its ingredients are sourced from the city. Furthermore, *longganisa* is recognized and registered as the city’s One Town, One Product (OTOP). The *longganisa* was incorporated in the annual city fiesta in 2002 with the longest *longganisa* making challenge and *Longganisa Street* dance competition spearheaded by the former city Mayor, Ferdinand Medina.

## Relevance

Vigan City fiesta or most commonly known as the “Vigan *Longganisa* Festival” is a unique and well-celebrated festivity of the said metropolis. It is a combination of two individually distinct yet religiously and culturally relevant occasions which strongly manifest the luxurious heritage of *Bigueños*.

Its relevance to the development of the city and its people is remarkable because it firmly emphasizes the root traditions of each local. The said festivity highlights the well-renowned product of the *Ilocanos*, which is the *longganisa*, and celebrates the divine intervention of St. Paul as the patron saint.

Its occurrence on an annual basis does not only bring joy and excitement to the locals but all other foreign visitors. People will always remember Vigan by its food, its people, and its timeless festivities.

## Dimensional Features

Antecedent to 2001, the reason for the thanksgiving celebration are usually arranged and constructed several months earlier with a long line-up of activities to last from the second to the third week of the first month of the year. This is in relevance to the study of Baños (2015) that cultural events are also “big vehicles to showcase the renowned Filipino hospitality and an arena to develop a stronger kinship and family ties” in the Philippines. Further, festivals have existed since the days of pagan religion. They were used by the Filipinos as a form of thankfulness for a bountiful crop and boons.

More popularly known as “*Conversion*”, the city fiesta is entrenched by Vigan’s central church, the Metropolitan Cathedral which is inscribed to Saint Paul the Apostle. A novena is usually done nine days before the feast and ends with a series of Holy Masses on the 25<sup>th</sup> of January. On the day of the feast, a well-attended parade commences the celebration with the day’s reigning muses in artistic and colorful floats and participants from the sponsors walking alongside. To cap the day-long activities, city folks are treated to cultural presentations of traditional Philippine and Ilocano folk music and dances at night.

Started in 2003, the street dance contest is celebrated every 22<sup>nd</sup> of January to promote the *longganisa*-making industry. Dressed in colorful Ilocano peasant costumes, participants from various areas of the northern region dance blissfully on the main streets of the city. The street dance troupes fill the streets to the beat of the drums using the music: “*San Pablo, Kamang ti Ili*” as their main musical background. Aside from the dance, there are also cooking contests on the ravishing roads of the city where residents and visitors are free to indulge in the mouthwatering *longganisa* of Vigan.

As to the study of Doria et al. (2014), they mentioned that festival dances are classified as either religious or secular. Religious festivals are held in honor of a certain religious figure or image, or patron saint.

Miss Vigan's coronation night that happens on the 25<sup>th</sup> of January is the climax of the fiesta. Here, the sponsoring groups attempt to outdo one another with their grand firework displays and the gorgeously crafted gowns of the muses. Although the coronation ceremonies and the ball that follows usually last until dawn, Miss Vigan's grand winner is paraded around the *poblacion* (town proper) a few hours later on a splendidly ameliorated float unique to this city's culture and legacy.

From the last week of December to the end of January, a carnival and a flea market are set up just outside the *poblacion* to allure local residents and visitors. Activities are replicated on an annual basis but are modified to adapt to the varying taste of people and some other standards. Nevertheless, culmination activities during this week-long festivity still ensue.

In an effort to augment public understanding of Vigan as a distinctive historic place to be conserved and secured, the city government pursues to spearhead new and unique activities for the city fiesta. Encouraging public response has made this fiesta a yearly activity. Also, community participation has transformed not only around Vigan but also the entire Ilocos Province as evidenced by the wide participation of people in the various activities undertaken. Significantly, this event does not only add tourists visit but becomes an avenue, especially to *Bigueños* to strengthen their camaraderie and cooperation as noteworthy citizens of the province and the Philippines as a whole.

## **Historical Background**

### ***The Viva Vigan Festival of the Arts***

#### **Etymology and Creation**

Vigan is accorded by foreign architects and conservation connoisseurs as "A place like no other." It is one of the few surviving colonial towns in the entire Philippine archipelago.

In 1992, solicitous owners of ancestral houses worked hand-in-hand and structured the Save Vigan Ancestral Homes Association, Inc. (SVAHAI) whose long-term objective is to appropriately rehabilitate Vigan's cultural resource for contemporary uses. To attain this goal, SVAHAI embarked on a diplomatic crusade on the historical and cultural values of Vigan's patrimony. The group initiated the 1<sup>st</sup>

Viva Vigan Festival of the Arts in May 1993 in an effort to foster public cognizance of Vigan as a one-of-a-kind historic town worthy of preservation. The festival has become a unique well-renowned cultural and historical occasion in the northern part of the country celebrated annually.

