



## A Review of How Philippine Colonial Experience Influenced the Country's Approaches to Conservation of Cultural Heritage

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**Abstract:** The colonial experiences of the Philippines have greatly influenced the preservation of the nation's literary cultural heritage and built cultural heritage. Apparently, colonial experience has defined how heritage is treated and conserved. The colonial legacy has set a precedent that destroys the old practices, ways of life, structures and edifices to favor the creation of a new set of world order, thus setting a culture of neglect and disregard for cultural heritage conservation. Apparently, the politics of memory and the quest for a new identity has influenced how heritage conservation is defined and perceived. From the time before the Philippines was discovered by the Europeans and the way the nation was passed on from one colonizer to another, minimal sense of heritage conservation was developed. The perception that anything related to the historical past is a sign of antiquity and underdevelopment has comprised the way present communities perceive development. Henceforth, cultural heritages are given the least importance unless its relationship with economic activities has been clearly established. This study connects the implications of the Philippines' rich colonial experience to approaches of heritage conservation in the country and in the end presents a way of how to possibly reverse some of its impact. The study presents an exploratory and descriptive approach using case studies of heritage districts in the Philippines that illustrate how can a practice of cultural neglect be converted to culture of concern and conservation through the development of creative industry and culture capital.

**Key Words:** Cultural Heritage, Psychocultural Marginality, Heritage Conservation, Colonial History, Creative Culture Industry

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Filipino culture has been characterized as hybrid in nature being a mixture of elements from different and often incongruous sources such that Filipinos are oriental about family, Chinese about business, and American about ambitions

(Viray, 1968). That is why it is not impossible that even a Filipino feels alienated with its own culture. The Philippine cultural heritage can be classified under two categories, intangible and tangible. The former latter includes oral and written customs and traditions, practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills recognizable within a



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particular set of cultural or social values that communities recognize as part of their cultural heritage; while the latter considers built structures with historical, archival, anthropological, archaeological, artistic and architectural value (Radzuan and Ahmad, 2015).

Usual discussions on Philippine cultural heritage are typically presented through comparison from the indigenous or pre-colonial period, the colonization period, and post-colonial period. Moreover, the colonization period is further categorized under the Spanish colonization (1571-1896), American colonization (1896-1942, 1945-1946), and Japanese colonization (1942-1945).

### **The Philippine Literary Cultural Heritage**

In the beginning, most literatures were reflective of the people's beliefs and superstitions as manifested in various legends, folk tales, incantations, and religious poetry. The other literary forms that have been formally documented include the cradle of song or lullabies, domestic and occupational songs, folk verses and folk songs, the *salawikain* or maxims, proverbs, and epigrams, which have been handed from generation to generation. These can be characterized as the people's responses to the forces of the Unknown or a reaction to the nature of their environment and to the rhythms of life (Viray, 1968). Nevertheless, most of those forms of literature are no longer available today because of cultural deterioration that transpired during the Spanish period.

After the Philippines was discovered by the Spaniards in 1521 and sovereignty was established in 1571, Philippine literatures underwent a paradigm shift providing a certain religious feelings and romantic mood, which later on included a strain of fatalism. Such literatures were mostly oral art, consisting not only of epics but also of songs, riddles, stories, and debates focused on the triumph of good over evil. Since most

of the literatures were condemned as heresy and ordered to be destroyed, Spanish literatures were introduced with focus on the spread of Christianity and catechism such as the Holy Bible, *Doctrina Christiana*, prayer books and the lives of saints and martyrs. Furthermore, majority of the literatures were in Spanish language to aid Filipinos to gradually disregard anything non-Hispanic. Moreover, the revolutionary period produced some of the finest in Philippine literary history in the latter years during the peak of the propaganda movement such as the works of Jose Rizal, Graciano, Lopez Jaena, Marcelo H. Del Pilar, and other *illustrados* (Viray, 1968).

The literary composition in the American colonization was greatly influenced by significant developments in education and culture. When the American rule was formally established in the country, the introduction of free public instruction with the use of English language was initiated. This assimilation strategy employed by the Americans provided a complete turn around for the Filipinos, such that anything Spanish was replaced with English including books, printed materials, medium of communication and instructions, and lifestyle. Most literary works took the form of free verse, modern short stories, and critical essays and some known literary writers of the time include national artists Jose Garcia Villa and Virgilio Almario. Developments in press production also stimulated the massive production of literary works in English such as the Philippine Free Press and the Philippine Herald that later on encouraged development of critical and seditious literary works and school publications such as the College Folio.

However, literary progress was almost completely halted with the sudden colonization of the Japanese. With the strict censorship being implemented, almost all newspapers in English were stopped and freedom of speech and the press were almost absent making Filipinos bitter and pessimistic. The Japanese language also replaced the English as the medium of communication, such that writers were encouraged to write in Filipino

Presented at the 12th DLSU Arts Congress  
De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines  
February 20, 21 and 22, 2019



again and contribute to vernacular literature until the Americans returned during the liberation war and granting the Filipinos their independence shortly.

Moreover, such colonial experiences have greatly influenced the Philippine literary heritage making it very aggressive and ever dynamic, evident even during the post-colonial such that the fame of Philippine literature lost most of its substantial value in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The expansion provided by technology and development contributed to the loss of Filipino interests in such cultural treasures, particularly in the urban setting. Although in rural areas some forms of oral customs and traditions are still being practiced that includes singing of lullabies, domestic and occupational songs, folk verses and folk songs, sharing of *salawikain* or maxims, and proverbs, it is usually the elders seen doing such practice. It may be hard for a millennial to pay more attention to such practices and behaviors as the trend goes digital and everyone is busy catching up with the latest fads that gradually consume human interaction and socialization. Thus, the development of heritage from generation to another has been slowly fading.

In perspective, Viray (1968) suggested that it is tempting to conclude that the historical plot of the Filipino has been one of colonization, in which the Philippine people have experienced diverse influences. Further stressing significance of literature as racial heritage (Viray, 1968: 196):

“Literature is both an act of discovery and an act of disclosure. It seeks to illuminate for us aspects of human experience, providing us with an apprehension of other people’s lives and an increasing accumulation of insights into our own behavior, attitudes, and emotional involvement. No wonder then that Horace felt literature is *dulce et utile*, agreeable and profitable.”

