

**Historical, Socio-Political and Economic Implications of
Festival Celebrations in Pangasinan**

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Abstract – *This study focused on the different festivals held in Pangasinan. Specifically, it determined the profile of the LGUs as well as their constituents, the nature and origin of the celebration of the festivals as well as the different activities conducted.*

Data were gathered from the selected constituents of nine (9) local government units (LGUs) through the use of archival research and focus group discussion. The subjects used in this study were five (5) municipalities, one (1) from each of the five (5) class levels after which stratified random sampling method was used to choose which municipality will be included and the four (4) cities that celebrate festivals. The nine cases are four (4) cities in Pangasinan; Alaminos, Dagupan, San Carlos and Urdaneta and five (5) municipalities: Bayambang, Bani, Anda, Balungao, and Sto. Tomas.

The study found out that: 1) the LGUs conduct festivals even with smaller budget; 2) the constituents generally attend most of the festivals whether the activities are religious, economic/tourism or leisure/entertainment in nature; and 3) the community residents “strongly agree” to the implications of the festivals to the socio-cultural aspects of the community including its impact to the constituents’ norms and values.

The study recommends that 1) the City/Municipality Tourism Office should conduct an internal assessment or inward-looking evaluation of their program or projects to assess whether they serve the purpose of the organization and that of the LGU as a whole; 2) sufficient funding should be given by the national government to the local government in order to support festival celebration that reflect the different cultural values, traditions and traits of Pangasinenses; and 3) there should be a creation of an agency whose main task is to coordinate the activities of the different private and government sectors during festival celebration.

Keywords – culture, festivals, pangasinan, tourism, values

INTRODUCTION

The culture of one country is enormously reflected in its treasury of festivals. Studying them thus help one understand people’s culture regardless of their race, color and creed. Culture is deeply imbedded in the very fiber of the society and festivals can be a most visible expression of culture. Festivals do not only contain valuable data on culture and tradition but they also give insights to the socio-economic and political background of people. Festivals reflect old traditions. Echoing not only the local life, the festivals also serve as precious intangible cultural heritage for the whole country. Festivals can therefore be a most potent symbol of national identity and the reflection of the peoples’ values.

The Republic Act 7356 or the National Commission for Culture and the Arts mandates the creation of artistic and cultural products shall be promoted and disseminated to the greatest number of our people. The level of consciousness of the Filipino people about their own cultural values in order to strengthen our culture and to instil nationhood and cultural unity, shall be raised formally through the educational system and informally through extra-scholastic means, including the use of traditional as well as modern media of communication.^[1]

It further states the *preservation of the Filipino Heritage*. Accordingly, it is the duty of every citizen to preserve and conserve the Filipino historical and cultural heritage and

resources. The retrieval and conservation of artifacts of Filipino culture and history shall be vigorously pursued.

Culture embodies the deepest conviction of a society, expressed in the arts, traditions and patrimony. The finest of these expressions marks the genius of a people, and their contribution to world heritage. The NCCA believes in the power of the Filipino culture to promote pride of place and a strong sense of oneness amid diversity-the hallmarks of a robust nationalism. Filipino culture is a wellspring of ideas, skills, values and wisdom which, harnessed properly, can contribute to social, economic, and national well-being. Our worldview which emphasizes community and family steers us through social or natural upheavals. Our vibrant performing arts and our richness of communal festivities pay tribute to our innate passion for life. Our industry, *joie de vivre* and resilience as a people buoy us up through hardship and struggle. These values also have a place in the formation of global knowledge systems and heritage. Culture is a source that renews itself through continuous evolution, whether in the realm of meanings or expressive forms. From this renewal springs the unique role of Filipinos in the transformation of the world. Agung.^[2]

The fiesta tradition according to the study of Joven (2012) ^[3] is one of defining cultural practices of the Filipino people. Although prior to the Spanish era, when social structures across the archipelago were still divided by race, ethno-linguistic clustering, and tribal grouping, there already was the universality that animism and polytheism were

ingrained in the belief systems of the people. Spanish missionaries, who documented the first encounter with the people of Pangasinan noted that indigenous festivities were celebrated with merriment and the imbibing of alcohol. The context of the feast was linked to the practice of ritual offerings or thanksgiving to the long forgotten indigenous gods of Pangasinan.

