

# **¡VIVA LA VIRGEN! : A STUDY ON THE HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS AS A BASIS FOR CONCEPTUALIZING A SAFEGUARDING PLAN – THE CASE OF THE PEÑAFRANCIA FESTIVAL**

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The study is about the heritage significance and the development that has occurred over the years to religious festivals, to be used as a basis for creating a safeguarding plan. For this study, the proponents will be focusing on the case or the *Peñafrancia* Festival in Naga City. The proponents will identify the heritage significance that would mainly be on its historical, aesthetic, social, spiritual, symbolical and economic significance only and the developments in the festivals as a religious and communal activity will also be discussed. The perspective of representatives from these different stakeholders, such as: Local Government Unit, Church, Historians, Academe, and the Private Sector on the heritage and development of the *Peñafrancia* Festival will also be asserted. The proponents used qualitative approach for the study, with the use of in-depth interviews with the stakeholders, and collection of data from different sources like, archives. After a rigorous data gathering and research, the proponents were able to identify the different heritage significances of the festival in its long existence, and that the stakeholders agree that the development that has and will transpire are not damaging to the essence of the festival, if assessed thoroughly. Because of this, the proponents concluded that a safeguarding plan is necessary to ensure the preservation of the festival in the long run and that this study can be used as a basis.

**Keywords:** *Development, Festival, Heritage, Significance, Tradition*

## **1. Introduction**

Festivals according to Congcong (2014) are “a kind of social events celebrated by a particular group of people with a common purpose and are held in a certain period of time, passing it from one generation to another” (p. 53). These festivals celebrate community values, ideologies, identity and continuity (Getz, Anderson & Carlsen, 2010 as cited by Wilson, Shaw, Arshed, & Pret, 2017). As agreed by many authors, festivals serve as a development and marketing strategy for the local economic development, promotion of the community, enhancement of the tourism image and provides opportunities for the locals (Wilson et al, 2017; Stankova & Vassenska, 2015; Uğuz & Gačnik, 2015). In recent years, these celebrations along with cultural events, have grown significantly in numbers and have become a dynamic phenomenon in the cultural scene (Devesa, Ba’ez, & Figueroa, 2015 as cited by Sanchez, Fernandez, & Lara, 2016). There are various renowned festivals around the world, but most destinations would hold those that fall under three types – historical, cultural and religious. These types of festivals started as a celebration in commemoration of something that is held significant by the host

community (Rodell, 2003 as cited by Coliat et al, 2014). Events, like festivals, have become a reason for these tourists to visit and flock these destinations (Setiyorini, 2016). Sometimes the celebrations of these festivals are done due to the demand of tourists who want to experience the festival as an attraction. Festivals help in increasing economic growth, promoting the destination’s image and providing opportunities for both the tourists and locals (Stankova & Vassenska, 2015; Coliat et al, 2014; Magpantay et al, 2014).

While festivals bring wealth and development to a destination, it is becoming an issue for the cultural festivals how participants are now merely about celebrating popular culture than the original or authentic culture (Crespi-Vallbona and Richards, 2007). This is what makes tourists, or the participants generally decrease their interest in learning about heritage and prefer entertainment more. Other than that, according to Eze-Uzomaka and Oloidi (2017), the tradition of the people is slowly being removed. This is because of the continuous modernization and the preference to be able to adapt to these developments to attract participants for these celebrations. Garnering a number of people to partake in the celebration is an important factor for it to be considered successful.

Therefore, the government sees this as an opportunity to announce projects (Matias, 2014) that would not only be beneficial for the participants but also for the local community.