### **The Philippine Built Cultural Heritage**

Seemingly, it is not only the literary heritage that is being left out by the society today. Dissention is more obvious for built cultural heritage. In the Philippines, many heritage sites and ancestral houses have been demolished, adapted as local warehouses or converted to high-rise condominiums in the sake of modernization and development, or just left out to deteriorate.

Indigenous structures in the Philippines were manifestations of the basic lifestyle prevalent in the community such that everything is patterned according to their basic needs to ensure survivability. Early Filipino settlements were located near river and streams to facilitate easy access to transportation and other economic resources but the arrival of the Spaniards provided a complete turn around by organizing settlements into structured community centered on a plaza surrounded by major Spanish structures like churches, *municipio* or municipal hall, schools, and convents for evangelization purposes and easy supervision of their colony. The Spaniards facilitated the construction of brick-made structures made of mud transforming primitive structures made from the light materials of dried cogon grass and bamboo called *bahay kubo* (Juanico, 2013).

As the American occupation started, the Philippines witnessed a rise in infrastructure and architecture development with improved engineering paving the way for the use of concrete reinforcements, hollow blocks, and hardwood showcasing Art Deco architecture. Nevertheless, such established infrastructure beauty were put into neglect as the Japanese grounded all architectural production for three-years. However, when much of the structures were heavily damaged if not totally destroyed by the outrage of the Second World War, not everything were reconstructed by the Americans particularly churches and minor government structures contributing to their deterioration and demise.

Presented at the 12th DLSU Arts Congress  
De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines  
February 20, 21 and 22, 2019



The post-war structure development paved the way for the construction of commercial centers and complexes that deconcentrated key structures usually centered at the plaza. Commercial centers such as *Escolta* in Manila was developed as economic business districts rather than a command post of political power. Post colonization era contributed as well to the reconfiguration of the community landscape. As new demands were imposed by the fast-phased modern lifestyle, changes in the landscape are really inevitable. Such that today, it is normal to see high rise structure in the heart of every community, displacing old structures in favor of new and innovative ones, and reinventing the community. It is now ordinary to see 24 hours convenience stores, commercial centers that remain open until late nights, freeways at the middle of residential areas, water reclamation, and other sorts of community reinventions.

As the Philippine economy advances forward in accordance to the linear model of industrial growth, demands for improvement of community structures, buildings, and facilities have led to the utmost chase for urban development. With the Philippine population contributing to the projected 75 million people added to the world's population every year, demands for more social infrastructures such as housing and commercial facilities were on the rise. Most often if not, the response to such demands comes at the expense of cultural heritage conservation. Due to poor urban planning and zoning regulations implementation, in addition to the scarcity of available spaces, one foreseen viable option is the displacement of built heritages such as national monuments and landmarks, historical parks, and ancestral houses. Heritage structures are replaced with high-rise infrastructures such as residential condominiums, shopping malls, theme parks, and commercial centers that ruin the original design and built of such cultural treasures. Thus, Katrinka Ebbe (2009) sees rapid urban

expansion posing a significant risk to irreplaceable cultural and natural resources.

In fact, according to the United Nations, threats to culture and heritage have increased significantly all over the world in the last 20 years (United Nations Task Force on Habitat III, 2015). Nevertheless, Joan Henderson (2012) expounded on this reiterating that urban development is an offshoot of globalization or the undying aspiration of cities to be international business centers and financial hubs and has often been accompanied by serious social and environmental problems. Thus any resemblance of the backward past is seen as an unproductive use of scarce resources.

## 2. MAIN CLAIMS

Apparently, the colonial experience of the Filipinos has defined how heritage is treated and conserved. As for the case of the Philippines, the capitalist character of colonialism which served as the primary reason for colonial expansion has greatly influenced the colony's approaches to conservation of heritage. Thus, the colonial legacy has set a precedent that destroys the old practices, ways of life, structures and edifices to favor the creation of a new set of world order, thus setting a culture of neglect and disregard for cultural heritage conservation. The politics of memory and the quest for a new identity has influenced how heritage conservation is defined and perceived in the Philippines.

Henceforth, racial heritages are given the least importance unless its relationship with economic activities has been clearly established (Ruoss and Alfarè, 2013). Communities often see cultural heritage as something without use or value and has no return of investment. Chohan and Wai Ki (2005) and Nijkamp (2012) both support this argument suggesting that in every phase of development, particularly, urban development does

Presented at the 12th DLSU Arts Congress  
De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines  
February 20, 21 and 22, 2019



not only affect the structure of the city but it also destroys the traditional physical composition, the built environment, social and cultural values and collective memory of habitants.

As nations continue to expand and pursue urban development, rapid urbanization has created unprecedented problems for cultural heritage. It goes beyond control, becoming destructive, not only to local ecologies and natural resources but to cultural resources as well, thus posing persistent threats to the heritage assets and values, and identity of historic urban areas (Hosagrahar, Soule, Girard, and Potts, 2016).

In the Philippines, there appears to be an impetus to destroy than to preserve cultural heritage. In June 2000, the historic Manila's Jai Alai building, an Art Deco Manila landmark was demolished after it was condemned unsafe by the local government of Manila. Soon after, in 2013, the Old Meralco Building on San Marcelino Street, another Art Deco treasure in Manila was demolished. In 2017 the old Army and Navy Club built in 1911 along Roxas Boulevard, Manila was converted into a boutique hotel as is now called the Rizal Park Hotel.

Likewise, heritage buildings in Calle de la Escolta, Manila are being demolished one after another to be replaced by modern architectures serving new functions and purposes. It started with the El Hogar Filipino Building built in 1914, as the original owners sold it to Chinese-Filipino real estate developers and the new owners intend to demolish the century-old structure to turn it to a condominium. The old Philippine National Bank Building constructed in 1962 was also demolished in January 2016 under the orders of the local government of Manila.