Over the years, the fiesta tradition expanded to include other religious inspirations and non-religious contemporary festival events. Because it was under the Catholic faith that the fiestas became an organized fixture in emergent Filipino culture, contemporary history credits the fiesta as one of the legacies of the Spanish period.

The fiesta is credited as a celebration that constructs the social realities of (1) affinity to local town culture, and (2) sense of national identity. It is therefore praxis in social transformation that fits the model of Social Construction Theory. Likewise, its evolution and expansion from purely religious to non-religious commercial festivities, exemplify how fiesta continues to enrich the expression of local town culture and serves as the locus for the evolution of a unique system of shared meanings among local town folk.^[4]

The celebration is being held as a thanksgiving for all the bounties that the province received all throughout the year. The celebration was infused with more relevance in terms of tourism, sports and environment advocacy. In consonance with festival celebrations is the One Town, One Product (OTOP-Philippines). The OTOP is a priority program of the government to promote entrepreneurship and create jobs. Through OTOP, local chief executives of each city and municipality take the lead in identifying, developing, and promoting a specific product or service, which has a competitive advantage. OTOP-Philippines support micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to manufacture, offer, and market distinctive products or services through the use of indigenous raw materials and local skills and talents.

The word Pangasinan is not an ethnic name. It is rather toponymic. According to Amurrio (1970; p. 257), Pangasinenses may have had an ethnic name but was perhaps lost through the centuries.^[5]

As a toponymic term, Pangasinan means 'land of salt' (panag-asinan/pinag-aasinan) from the root word asin with the prefix 'pang' and suffix '-an', denoting place. In the Iluko creation myth Angalo ken Aran, the place has been cited as the land of 'Thalam-asin'. While salt is also found in the Ilocos Region and in Manila Bay, salt coming from Dasol and Bolinao are superior in quality. And because of salt, Pangasinan is able to produce the best bagoong from the monamon fish that abound along the coast. The town of Bolinao got its name from this fish. In Tagalog, Visayan and in Bicol, 'bolinao' means 'monamon'. Lingayen is popular for its own variety of bagoong which is brand named maniboc. (Flores, 2002) ^[6]. Today, the political formation of Pangasinan is bounded on the west by the province of Zambales, on the mid-north to northwest by Lingayen Gulf, the northeast by La Union province, on the east by Nueva Ecija, and on the south by the province of Tarlac.

The province of Pangasinan is one of those that offer a variety, rich and colorful socio-cultural festivals. Each of its cities and municipalities has its different celebrations of festivals with different historical reasons and justifications. It is usually a weeklong event that aims to further enhance serious efforts of Pangasinan leaders to promote the economic and tourist potentials of the place through various colorful, fun filled activities.

Pangasinan with its advocacy to promote its culture and traditions as well as tourism has embraced celebrations of festivals in the different cities and municipalities. The goal of this study is to describe the festival celebrations and unravel the richness of Pangasinan culture. It will also show how these festivities become a reflection of people's values in general and that of Pangasinan in particular.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to determine the Pangasinan festivals and events as a reflection of people's values. The province of Pangasinan ^[7] is one of those that offer a variety, rich and colorful socio-cultural festivals. Each of its cities and municipalities has its different celebrations of festivals with different historical reasons and justifications. It is usually a weeklong event that aims to further enhance serious efforts of Pangasinan leaders to promote the economic and tourist potentials of the place through various colorful, fun filled activities.