### **Evolution and Description**

Sculptured in 1993, this summer festival is a goal to cultivate the pride of *Bigueños* in their unique and historic city. It is the sole grandest and most vibrant allurements in the North drawing crowds from both local and international audiences who come together to glorify in a setting abounding history, cultural treasures, and reminiscence.

The Viva Vigan Festival of the Arts is predetermined not only to provide entertainment to guests but also to bolster pillars on education, culture, cooperation, co-existence, and peaceful relations between and among its people. Visitors are stimulated to compress into their six-day Viva Vigan experience.

### **Relevance**

Viva Vigan Festival of the arts is one of the most sought-after events of Vigan City specifically commemorated during the summer season. The said festivity is a conglomeration of artistic and well-planned activities for both local and foreign visitors.

Its significant development of the City and its people is strongly emphasized within the dance movements, the arts and the crafts, and the resilience of each *Bigueño* celebrating joyfully hand-in-hand with each other. The unparalleled preservation of its splendid heritage over the years is worth celebrating. The architectural designs which can be dated back as early as the Spanish regime coupled with the ravishing remnants of ancient natives are the true treasures of this modern era. Hence, in a world where everything is becoming fast-paced and dynamic, well-grounded efforts of preserving the rich culture and heritage of the past are remarkably challenging yet fulfilling.

For Vigan City, such treasures are imperative to protect. Not only because these mark the uniqueness of the metropolis but because the children of tomorrow are so loved by its people that such richness is deserving to be passed on from generation to generation.

### **Dimensional Features**

Viva Vigan's week-long festivities have both devotional, spiritual, and secular significance. It begins on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of May when the entire Filipinos magnify Labor Day while Vigan remembers its own Isabelo de los Reyes who established the



country's first federation of labor. The catholic devotees recall on this day St. Joseph, the patron saint of workers. The first-day commemoration is consequently followed by the *Binatbatan* Festival celebrations which include a street dancing contest in the afternoon and the showdown competition performed during the night.

*Binatbatan* Street dancing is anchored to Vigan's *abel-iloco* craft. The dance elucidates how cotton pods are beaten with bamboo sticks to release the cotton fluff called *batbat* from its seed. *Binatbatan* is a popular Ilocano dance depicting the foremost step in the *abel-iloco* weaving process.

Furthermore, with the assistance of festival dance and music professionals, the festival dance may be developed in terms of notated musical score and lyrics, dance steps, and clothing pattern (Doria et al. (2014).

According to an interview with Dr. Norma Respicio as mentioned by Malbog, Co, Comia, Crisostomo, Cuare, and Dizon (2018) the handwoven cloth "inabel," also called "Abel Iloko" by many, has remained one of the Ilocanos' most enduring living treasures because of its durability and uniqueness. Many areas in the northern Philippines perform Abel weaving, and the Ilocos area is well-known for revitalizing the country's weaving industry. The weaving craft in Ilocos Sur is confined in Vigan City, with a few families working to establish and sell Abel. Cristy's Loom Weaving, located in Barangay Camangaan, is one of Vigan City's oldest weaving centers.

Commenced in 2002, this festival showcases the ancient and traditional way of weaving craft that is said to have existed during the Spaniards' arrival. Moreover, this festival aims to push the reawaking of the *abel* (handwoven fabric) as a means of livelihood and as a traditional art especially with the inscription of Vigan as a World Heritage Site. Thus, this week-long festivity is popularly known today as the **"Viva Vigan *Binatbatan* Festival of the Arts."**

One of the key commemorations is the Feast of Black Nazarene or the "*Apo Lakay*" on May 3. In 1882, a deadly cholera epidemic ceased only through the intercession of *Apo Lakay*, the Miraculous Black Nazarene. The year after, *Bigueños* started celebrating May 3 as a religious fiesta in honor of *Apo Lakay* enshrined in front of the *Simbaan a Bassit*. Traditional games are played underneath richly decorated *ramadas* erected in various *poblacion* barangays. In the afternoon, devotees join a Holy Procession of *Apo Lakay* that weaves through these *ramadas* while in the evening, *zarzuelas* and other cultural shows are staged beneath the *ramadas* as well.