The Republic Act No. 10066 (R.A. 10066) of the Philippines, otherwise known as the National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009, sets down the parameters for cultural heritage based on the instruments provided by the United Nations

Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The legislation considers cultural heritage referring to the totality of cultural property preserved and developed through time and passed on to posterity (Art II, Section 3). Thus, a cultural property refers to all products of human creativity by which a people and a nation reveal their identity. It also includes traditions or living expressions that are often shared, learned, symbolic, adaptive and integrated, inherited from ancestors and passed down to the next generation (Balco, 2011; Radzuan and Ahmad, 2015; UNESCO, 2011).

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This study presents an exploratory and descriptive approach through case studies that will answer the following questions:

1. How did the Philippine colonial experience influenced the country's approaches to conservation of heritage?
2. How has being a colony under foreign powers influenced conservation approaches to cultural heritage in the Philippines?
3. Why is cultural heritage given the least importance in terms of economic development in the Philippines?
4. How to pursue economic development without impinging on cultural heritage in the Philippines?

### 4. FINDINGS

The legacy of colonial history of the Philippines has contributed to how communities perceive life, culture, and society. From the time before the Philippines was discovered by the Europeans and the way the nation was passed on from one colonizer to another, minimal sense of heritage conservation was developed. The

Presented at the 12th DLSU Arts Congress  
 De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines  
 February 20, 21 and 22, 2019



perception that anything related to the historical past is a sign of antiquity and underdevelopment has comprised the way present communities perceive development.

One impact of colonization is “psychocultural marginality” or the loss of one’s cultural identity along with social and personal disorganization. Such impact is produced when people are denied access to their traditional culture, values and norms leading to historical trauma and cultural alienation (Dalal, 2011).

The cultural diversity produced by the series of colonization involving Spaniards, Americans, and Japanese created a weak sense of Filipino identity, which resulted to the culture of neglect for cultural heritage conservation. As Pierre Nora (1989) emphasized, there is the absence of the will to remember. This identity crisis has contributed to the commodification of culture that was further enhanced by urbanization. Once culture is treated as a commodity, financial value is attached to it and loses its authenticity (Taylor, 2001). Hence, cultural heritage conservation becomes a financial and material concept.

The influx of development has changed the playing field for cultural heritage conservations. Unless a correlated economic benefit can be established, heritage conservation is treated as inimical to economic interests.

Apparently, cultural heritage conservation rests on the different types of value attached to it. Aside from the usual aesthetic and emotional value attributed to it by cultural advocates, it also incorporates values seen from an economic perspective such as the *culture capital* identified by Throsby (2007) considering both the direct use value and indirect non-use value of the cultural heritage.

Nevertheless, Throsby (2012) provided that cultural heritage should be considered as an asset and any related expenses should be treated as

an investment. The theoretical basis for such pronouncement lies in the principle of capital theory. Capital forms one of the factors of production that can be combined with other factors such land and labor to produce other intermediate and finished goods and services. Throsby (1999) suggested that culture could be combined with other inputs in the production of further cultural goods and services, calling it culture capital.

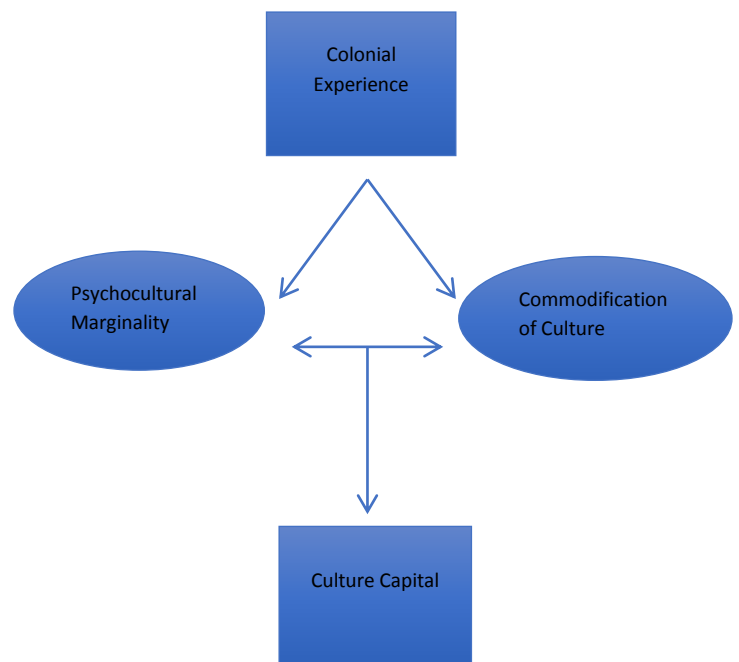


Figure 1: How Colonial Experience Influenced Filipinos’ Definition and Approaches to Heritage Conservation

Culture capital considers both the direct use value and indirect non-use value of the cultural heritage. On one hand, the so-called use value pertains to the value assigned to heritage properties that produces concrete results such as profits and earnings from cultural heritage activities. This includes heritage structure used for housing that yield higher rents than other buildings by virtue of its heritage status or the



improved value of remote users when they benefit from the view provided by the heritage property or due to its proximity to the heritage property. On the other hand, non-use value refers to the indirect use value or the less tangible benefits of cultural heritage such as the deep affection and appreciation one can get from a certain cultural object or historical site; or spiritual and social satisfaction which cannot be measured in concrete terms such as profits, revenues, or number of jobs and businesses it generated (Throsby, 2007).

Nevertheless, development has been considered already as not an end in itself but instead as a catalyst for other social aspects of growth. Thus it is in this perspective that cultural heritage conservation is seen as another form of development. The World Bank already has considered the conservation of cultural heritage to be supporting urban revitalization by preserving city livability, improving competitiveness, and providing venue of income-earning opportunities (Ebbe, 2009).

## 5. ANALYSIS

The series of colonization experienced by the Philippines contributed to the community's cultural bereavement and cultural identity loss. When the Spaniards established their first colony in the Philippines, to successfully accomplish their economic objectives they capitalized on the value of Christianity to force Filipinos to disregard their traditional practices and instill a new way of life. This can be seen on how the Spaniards organized communities around a plaza complex adjacent to important Spanish infrastructures such as churches, schools and municipal halls. Communities were forced to locate near the plaza complex for easy monitoring and regulatory purposes. The value of Christianity was used as well in enforcing the Spanish will to the Filipinos. Moreover, Filipinos were forced to speak the

Spanish language and condemn those who will revert to their old practices.