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study utilized a descriptive case study type of research. Best ^[9] defined case study as a way of organizing data for the purpose of viewing social reality. It examines a social unit as a whole. The unit may be a person, a family, a social group, a social institution, or a community. The purpose is to understand the life cycle or an important part of the life cycle of the unit. The case study probes deeply and analyzes interactions between the factors that explain present status or that influence change or growth.

Subjects of the Study

The Province of Pangasinan ^[10] is subdivided into forty-four (44) municipalities and four (4) cities comprising of 1,364 barangays scattered within the six (6) political districts. The subjects of the study were selected which are five (5) municipalities, and four (4) cities in Pangasinan, Alaminos,

Dagupan, San Carlos and Urdaneta all are automatically included. However, in the case of municipalities, stratified random sampling method was used. In stratified random sampling, the strata are formed based on members' shared attributes or characteristics. In this study, the strata refers to the five class levels of municipalities.

A random sample from each stratum is taken in a number proportional to the stratum's size when compared to the population. These subsets of the strata are then pooled to form a random sample. After which, lottery method was used to determine objectively the municipalities which was included in this study. In particular, the list of the municipalities was written in a sheet of paper that comprises the municipalities belonging to same class level and placed in a box where the researcher randomly picked the name of the five (5) municipalities; to wit: Bayambang from the 1st class municipality, Bani from the 2nd class municipality, Anda from the third class municipality, Balungao from the 4th class municipality and Sto. Tomas from the 5th class municipality. ^[11]

To obtain primary sources of information, the interview schedule was used. In gathering data, the researcher used the questionnaire-checklist as the main instrument. The said questionnaire was constructed by the researcher. Observation was likewise done to supplement the data which was gathered and was later subjected to content validation with the help of some experts, prior to its finalization. The draft of the questionnaire was presented to the researcher's adviser, critic reader, and panel members for their comments, and suggestions. After the necessary revisions, the draft of questionnaire was tested to ten (10) citizens who were not actual respondents of the study in order to evaluate the instrument's clarity of directions and questions called for. The questionnaire was presented to a pool of experts for content-validation purposes. Their wise recommendations were considered in finalizing the questionnaire. A dry-run of interviews was done to some selected participants to gather additional data and feedbacks to improve the instrument.

To obtain valid and reliable information from the data gathered, appropriate statistical tools were used in the study.

The profile of the LGUs, the historical, nature and origin of their festivals, the different activities of the place in relation to their festivals was presented in a narrative form.

The socio-demographic attributes of the municipality/cities constituents were described based on the obtained frequency and corresponding percentage of the classes of the given variable.

The most and the least participated activities by the municipality/cities constituents and the most and least encountered problems in the celebration of the festivals were determined by ranking the classes of the variables based on their frequency.

The extent of involvement and the implications of the festivals to the constituents were determined using average weighted mean.

The range of values below was used to describe the extent of involvement and implication of the festival to the constituents

Range	Extent of Involvement Description	Implication Description
1 - 1.79	Not Involved (NI)	(SD)
1.80 – 2.59	Least Involved (LI)	(D)
2.60 – 3.39	Involved (I)	(N)
3.40 – 4. 19	More Involved (MI)	(A)
4.20 – 5.00	Highly Involved (HI)	(SA)

Lastly, as to whether the constituents still favor the conduct of the festivals, a frequency count is used. If there are more than half of the respondents who answered yes, it means that they still favor the conduct of their festivals.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The four cities and five municipalities belongs to different class level thus receives different amount from their Internal Revenue Allotment shares. The amount of the IRA shares each city and municipality received is dependent on their respective class level category.

Alaminos is a fourth class city in the province of Pangasinan. The city celebrates the "*Galila Hundred Islands Festival*" which is held from March 16 to March 21 of every year. *Galila* means "come" in the vernacular. On its third year of festival celebration, the city adopted Hundred Islands Festival where Alaminos City being known for its majestic and world famous Hundred Islands National Park, also boosts of its unique lean meat product, longanisa. Alaminos' longanisa has long been an all-time favorite by Pangasinenses. It is best served during breakfast and is currently regarded as one, if not, the tastiest native sausages in the country. With its distinctive salty and zesty taste, Alaminos longanisa gained its reputation as one of the best processed meat products in the country. Considered healthy and delicious, it uses all-natural ingredients like garlic, black pepper, salt, achuete and other secret spices mixed with ground pork. Longanisas from Alaminos, Pangasinan are unique because of the toothpicks they use to divide the segments. Each length has six pieces and is hung using a buli grass string.