One more significant activity within the Viva Vigan is the *Karbo* Festival. Derived from the Indonesian term for *Carabao*, Vigan City's *Karbo* is the fusion of *carabao* and *bokel*, an Ilocano term for seeds, which are the main features of the *Karbo* festival. This activity is conducted to expose and parade the natural bounty of

the city's flora and fauna artistically showcased through the seeds of life and the *carabaos'* industrious pageantry.

Other activities include a parade and contest of artistically decorated *calesas* (horse-drawn carriages) adorned with *burnay*, *abel* cloth, and other indigenous products. The *calesa* is emblematic to Vigan. Furthermore, another part of the festivity is the *abel* design contest. It is conducted to uphold product development and competitiveness in the manufacture of *abel iloco*. It acknowledges loom weavers who demonstrate exceptional ingenuity through their products and accolade their dexterous and noteworthy workmanship. This design contest is as well geared to inspire loom weavers to aggressively pursue product design development and educate the youth as well to the importance of such local products.

Another event is the *abel* house decor which is participated by residents and establishments of the city's historic core. Homes and establishments are fascinatingly decorated with colorful *abel* clothes reliving the spirit of the unique art of *abel iloco* weaving industry.

One more highlight is the so-called *Santa Cruzan*. It is a Roman Catholic period way of prayer procession commemorating Saint Helena's mythical and fictitious quest of the cross. *Santa Cruzan* is among the many processions and probably the most popular one in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Also, Chinese opera is one important event. This is the presentation of a traditional form of Chinese entertainment called "Kao'kak" which has been a yearly act of thanksgiving of the local Filipino-Chinese community. To date, said activity was also performed and showcased during the World Heritage Cities Solidarity Cultural Festival.

Next on the list is the *Comedia* Street dancing which is a traditional form of *Ilocano* stage entertainment consisting of verses and movements revolving around the *moro-moro*. The *moro-moro* depicts the conflict between Christians and Muslims. The *comedia* has been adapted into a choreographed form of street dancing spectacle that is never seen elsewhere in the whole Philippines.

*Letras y Figuras* is another event to watch out for. This displays the craftsmanship and artistry of budding local artists through paint and brush.

Aside from cultural events designed to preserve Vigan's precious heritage, trade fairs and food courts are also set up in the vicinity of Plaza Burgos or at the parking lot of Vigan convention center to further boost the market of conventional iloco products.

Other activities to enumerate are the *Pasagad* dressing painting contest, mosaic art contest, *bangkathon* (*Bangka* which means boat marathon), *rakithon* (*rakit* an Ilocano term for raft), Ilocano cultural show, and the World costume festival. New activities are added to this festival which includes the regional dance competition (contemporary, hip-hop, and dance-sports category) and the regional media art and chorale competition.

On this special occasion, the City of Vigan was declared as New 7 Wonder Cities of the World at 3:00 am Philippine time on December 8, 2014, and was inaugurated on May 7, 2015, by Mr. Bernard Weber, Founder and President of the N7W Foundation in front of the Saint Paul Metropolitan Cathedral.

### **Historical background**

#### ***The World Heritage Solidarity Cultural Festival***

##### **Etymology and Creation**

On December 2, 1999, the famous and historical city of Vigan, then still a municipality, was registered and engraved in the World Heritage List of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Vigan was inscribed for it symbolizes a unique conglomeration of Asian structures, design, and construction with European colonial settlers of architectural planning. It is an excellently intact and well-preserved good pattern and illustration of a European trading town in East and East Asia. In addition, it is inscribed in the World Heritage List because it met the Test of Appropriate and Adequate Management.

Vigan City, the only Heritage City in the Philippines, celebrates Solidarity day every 8<sup>th</sup> of September simultaneously with all heritage cities of the world to renew the commitment to heritage conservation. This global celebration of the World Heritage Cities solidarity day is a manifestation of how committed *Bigueños* are in conserving their distinct heritage. The celebration also reflects how dedicated the past and present governance in the city is to protect such a legacy that continues to benefit its people.

This is significantly true as manifested by the study of Coliat, Alday, De la Peña, Dyogi, Jusay, Jusay, and Buted (2014) that festivals are means to encourage the development of societies via collaboration and the desire for individuals to work together, which may encourage and promote camaraderie among their fellow people.

## Evolution and Description

From the first day until the 8<sup>th</sup> of September World Heritage Cities Solidarity Cultural Festival features a potpourri of activities that focuses on the *Bigueño* culture and heritage.



**Figure 1. The World Heritage Solidarity Cultural Festival**

## Relevance

The World Heritage Solidarity Day is timely and always relevant to the growth and development of the city and its people. Such celebration ignites the fervent feeling of each *Bigueño* to continually work harmoniously with other historical cities around the world in preserving and protecting the gems of their respective places. The historical site of Vigan City is a dedicated part of this organization because they truly believe that it is in preserving the past that molds the present and shapes the future.