The transfer of colonial authority from the Spaniards to the Americans further impaired the cultural alienation produced by colonization. The Americans likewise implemented practices to advance their economic interests. Under the guise of benevolent assimilation or helping the Filipinos prepare for their liberalization, the Americans first ensure the disregard of Spanish practices by correlating anything relevant to Spain as indication of underdevelopment thus should be abandoned and replaced. Under such strategy, the English language was commissioned as the medium of communication and was institutionalized through the free education conducted by the *Thomasites*. Furthermore, new practices were introduced replacing Spanish leisure of cockfighting or *sabong* and obsession to opium with active sports development such as basketball, volleyball, and football. New fashion trends were also introduced through the popularity of long gowns, Sunday dresses, tuxedos and coats.

Likewise, the Japanese invasion contributed to the developing cultural alienation in the Philippines. The Japanese colonial philosophy of "Asia for Asians" have generally regarded the American influence as oppressive in character as they replaced anything related to the Americans with something Japanese such as the use of the *Mickey Mouse Money* as the currency and medium of trade. Filipinos were also prohibited from communicating using the English language and were forced to learn the Japanese language of *Nihongo*. Japanese practices were also introduced such that Filipinos learn various Japanese art works and forms such as the *origami*, *haiku* and *tanka*. The strict censorship and curfew ensured compliance of the Filipinos.

Therefore such experiences characterized the usual pattern of cultural disregard in the Philippines created by the constant destruction and replacement of old practices induced by the new

Presented at the 12th DLSU Arts Congress  
De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines  
February 20, 21 and 22, 2019



dominant culture of the colonizers. Henceforward as the Philippines gained its independence from foreign powers, the weak Filipino sense of identity is still inevitable reflected through the commodification of culture and the dominance of capitalist interest. Unless an economic value can be attached to it, minimal importance is attributed hence the problem lies in how to attribute economic value or sell the unsellable past.

The Heritage Conservation Society, a non-stock, non-profit organization advocating the protection and preservation of cultural heritage in the Philippine through its president, Ivan Henares, discussed that it is a misconception to think that heritage structures have become liabilities accumulating expenses because of maintenance and preservation. Furthermore, Henares (2011) suggested that varied approaches in heritage conservation could be utilized without impinging upon urban development and without sacrificing insurmountable costs.

### **Creative Culture Industry**

Advocates likewise believed that cultural heritage could serve as an avenue for cultural tourism providing a boost to the economy. According to the findings of a forum organized by the Asian Institute of Management's Dr. Andre L. Tan Center for Tourism in 2004 as well as the generalizations made in a summit organized by the Heritage Conservation Society (Philippines) in 2013, preserving heritage structures and cultural resources can contribute to the market value of real estate properties thus significantly boosting tourism activities and facilitating economic growth in the area and correcting the misconception that heritage conservation will cause financial and opportunity losses to property owners (Flores, 2013).

Accordingly, conservation of heritage is not only keeping a resemblance of the backward past for its historic significance, but also for its potential to increase income-earning opportunities, city

livability, and competitiveness (Ebbe, 2009); hence significantly maintaining social capital and generating economic produce (Chohan and Wai Ki, 2005). Bryan Balco (2011) further concludes that:

*“Cultural heritage or the historic built environment has a big part to play “in promoting economic growth” and as such, it can help “boost the local and national economy and create jobs by attracting tourists and investments, and providing leisure, recreation, and educational facilities””* (p. 6).

Montaser Hiyari (2012) suggested that aside from rehabilitation costs less than constructing new ones, it stimulates commerce leading to employment generation. In relation to this, Henderson (2012) concluded that cultural tourism as a whole contributes to urban development and provides an avenue for sustainable development by making communities more attractive destinations for tourism and investments.

Alongside the economic benefits are the psychological benefits of heritage conservation. Consequently, cultural heritage presents the community's identity and history, and illustrates the community's development that forms its pride, honor, and understanding of oneself (Chohan and Wai Ki, 2005; Hiyari, 2012). The UNESCO (2012) also noted the non-monetized benefits such as social inclusiveness and rootedness, resilience, innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship in the use of local resources, skills and knowledge.

Many nations have already ventured to heritage conservation as an avenue for economic and urban development. In Thailand, the community was able to preserve *wats* or ancient temple and structures, which now serve as famous tourist attractions that not only draw tourists but are also able to generate employment and entrepreneurship opportunities (Peerapun, 2012). Singapore was also able to make profit in preserving their historic shophouses and buildings





Presented at the 12th DLSU Arts Congress  
De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines  
February 20, 21 and 22, 2019

through adaptive re-use of old structures observing the fundamental principle of maximum Retention, sensitive Restoration, and careful Repair or “3Rs” (Singapore Legislative Council Secretariat, 2008).

Indonesia was also able to preserve their cultural landscapes of rice terraces and water temples as part of the *subak* system as a manifestation of the *Tri Hatna Karana* Philosophy. It does not only ensure rice sufficiency but also provided great tourist attractions that corresponded to income-generating opportunities (Lansing and Dharmiasih, 2014).

Furthermore, in 2002 the Macedonian’s urban heritage investment project focused on investments in heritage and infrastructure works which resulted to the revival of economic activity brought about by the rise in handicraft production, increase in workers’ wages, and growth of tourists visits and expenditures. Overall, heritage revitalization produced economic development (Throsby, 2012).

### **Heritage Districts in the Philippines**

Despite of the massive colonial influences creating a diversified culture for the Filipinos, there were communities in the Philippines that managed to maintain their historic past and provide high value to culture. Vigan’s Mestizo District in Ilocos Sur serves as the country’s premiere historical district. The *Kamestisuhan* District of Malolos, Bulacan could likewise rival the prestige of being a heritage site. Iloilo City has recently started the gradual revitalization of its old downtown area, while San Fernando, Pampanga has initiated its urban renewal program in preserving heritage for progress. Likewise, the town of Silay, Bacolod takes pride in conserving its heritage as the “Paris of the East” as part of the local government’s Heritage Conservation Project; while Taal, Batangas continues to preserve its heritage legacy through its Heritage Village. All of these communities share one thing common, they once problematized cultural heritage as indications

of underdevelopment but has manage to made use of such rich historic past to pursue economic development.