The **City of Dagupan** is a first class city created by virtue of Republic Act 170, or the City Charter of Dagupan City. Milkfish, popularly known as "bangus", abounds in Pangasinan. The province is the country's top producer of milkfish cultured in marine fish cage and marine fish pen. Dagupan is among the top producers of milkfish in the province. There are two kinds of milkfish cultured in the city. One is the Bonuan Bangus which is the more preferred kind because of its savory taste and palatability. This milkfish has a short arched belly, fat, with fine and white shiny scales, short tailed and has small head. It is also soft-fleshed and juicy. It feeds on lablab or benthic blue algae, diatoms and planktons

and is grown only in fishponds along the inland waters of Dagupan City. Each Bonuan Bangus cannot weigh heavier than 250 grams because of its dependence on natural food. Meanwhile, the other kind of milkfish, which is raised only in fish pens/cages, feeds on formulated feeds. It can be distinguished from the Bonuan Bangus with its long arched belly and long tail. To give focus on the local milkfish industry and to promote the city as the Bangus Capital of the World, the City Government of Dagupan conceptualized the Bangus Festival.

San Carlos City is classified as a second class city in the Province. San Carlos City is among the liveliest places in the Province of Pangasinan in terms of economic activity. It has the largest number of fruiting mango trees - their fruits are among the most delicious in the country - and a flourishing bamboo craft industry. San Carlos City is popular in bamboo industry, the city has its own bamboo market where produce from bamboo like nipa huts, baskets, lamp shades, furniture, cabinets, among others are on display and traded. Traders from other provinces come here to buy the produce and sell these to outside provinces. For such reasons, a festival promoting San Carlos City as major trading center of bamboo based products/furniture and best producer of “carabao” mangoes and other mango variety in the country has been created which is the *Mango and Bamboo Festival* and is usually celebrated in the month of April.

The study also included **Urdaneta City** which is classified as a second class city in the province. Urdaneta City celebrates *Dumayo Festival* annually which is held on March 18 – March 31 of each year. “Dumayo” is an Ilocano word which means “visit us” or “go there” in English. The *Dumayo Festival* showcases the varied cultures of the Cordillerans, Muslims and Batangueños as well as the Chinese and Indian communities who have settled in the city and contributed to its cultural evolution and economic transformation through the decades. The Dumayo festival is only in its 3rd year of celebration. Urdaneta City celebrates Dumayo Festival annually to give thanks for the blessings that the city has received throughout the years. Highlighting the opening of the Dumayo Festival is the search of the “Most Attractive Carabao” which was participated in by the 34 barangays of the city that were clustered into ten districts. The carabaos were dressed in fashion together with their carts full of products from their districts.

The town of **Bayambang** is a first class municipality that lies in the central part of southern Pangasinan on the banks of the Agno River. Bayambang, just like the other municipalities, observed the celebration of fiesta foremost as a way of thanksgiving to God in gratitude to the year-round blessings bestowed upon the townspeople. On such occasion, the best known and outstanding products of the town are showcased and displayed in exhibits as a manifestation of the progress and development attained by the locality. Bayambang, which is known for its fish products such as mudfish (dalag), catfish (pantat), gele-gele siringan, alalo, gurami, and others which are sourced out from the town’s Mangabul Lake

celebrates the “*Malangsi Fish-tival*” every 1st week of April. The word “Malangsi” is a reference to the variety of freshwater fishes that abound in the Mangabul Lake of Bayambang which is a source of livelihood to Bayambang townspeople. Mangabul Lake is a 2,000-hectare swath of land which has some dry as well as wet portions which is the habitat of the aforesaid malangsi fishes.