Vigan City is not alone in this battle cry. The people are always supportive and appreciative of its distinct spectacle and memories. Through this festivity, a deep sense of responsibility and patriotism are cultivated over and over again to inculcate in everyone's consciousness, including that of the future protectors, to continually shield the beauty of Vigan's historical remnants. It is via this manner that people will try to continually uphold the richness of their wonderful traditions as well as the uniqueness of their identity.

## Dimensional Features

The City of Vigan celebrates the World Heritage Cities Solidarity Cultural Festival every September.

In the year 2009, the celebration took a twist with a cultural festival participated in by all Vigan schools both public and private, and the 39 barangays clustered into five (5). All clusters contended in cultural events to showcase their talent in dances, music, and literary whose main objective is to rejuvenate and strengthen cultural activities for the appreciation of local residents and visitors.

A festival is a reflection of one's culture and history. People like to watch them yearly since they never cease to provide a range of amusement. They have been a part of every Filipino's history and existence. Furthermore, it allows brilliant individuals to demonstrate their abilities, allowing them to be recognized and acknowledged by the community. Since Filipinos are considered to enjoy mirth, many events are held around the country (Punongbayan, 2017).

The winners are determined through a point system. In each category, there are earned points for each cluster depending on their rank. Furthermore, this event is now known as **Solidarity Cultural Festival**. Here, academic institutions and barangays merge and unite into five clusters and compete through various cultural events such as:

*Historia Oral* is a historical-literary contest that taps the young and potential writers of Vigan. Tales and stories of the ancient Vigan are told by the old and retold by the young in written words. *Fotografias Y Recuerdos* is a photography contest that centers on Vigan's intangible heritage as a subject.

*Zarzuela Ilocana* showcases a lyric-dramatic approach and genre that alternates between spoken and sung scenes. *Daniw* is an Ilocano poem interpreted by a senior citizen. *A vocal Solo* is a formal signing of a tagalog Kundiman. *Dallot* is a traditional Ilocano pre-wedding, wedding, and post-wedding chant. It concerns the old Ilocano practice of the party of a bachelor trying to gain acceptance into the party of a maiden which would result in marriage.

*Sabayang Pagbigkas* is a group oration, where a group of people all speak or read at the same time. All clusters are given uniform contest pieces. *Folkdance competition*, a popular Filipino traditional dance is considered as part of the tradition or custom of a particular people

The uniqueness and color of Vigan's events of the past are also showcased through the Repazzo de Vigan, an action and interactive street parade participated by pupils, students, and the local community, garbed in colorful and nostalgic costumes. The parade reflects the different historical periods of Vigan's past events from the Pre-Spanish era to the present time.

In *Kinnantaran*, a man and a woman argue on a certain matter through singing, indicating the pros and cons of the topic. *Vocal duet*, a man and a woman

interprets an Ilocano love song. *Vocal chorus*, a mixed chorale ensemble, done in a cappella or accompanied with music. *Puppetry competition* is a form of theatre or performance that involves the manipulation of puppets.

To date, said festivity is a month-long celebration participated by the Filipino-Chinese and Indian community residing in Vigan and International students enrolled in both private and public educational institutions.

## **Historical Background**

### ***The “Raniag” Twilight Festival***

#### **Etymology and Creation**

In a simultaneous manner, Halloween, All Saints, and All Souls Day in Vigan are celebrated every November by remembering departed loved ones in prayers, thanking God for the gift of life, and imploring His mercy for the living. *Raniag* means light. This symbolizes the light that *Bigueños* offer to the Lord in thanksgiving as well as the beacon that depicts their love for departed kin and the warmth of the bonding renewed in reunions during All Saints day.

#### **Evolution and Description**

The first *Raniag* festival was held from October 29, 2010, to November 2, 2010, with the following activities undertaken:

*Dance-fest and Halloween street party, Raniag Street Dancing.* At this event, hip hop groups don battery-operated illuminations that are danced to the beat of an Ilocano song “*Di Kanton Malipatan*” (I will not forget you) followed by the showdown competition right after; *Parade of fantasy floats; Trick and treat; Lighting of sky lanterns; Candle floats and Acoustic playing and singing competition*

Doria et al. (2014) in their study mentioned that the Philippine festival and its dances have reflected a variety of variables, the majority of which are dependent on the community in which they are performed. They depict people's ways of life, beliefs, and customs, among other things, "through motions, costumes, and instruments intrinsic to their area of origin."