### **Vigan’s Mestizo District**

The heritage district of Vigan, Ilocos Sur is a demonstration of how the commodification of culture provided a cultural capital resulting to the fusion of sustainable cultural heritage conservation and economic development. The city ventured on its rich history and culture by embarking on a cultural heritage conservation and heritage tourism program. Through this, the city was able to develop from being a 2<sup>nd</sup> class municipality with annual revenue of Php 27 million or 800,000 dollars and population of 42,067 to a 1<sup>st</sup> class municipality in 1995 (Medina, 2009).

The city of Vigan first experienced colonial culture domination in 1572 when Capt. Juan de Salcedo conquered the islands of *Ylocos* or *Ciudad Fernardina de Bigan*. The town followed the standard urban planning patterns implemented by the Spaniards that radiates from a central park surrounded by a church, government building, and other Spanish structures. It became the center of political, religious, social and cultural activities in the north. In the aftermath of the Manila-Acapulco Galleon Trade, the significance of Vigan as center for trade and industry started to decline as an offshoot of political instability that led to the massive migration of local businessmen outside of the city. Thus to regain the lost glory, the city of Vigan focused on their rich historical and cultural heritage potential as a major tool for development with the mission of “to conserve our heritage and deliver effective services for an improved quality of life”.

In 1995, the local government of Vigan reengineered governance through “the Vigan Conservation Program as a Tool for Development” that had four objectives (Medina, 2009):

Presented at the 12th DLSU Arts Congress  
De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines  
February 20, 21 and 22, 2019



1. To fortify the sense of identity and pride of the community on their historic city.
2. To institutionalize local protective measures and development plans to ensure continuity of programs and involvement of stakeholders.
3. To forge local and international linkages.
4. To develop Vigan as a tourist destination where tourism programs enrich and conserve the people's core values and traditions, as well as sustain livelihood and employment for *Bigueños* (Vigan locals).

The Vigan Conservation Program aims to spearhead economic development through cultural heritage conservation. The city's consultant on Heritage Conservation, Eric Zerrudo (2008), embarked on a four-phase model of cultural heritage-oriented development leading to sustainable development. It starts with *awareness, appreciation, protection, and utilization*.

As such, the city started the awareness phase through cultural heritage mapping or the identification of heritage resources for purposes of conservation and development. To facilitate cultural awareness, the city government initiated a massive information campaign through brochures, videos, e-books, newsletters, postal stamps and coloring workbooks highlighting the city's traditions, arts, and culture thus enriching cultural heritage appreciation.

To further improve cultural heritage appreciation, tourism and heritage-related economic activities including cultural and historical tours were also organized. Museum tours, the Ilocos Culinary Tour, horse-drawn carriage or *kalesa* rides and Vigan Heritage River Cruise were among the common tour attractions. Capacity-building seminars and workshops were also organized which led to the reorganization of existing people's organization and encouraged the creation of new ones.

Legislative measures were also undertaken to institutionalize the conservation

program. Such measures include (1) defining the boundaries of the protected historic district; (2) providing the Vigan Conservation Guidelines that stipulates the guidelines on restoration works on historic structures including ancestral houses; (3) creating a multi-sectoral Vigan Conservation Council which monitors conservation and development plans involving the historic district; and (4) authorizing the annual allotment of one percent of the city's internal revenue allotment for arts, culture and tourism (Medina, 2009).

Finally, to make the most of the cultural conservation program, the city government promoted the use of their rich cultural heritage to address contemporary needs relevant to the stakeholders in further strengthening their conservation program. Through the cultural heritage conservation efforts, the city government was able to produce economic value in the form of heritage-based tourism that generated livelihood and employment. Ancestral houses along the main historic street of *Calle Crisologo* and other historical buildings were considered for adaptive re-use as office space, hotels, shophouses and restaurants without destroying its original historical and cultural structure. New structures were also built following the old Spanish architectural design.

Moving forward, the city began to initiate partnerships and collaborations with other organizations and governments such as the collaboration with the Spanish government in the formulation of the Vigan master plan and granting of financial and technical assistance to keep the program sustainable.

In 1999, the City of Vigan was inscribed in the prestigious UNESCO's World Heritage List of Sites and Monuments after demonstrating a delicate balance of preservation and urbanization. In 2000, Vigan was formally classified as a city through Republic Act No. 8988, which validated the city creation by virtue of the Royal Decree issued by the King of Spain in 1757.

Presented at the 12th DLSU Arts Congress  
De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines  
February 20, 21 and 22, 2019



The cultural heritage conservation program of Vigan led to the economic development of the city from having an annual income of 800,000 dollars in 1995 to 4.2 million dollars in 2009. Such initiative led to the recognition of UNESCO in 2012 citing the city as an example of best conservation management of world heritage properties by being the best-preserved example of a planned Spanish colonial town in Asia:

*“Vigan represents a unique fusion of Asian building design and construction with European colonial architecture and planning”. Furthermore, “Vigan is an exceptionally intact and well preserved example of a European trading town in East and East Asia.”*

Moreover, through its cultural heritage conservation program as a tool for development, the city has been recognized as well as a *Galing Pook Awardee* for the Vigan’s Heritage Conservation Program as Best Practice on Local Governance, Cleanest and Greenest City in Northern Luzon, Most Child Friendly Component City of the Philippines, Best Performing Local Government unit with the least number of constituents below the poverty threshold in the Ilocos Region. Finally, in 2015, Vigan was officially inscribed among the New7Wonders Cities in the world.

Such recognitions also provided non-monetized benefits such as boosting the pride and empowering of the people of Vigan to be guardians of their own cultural heritage that led to the preparation of the heritage homeowner’s preservation manual and the organization of the Save Vigan Ancestral Homeowners Association, Incorporated.