Bani, founded on March 18, 1769, used to be a part of the province of Zambales. In May 1903, it was transferred to Pangasinan together with the towns of Agno, Alaminos, Anda, Bolinao, Burgos, Dasol, Infanta and Mabini because the provincial capital then, Iba, was very far and transportation was difficult. Bani, the watermelon producer in Pangasinan had been known not only in the entire Northern Luzon, but also in the Philippines for its Pakwan. The watermelons of Bani are known far and wide to be the sweetest in the Philippines as they grow in farms with soil rich in limestone. It is believed that the limestone helps filter of the water that gets into the plant which explains the reason why the watermelon produced in their town is different from others. Some 100 to almost 200 hectares of farmlands in the town are devoted yearly for watermelon production. The watermelons from Bani come in green and yellow and are marketed to Manila, Clark, Subic and Dagupan City. As part of positioning Bani, Pangasinan as the “Watermelon Capital of the North”, the town hold its first ever *Pakwan Festival* last February 6 to 9, 2014. The Pakwan festival aims to boost the tourism industry and to further address the importance of watermelon as the primary product of the town. The local government had lined-up several activities for the celebration of the “Pakwan Festival” to promote their best-tasting giant watermelons to tourists who come during the celebration.

Anda is a third class municipality with a land area of 8,380 hectares, subdivided into 18 barangays. Anda is celebrating a yearly festival called “*Binungey Festival*”. They selected Binungey Festival as their yearly festivity to promote the number one product of the town which is locally known as “Binungey”. Binungey is a food made from the mixture of “malagkit” sticky rice, coconut milk, salt and placed inside the bamboo and cooked in a low fire. It is the number one product of Andanian’s which they used to prepare and offer for the visitors during fiestas, and special occasions. Eventually, the festival of the town was named after the number one delicacy of the town “*Binungey*”. Like other festivals celebrated in the province, Binungey Festival is full of enjoyable activities to entertain townspeople and visitors.

Balungao is a municipality located in the southeastern part of the Province of Pangasinan, bordering the province of Nueva Ecija to the south. The celebration of the *Goat Festival* in the municipality was conceived through the concerted efforts of the Municipal Officials of Balungao. the Sangguniang Bayan passed and approved Resolution No. 137 declaring “Goat” as the OTOP of the Municipality on October 3 2005. Consequently, it was also the time the Integrated Goat Management (IGM) was conceptualized and practiced by the Local Government for the study of goat. Because of the

conceptualized management and technology, Balungao was awarded by the Department of Agriculture, University of the Philippines-Los Banos, PCCARD and DOST, a recognition among all participants coming from different parts of South East Asia. Since then, became famous as the goat capital of the Province of Pangasinan.

The **Municipality of Sto. Tomas** is considered as the smallest Pangasinan town in terms of land area with 1, 429.32 hectares, composed primarily of 10 barangays. Every 3rd week of March, Sto. Tomas celebrates its annual town fiesta. Simultaneous with the town's annual festivity is the celebration of fun filled and lively "*Corn Festival*" showcasing the town's organically farm produced Klasika Glutinous Corn. Apparently, Sto. Tomas is considered as one of the main producers of quality corn products. Agriculture is the prime industry of the municipality, with rice and corn (yellow and white glutinous) as the major crops being cultivated

Further all the subject city and municipality celebrates their respective festival annually. The festival is usually based on OTOP program by the government or based on the main source of the livelihood of the majority of the residents in the community.