**Figure 2. The Raniag Twilight Festival**

### **Relevance**

*Raniag* Festival is unique in Vigan City. Although there are a lot more similar celebrations across the archipelago during this month, Vigan holds the grandest of all. Lights of various colors and features plus music that are traditional to Ilocano's identity rejuvenate each audience's spirit of both thrill and bliss.

This festivity is remarkably relevant to celebrate because it does not only emphasize the concept of reminiscing the memories of their deceased love ones but also radiates the positivity of staying vibrant and enthusiastic in the middle of woes, pains, and struggles. Also, this celebration gathers family from the different sides of the world to be together as one and to enjoy themselves as they give prayers to their lost family members.

### **Dimensional features**

The week-long *Raniag* Twilight festival activities begin on the last week of October with a candle float activity followed by the Acoustic competition.

The celebration has more exciting events because of the participation of residents and officials from the thirty-nine (39) barangays of the city in which they create their fantasy floats paraded on the streets of Vigan. The city employees, Non-Government Organizations, and the Provincial government also join the colorful float parade and the street dancing competition.

Other highlights and activities of the festival are the following: Halloween and costume party; *Raniag* Electric Street parade; *Raniag* Street Dancing; Free

Halloween Concert and Band Presentation; World costume festival; cosplay; and international students' day.

### **Promotional Programs**

Vigan remains highly regarded through various programs, projects, and activities to maintain its impression as a tourist-friendly city.

The chronicles of Vigan continuously spread to all municipalities and cities of Ilocos Sur including schools, business establishments, banking institutions, hotels and restaurants, and all barangays of Vigan. Press releases are given to the members of the Vigan City Press Corps every Monday of the week. The press release includes write-ups, a schedule of activities, advisories, and other important city projects and programs of the week. Text messages and phone calls are also done for instant advisories.

Moreover, social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter are regularly updated to promote the city's activities, schedules, and other advisories.

TVigan Channel 9, which is the official network of the City Government of Vigan is also being broadcasted in two major cable networks in Metro Vigan that can reach out to all Bigueños and Ilocanos in the Ilocandia Region (including nearby towns of Ilocos Norte and La Union).

Vigan has also covered and documented the city festivals, local and international activities held at Vigan Convention Center. Audio-visual presentations are also produced. Along with these is AVP Presentation for the City Mayor in international conferences and exhibits. Finally, 12 additional promotional videos for the city's campaign for new7wonder cities of the world. (*Source: Vigan City Fiesta Book 2015*).

A total number of 6,414 coordinated tours with different people's organizations in the country were also conducted (*Source: Vigan City Fiesta Book 2015*). Tourism Development Support Facilities, Participation in national and international food exhibition, Construction of display showroom at Villa Fernandina in Taguig City, and the invitation of the street dancing competition grand winners to perform in Metro Manila were all conducted accordingly.

### **Problems and concerns encountered by the City Government of Vigan**

Admittedly and as expected, there is the usual traffic congestion on the city's main roads because of domestic and foreign tourist arrival in the city during these festivities. On the other hand, though there is a budget allocated for the festival, the budget is still limited because the whole allocated budget for tourism festival management is distributed to the four major festivals and other cultural



events and activities in the city. There is also a need to introduce and create new activities within the festival and make minor improvements to the existing features of the festivals. With too many festivals being conducted in the city there is difficulty to conduct such activities because of the limited personnel to manage the festivals. A successful festival needs good planning and proper implementation.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The city festivals represent a rich and meaningful culture and tradition of Vigan set and valued at different times and occasions of the year. These major festivals express the blissful, vibrant and historic lifestyle that the Bigueños exemplify and a way to preserve and protect the variegated and grand heritage of the city that are inherited from the past, maintained in the present, and bestowed for tomorrow's generation.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The city government of Vigan should continuously promote and make innovations within the activities of the city's festivities. The city concerned offices may organize sing and dance festival workshops and trainings for the community, school trainers, and choreographers for the city's system of conducting its festivals. For a greater impact, the City should collaborate with national and international agencies in promoting and for improvement of the festivals. Intense planning, implementation, and execution of traffic management to solve traffic congestion in the city should be done. With the limited budget allocated, the City government of Vigan may initiate a request of sponsorship to private or public agencies to augment incidental expenses in the conduct of these festivities, thus the Local Government Unit (LGU) of Vigan should also give financial assistance to participating schools or barangays. Moreover, the LGU of Vigan should hire additional personnel that is knowledgeable and skillfully ready to handle such culture and arts programs and activities. Finally, all activities, modifications, or changes in the conduct of the city's festival should be properly documented and recorded.

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