*Kamestisuhan* District of Malolos, Bulacan

The City of Malolos, Bulacan takes pride in its own *Kamestisuhan* District that centers on Pariancillo Street. Just like the case of Vigan, Ilocos Sur, the local government of Malolos banked on their rich history and culture in initiating a

cultural heritage tourism program called “Vamos A Malolos”. The program showcased both tangible and intangible cultural heritages of Malolos including theatrical plays and cultural presentations.

The historic significance of the district dates back to the declaration of the First Republic of the Philippines by General Emilio Aguinaldo in 1898. After which, several houses near the Malolos Church were converted into government offices. One of the fifteen heritage houses along the district is the Lino and Maria Reyes House that served as the office of Apolinario Mabini, the chief adviser of President Emilio Aguinaldo. Another house is the Fausto Chiong House which became the *Secretaría de Interior*, while the Jose Bautista House famous for its caryatid posts and French Art Nouveau style was the *Secretaría de Fomento* (Department of Public Works) that was converted into a living museum of antique artifacts. Another structure is the Adriano Family house, locally known as *Casa Tribunal de Malolos*. It used to be the Second Municipal Hall of Malolos that was later turned into a *carcel* (jailhouse). Another known structure is the site of the *Instituto de Mujeres* (School for Women) established by twenty young women who pursued the establishing of a night school amid opposition from the friars.

Some of the properties subscribed to the heritage conservation practice of adaptive reuse such as the Adriano-Vasquez Mansion that served as the site of the *Gobierno Militar de la Plaza* and now serves as the City’s Meralco Office but still retaining its Art Nouveau original design. Another excellent restoration is the Art Deco structure Dr. Luis Santos House, son of one of the twenty women of Malolos Doña Alberta Uitangcoy Santos. Unfortunately, some heritage houses were already demolished such as the Ponciano Tiongson House, which served as the *Comisaria de Guerra* that was replaced by an Internet café.

Apart from the *Kamestisuhan* district, other heritage structures that can be found in



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De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines  
February 20, 21 and 22, 2019

Malolos includes the *Casa Real* that served as the office-residence of the *gobernadorcillo* during the Spanish colonization and a capitol during the American era. Today, it serves as the national shrine and Museum of Political History. Along with, the Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church popularly known as the Barasoain Church which served as the site of the First Philippine Congress, and with its convent once served as the *Palacio Presidencia* (official residence and office) of President Aguinaldo is also another cultural gem of the city.

In 2001, the National Historical Institute declared the historic town center of Malolos a National Historical Landmark and Heritage Town (Tejero, 2016).

#### Iloilo's Old Downtowns Revitalizations

The local government of Iloilo through its Iloilo City Cultural Heritage Conservation Council (ICCHCC) likewise takes pride in their version of a heritage conservation framework focusing in culture capital for development. The framework is a product of a multi-stakeholder strategic planning workshop aiming to transform the city into a culturally-vibrant community working for the preservation, development and promotion of its heritage without compromising urban design and planning (Lujan, 2006). The thrust of the program is to revitalize the old downtown of the city to attract investments and ensure the effective management of the preservation efforts.

The city of Iloilo gained prominence during the boom of the sugar industry in the 19<sup>th</sup> century serving as the transport hub for the developing sugar industry in Negros Island. This incident stirred local economy growth as the city witnessed the influx of banks, social clubs, warehouses, machine shops, printing presses, retail shops, commercial establishments, and educational and medical institutions. The economic status of the city is much evident in the designs of old houses and mansions that resembled a display of unique

mix of Asian and Hispanic architectures. However, the decline of the sugar industry and the impacts of the Japanese invasion particularly to the city's central business district (CBD) left the city to decay suffering from economic stagnation.

In April 2000, the city responded to the calls of cultural and heritage tourism by enacting the Local Cultural Heritage Conservation Ordinance. The ordinance created the ICCHCC tasked to monitor and conducts an inventory of cultural heritage and legacy buildings in the city and to promulgate rules and regulations for the promotion of cultural heritage preservation. The main focus of the conservation program is the CBD composed of the streets of J.M. Basa, Aldeguer, Mapa, Guanaco, and Iznart; which were declared as Heritage Zones. In addition, certain sites were declared as Heritage and Tourist Spots including the Jaro Cathedral, Molo Church, CBD, Fort San Pedro, the Jaro Plaza complex, and the Plaza Libertad Complex (Yu, Oreta, Ibabao and Hechanova, 2013).

Under the ordinance owners, administrations, lessees or any person in charge in the heritage zone are prohibited from undertaking any structural modifications without recommendation from ICCHCC. Furthermore, all businesses within the zone are entitled to incentives including business tax exemptions as prescribed under the city's Tourism Code. Moreover, the council started the gradual phase-out of big billboards and the regulation of signage that obstructs the aesthetical beauty of the cultural and heritage structures.

Through such framework the local government of Iloilo perceives that by the reviving the central business district, economic investments can be encouraged to boost the city's economy and serve as an impetus of economic advancement.

San Fernando, Pampanga's Preserving Heritage for Progress

Presented at the 12th DLSU Arts Congress  
De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines  
February 20, 21 and 22, 2019



The local government of San Fernando, Pampanga initiated a similar heritage conservation campaign, “Preserving Heritage for Progress”, that anchors on urban renewal of cultural heritage. In 1995, the city lost one of its prime jewels, the Abad Santos house that serve as the abode of the prominent Abad Santos couple Vicente Abad Santos and Toribia Basco, after a heavy typhoon caused a lahar overflow that ruined the famed heritage house. The event served as the tipping point for the community to facilitate initiatives that will conserve its rich history, heritage, and culture.

Aside from the popularity created by giant lantern production and the *Holy Week*'s portrayal of the passion and death Jesus Christ, San Fernando is home to many heritage structures four of which were declared as Heritage House by the National Historical Institute. Most of the structures are located along Consunji Street and Capitol Boulevard, which include the Lazatin House, Dayrit-Cuyugan House, Hizon-Singian House, Henson-Hizon House, Consunji House, Hizon-Ocampo House, Santos-Hizon House, the Metropolitan Cathedral, San Fernando Train Station, Death March Marker, Pampanga Capitol and Provincial Jail, and the PASUDECO (Pampanga Sugar Development Company) Sugar Central. Most of these structures were constructed in the late Spanish period-early American period, while some were even appropriated by the Japanese Imperial Army during the Second World War.