The findings also show that majority of the respondents, 28 or 31.1 percent belong to the age bracket of 40-50 while only two or 2.22 percent belong to the age bracket of 62 and above. There are 50 or 55.6 percent of the respondents are female. On the other hand, 40 or 44.5 percent are male. As to civil status there are 35 or 38.9 percent of the respondents are single, 52 or 57.8 percent are married, and 3 or 3.3 percent are widow. Along educational attainment, ninety respondents, 4.44 percent has an educational attainment of high school level, eight or 8.89 percent are high school graduate, 21 or 23.3 percent are college level, 45 or 50 percent are college graduate, eight or 8.89 percent are masteral level, two or 2.22 percent are masteral level, one or 1.11 percent is a doctoral level and one or 1.11 percent is doctoral graduate. In terms of employment, 39 or 43.3 percent of the respondents are employed in the government, 24 or 26.7 percent are in the private sector, 17 or 18.9 percent are self-employed and 10 or 11.1 percent are unemployed. As to the monthly income, there are 14 or 15.6 percent has the monthly income ranging from Php 30,001 and above, 2 or 2.22 percent monthly income ranging from Php 25,001-30,000, 16 or 17.8 percent monthly income ranging from Php 20,001-25,000, 14 or 15.6 percent monthly income ranging from Php 15,001-20,000, 16 or 17.8 percent monthly income ranging from Php 10,001-15,000, 12 or 13.3 percent monthly income ranging from Php 5,001-10,000, and 16 or 17.8 percent monthly income ranging from Php 5,000 or below. In the aspect of religion, majority of them belong to the Roman Catholic religion such that there are 64 or 71.1 of them. 8 or 8.89 percent are Baptist, 7 or 7.78 percent are Aglipayan, 4 or 4.44 percent of them are Iglesia Ni Cristo, 2 or 2.22 percent is a Pentecost. There is 1 or 10 percent from the following religions, to wit: Protestant, El Shaddai, United Methodist, Sisters of St. Ann, and Christian Spritist. Finally, the frequency of attendance to their respective

festival, from the ninety (90) respondents, 35 or 38.9 percent of them had attended their festival 6 times and more.

As to the totality of all the activities, of the ninety respondents, 79 or 87.8 percent had chosen the following religious activities as the most frequently participated at, to wit: the church celebrates mass in celebration of the festival in honor of their Patron Saint; and the people carry out a procession where they display the image of the Patron Saint. With regards to economic/tourism activity, nine or 90 percent of the respondents had chosen with the highest frequency of participation is the activity where a competition is done with the festival product as the main item to patronize the product with 72 or 80 percent. With regards to leisure/entertainment, 78 or 86.7 percent had chosen the activity to be the most frequently participated at is the street dancing competition with striking costumes of colorful design is held.

The community residents "strongly agree" with the implications of the festivals to the socio-cultural economic and political aspects of the community with mean of 4.5, 4.4, and 4.2, respectively. In addition, out of the eight areas of consultation made by LGU to their constituents, the respondents rated the following as areas where there are highly involved and with a weighted mean of 4.2: (a) the constituents were encouraged to participate in the festival and (b) The LGU conduct different meetings with the different stakeholders as to know their uptake as to the holding of the festival.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the gathered data, the respondents has declared their gladness for having their own festival as well as their contentment as to the manner of its observance and that they strongly expressed their delight and enthusiasm with the conduct of their festival thus continuing attendance to its celebration. The study recommends that 1) the City/Municipality Tourism Office should conduct an internal assessment or inward-looking evaluation of their programs/projects to assess whether they serve the purpose of the organization and that of the LGU as a whole; 2) sufficient funding should be given by the national government to the local government in order to support festival celebration that reflect the different cultural values, traditions and traits of Pangasinenses. There is a need to identify the different activities that is worthy to maintain or be removed and examine whether there is a steady increase in the attendance of participants. This is to determine the possibility of growth or expansion as to a Pangasinan festival reaching the level of popularity of the well-known festivals in the Philippines (i.e. Sinulog, Ati-Atihan) which are well attended by both local and foreign tourists; 4) the local government should encourage constituents for more active participation and involvement in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the festival-related activities; and 5) LGU officials should come up with strategies in order that true and actual income is realized in succeeding festival celebrations.

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