The city's heritage conservation initiatives started in 2004 after the local government through a city ordinance pronounced the City of San Fernando Heritage District as part of the “Preserving Heritage for Progress” program. Eventually the program gained recognition as it was cited as one of the Top 10 Best Practices of the League of Cities of the Philippines and a Trailblazing Program of the *Galing Pook* Awards in the same year. Following the success of the program, the local government has institutionalized incentives for heritage owners in

2006 by granting zero assessment levels for purposes of real property tax assessments. In the same year, the city's conservation program was given the Heritage Tourism Award of the Best Tourism Practices – Special Award Category by the Association of Tourism Officers of the Philippines citing:

*“in cognizance of the innovative and valuable effort, passion and commitment of the City Government to ensure the protection and promotion of the City's priceless architectural heritage by restoring and preserving the same for the benefit of the future generation of Fernandinos and the Filipino people.”*

In 2015, the local government renewed its commitment to heritage conservation through a new strategic objective anchored on heritage, crafts and cuisine, envisioning it as “City of San Fernando as Center of *Kapampangan* Culture, A Preferred Tourism Destination in Asia by 2022” (Pangilinan, 2015).

Silay, Bacolod's Incentives for Conservation and Adaptive Reuse

The local government of Silay, Bacolod took bold steps in the preservation of their old town and conservation of its heritage as the “*Paris of the East*”. The town gained popularity during the sugar boom in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as sugar barons reaped the benefits of the sugar trade evident by their opulent mansions that formed the culture and aesthetic core of the region. Henceforth, Silay city continues to ride the waves of adaptive re-use of heritage buildings to cafés and bars, accommodations and other business ventures to boost heritage tourism in the area boasting with 29 heritage houses recognized by the National Historical Commission of the Philippines.

Silay City recorded a remarkable success in 2015 in its heritage conservation efforts when the local government enacted a landmark legislation that provides 100-percent incentive in taxes for owners of heritage structures who



Presented at the 12th DLSU Arts Congress  
De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines  
February 20, 21 and 22, 2019

properly maintain and adaptively reuse their properties. The Heritage Ordinance is an offshoot of a previous ordinance that created the Silay Heritage District the previous year. Moreover, the Heritage Ordinance identified cultural districts for tourists and investors thus requiring necessary clearance from the Office of the Building Official of the City's Engineering Office for renovations and modifications of existing structures and constructing of future facilities (Sembrano, 2015).

In 2016, the Silay City Heritage Conservation Project won second place in the 11<sup>th</sup> Pearl Awards of the Association of Tourism Officers and the Department of Tourism. Hence, heritage advocates are lobbying for the inclusion of Silay's sugar heritage sites in the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites. Apart from heritage houses, the city takes pride in its heritage sugar facilities such as antiquated sugar mills, sugar chimneys, and dilapidated trains used in transporting sugar canes from farms to mills. Apparently, the success of Silay City Heritage Conservation Project helps the community define their history and identity.

#### Taal, Batangas' Heritage Village

The "Heritage Village" of Taal, Batangas showcased a fine example of responsible and ethical promotion of heritage tourism. The town received its distinction as a "Heritage Village" in 1987 thru a resolution passed by the National Historical Institute. Hence, Taal is one of the most culturally preserved sites in the country in spite of the growing urbanization in the region (Aguda, Tamayo and Barlan, 2013).

In 2009, the local government adopted the Heritage Conservation, Preservation and Restoration Code of the Municipality of Taal, Batangas that prescribes the rules in the conservation of heritage structures and guidelines to all future construction activities requiring all designs to conform to 19<sup>th</sup> century Filipino structures or American colonial styles ancestral homes. With the support of a community-based

Non-Governmental Organization, the Taal Active Alliance League (TAAL), the community aims to preserve its culturally rich heritage houses and structures that includes the Marcella Agoncillo Museum, Gregorio Agoncillo Mansion, Goco House, Don Apacible Museum, Villa Tortuga, Villa Severina, Estacio Ancestral House, Orosa House, Galleria Taal, Casa Dela Rosa, Villavicencio House, Ylagan-Dela Rosa House, Casa Ofelia, La Casa de Dimaano, Casa Conchita, Villavicencio Wedding Gift House, Okada-Barrion Salazar House, Casa Punzalan, Cabrera House, Gen. Ananias Diokno House, Casa Gahol, Dela Vega House, Taaleñas Antique Shop, and Bazaar de Taal. With a good number of preserved heritage houses, the town's heritage village draws inspiration from the success of Vigan's Mestizo District.

More than the preserved built-heritage structures, Taal also ensures that the community's oral traditions are likewise preserved through the recital of a traditional *luwa*, a declamation in the vernacular as prayer or tribute to the saints. Apart from this, every month of April, the town celebrates the annual EL PASUBAT festival that brings forward the local delicacies of *Empanada*, *Longganisa*, *Panutsa*, *Balisong*, *Barong tagalog*, *Tapang Taal*, *Tawilis*, and *sinaing na Tulingan* (Castillo, Bansil, Garcia, Castillo and Peyra, 2015). At present, the community continues to respond to the calls of sustainable heritage tourism in promoting development with sensitivity to the local community's values and goals.

The relentless efforts of a number of heritage districts in the Philippines establish the link between cultural heritage conservation and economic development. Such development framework underscores the sector's contribution to the economy through cultural and creative industries, sustainable cultural tourism, and cultural infrastructure, thus developing culture as a means of capital towards developing the economy (Ruoss and Alfarè, 2013).



Presented at the 12th DLSU Arts Congress  
De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines  
February 20, 21 and 22, 2019

## 6. CONCLUSION

In the advocacy for cultural heritage conservation, the adage “if it doesn’t pay it doesn’t stay” has provided great limitations for heritage communities. It situates cultural heritage and economic development as two opposing views and extremely incompatible such that it is considered that to reduce poverty is to reduce heritage and to preserve heritage means to preserve poverty. As such, any investment connected to heritage conservation is perceived as a losing investment (Barthel-Bouchier, 2013).

Apparently, the pervasive cultural apathy that prevails in the Philippines was brought by the perception that cultural heritage has no use and implies no return of investment. Instead, investment in cultural heritage is seen as a dead end with insurmountable costs than benefits (Baker, 2010). This narrative summarizes the plight of cultural heritage in the Philippines, oral or written, tangible or intangible, movable or immovable. Anything related to cultural heritage is considered as holding on to the backward past and considering the implications of the modern society were everything happens at the touch of fingertips, the next generation already forgot what is it with the thing in the past. For some, relieving cultural heritage is just trying to get to know history or just getting a glimpse of what was in the past through *selfies* and souvenirs that can be shared to the social media for five seconds of fame and glamour. It is very rare to find people today who really care about the past.

This has been an ideal testimonial of what Jose Rizal provided in his essay *Filipinas Dentro de Cien Años* (The Philippine A Century Hence), appeared in *La Solidaridad*, September 1889 – January 1890 edition, which argues that:

“At a terribly critical time when an entire people was undergoing change in government, laws, customs, religion and beliefs, the Philippine Islands were depopulated,

impoverished, and retarded by these wars... they lost confidence in the past, all faith in the present and all hope in the future... little by little they lost their ancient traditions and their culture. They forgot their native alphabet, their songs, their poetry, their laws, in order to learn by rote other doctrines which they did not understand.”

Especially, the capitalist nature of colonialism that characterized the Philippine colonial experience which generated a diversified culture have set a precedent for the destruction of anything related to the previous colony to favor the creation of a new set of world order; a culture of heritage conservation is difficult to establish.

The psychocultural marginality established by the colonial perception of identity has been the central issue of heritage conservation strategy and advocacy in the Philippines. The minimal support and interest provided by major stakeholders including the government and local communities are resemblance of the gravity of culture commodification in the country. Thus there is a need to reorganize heritage conservation frameworks in the Philippines that will work on culture capital as a mode of investment towards sustainable cultural heritage conservation.

Nevertheless, Manuel Viray (1968) once reiterated the value of racial heritage that despite of being passed on from one generation to another and transcending one period after another, a country’s heritage never dies. The initiatives demonstrated by the heritage districts of Vigan in Ilocos Sur, Malolos in Bulacan, Iloilo City, San Fernando in Pampanga, Silay in Bacolod, and Taal in Batangas were all manifestations of how culture capital working as an agent of the commodification of culture have provided a sustainable and effective cultural heritage conservation program. The philosophy of considering expenses generated by heritage preservation as investments rather than a mere luxury was able to generate support both from the local government and the community. Apparently, the tax and financial incentives

Presented at the 12th DLSU Arts Congress  
De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines  
February 20, 21 and 22, 2019



provided by the local government have encouraged private owners and local community to participate in such advocacy. Any losses from the tax incentives were viewed as an investment that will generate direct and indirect economic benefits. Nevertheless, through cultural heritage tourism, livelihood and employment were generated compensating for such financial losses. It initiated a two-pronged approach towards economic development. Not only local stakeholders became interested in conserving the local cultural heritage, it also resulted to a return of investment either by leasing the properties for adaptive re-use such as commercial or office space or through tourism-oriented activities.

Moreover, there is a need to formalize financial and tax incentives through a national legislation that will encourage and support conservation of both literary and built-cultural heritages, such that support to the support to the lobbied Heritage Conservation Incentive Bill (Senate Bill no. 1234) is greatly encouraged. The bill proposes to formalize the granting of tax incentives and exemptions for those who will undertake heritage conservation such as real estate tax exemptions or discounts since most of the properties are in an idle state thus doesn't provide formal income to their owners. Furthermore, exemption from inheritance taxes for families that participates in heritage conservation is likewise being considered because usual dilemma is when heritage properties are passed on from one generation to another the heirs are deciding to put the properties on sale so they can have the money to settle the inheritance tax just like the case of the El Hogar Filipino Building in Escolta, Manila. There should be tax incentives as well for businesses and entrepreneurs who will choose to locate their business in heritage buildings or properties thus incorporating adaptive re-use of such properties, further stressing that what is good for business is good for the community, vice-versa (Palaña, 2015).

Aside for incentives, Mark Evidente (2013) has proposed an alternative that explores the possibility of utilizing "transfer development rights" (TDR) in relation to the existing height and zoning regulations implemented by local government units as a way of promoting heritage preservation. Accordingly, if a height and zoning regulation implements a five-storey structure limit but a certain structure is only two-storey high, legally the owner still has the right over a three-storey extension that the owner can either maximize or transfer development rights to another. Thus it is under this premise that the idea of TDR as a heritage conservation strategy can be optimized. Since most of the heritage structures in the Philippines are about two or three storeys tall, development rights can still be exercised by either trading it or selling it to developers or conservation enthusiast in which the proceeds can be utilized in maintaining the heritage structure. However for such strategy to work, the cultural heritage value of the property needs to be properly considered.

To conclude, inheriting from Manuel Viray (1968), "Cultural heritage is both an act of discovery and disclosure." Not only it unfolds one's history but it also unravels one's personality and story. As Jose Rizal greatly exclaimed, "*Ang hindi luminingon sa pinangalingan ay hindi makakarating sa paroroonan*" (He who does not know how to look back at where he came from will never get to his destination), serving as a call to succeeding generations to slow down, sit back and savor the glory of the past for it is in the past that comprises the present and that will determine the future. It is only through this that *Pamana ng Lahi* or cultural heritages will really serve its purpose, keeping the cycle and truly committing to the value of the term **Heritage**, adapting to present times and keeping it alive.





Presented at the 12th DLSU Arts Congress  
De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines  
February 20, 21 and 22, 2019

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Presented at the 12th DLSU Arts Congress  
De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines  
February 20, 21 and 22, 2019

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Presented at the 12th DLSU Arts Congress  
De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines  
February 20, 21 and 22, 2019



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February 20, 21 and 22, 2019



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