The *Peñafrancia Festival* is a celebration in honor of the *Nuestra Señora de Peñafrancia* or the Our Lady of *Peñafrancia*. According to Gorospe (1994), there are two images of the Lady, one is in *Salamanca, Spain* which was found in 1434 and crowned in 1951. On the other hand, *Naga's Peñafrancia* was carved in 1705 and was crowned in September 1924. The image is three feet tall from the base, but four feet including her crown. She is dressed in silver overlay, and her crown and cape decorated with jewels. Aside from this, there are other jewelled capes used in different occasions. Her character as an “*Ina*” or mother is depicted with the Holy Child she is carrying. However, the adornments of her body only reveal both her head and the Holy Child's. A ceremony called the *traslacion* – where the image is transferred from the *Basilica Minor to Peñafrancia Shrine to Naga Metropolitan Cathedral* where she will stay for her 9-day novena. However, unlike the original practice, only the replica of the image is carried in the *traslacion* and fluvial procession. The fluvial procession is where the image is boarded on an *andas* or *pagoda* carried by the *voyadores* or the men, followed by the Catholic clergies and devotees. Cries of “*¡Viva la Virgen!*” meaning “Long Live the Virgin” can be heard. Through the years, there arise other civic activities observed such as pageants, fairs, parades, band and concert contests and others (Weekend, 1986; Mr. & Ms., 1987; The Philippines Journal, 1989 as cited by Gorospe, 1994).

This study is focused on the heritage significance and development of the *Peñafrancia Festival* in Naga City as basis for conceptualizing a safeguarding plan. There are four objectives for this study. First, is to learn the heritage significance of *Peñafrancia Festival* historically, aesthetically, socially, symbolically and economically. Second is to identify the developments in the implementation of *Peñafrancia Festival* as a religious and communal activity. Third, is to understand the perspectives of the Local Government Unit, Church, Historians, Academe and the Private Sector on the heritage significance and development of the festival and lastly, to know how the heritage significance and development of *Peñafrancia Festival* can be a basis for conceptualizing its safeguarding plan. The limitations in implementing the study are the *Peñafrancia Festival's* significance, activities and development. This is different from other studies because it is not just intended to educate the people, but also as a basis for a safeguarding plan for the *Peñafrancia Festival*.

Through this study, the *Peñafrancia Festival* is viewed as more than a religious festival once its historical, aesthetic, social, symbolical and economic aspects and significance are highlighted. The church will be able to emphasize, not only to the locals but also to the tourists, the origin and traditional practices of the festival by tracing the different religious and communal developments that occurred in the celebration of the festival. The provincial and the local government will then be guided in producing activities which will be included to the actual celebration of the festival, which if done successfully, the tourism sector of the local government will be promoted not only in the national setting but also internationally. Apart from these, the significance of this study that is highly regarded by the researchers is the possibility of it to become a basis for a safeguarding plan. According to "UNESCO - Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage" (2003), “safeguarding means that measures are aimed at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage including the identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage”. This explains that safeguarding will help in preserving the identity and existence of various heritages. This study can serve as a basis of the stakeholders for the festival's safeguarding plan concerning its preservation. It contains several pieces of information about the history, traditions, practices, and the point of view of the different stakeholders regarding the significance and development of the festivals, it will be the good start for the community of *Naga* to use this study as their basis while still being able to adapt to the emerging developments in the tourism industry. Assistance is given to the community in innovating future plans with sustainability in consideration.

## 2. Design

The study undertaken employed the qualitative approach because it is the most appropriate method for the research. The instruments used for this approach allowed the proponents to gather data that were necessary and gave an in-depth understanding of these related to the topic (Daniel, 2016). The data gathered in forms of words, documents and pictures, allowed the proponents to provide more factual information as explained by Johnson and Christensen's 2012 work as cited by Daniel (2016). Out of all the methods for the

qualitative approach, case studies provided a more detailed description and the analysis. A case study explored the complexity of a study, which results to a more elaborate and refined data (Yin, 2014). This approach helped understand and explore the issues of the topic as it enabled the researchers to gather in-depth data by using multiple resources of information (Creswell, 2013 as cited by Gutafsson, 2017). The past studies relating to the topic was explored and understood to further analyze the present issues about the topic of research (Gutafsson, 2017). Several tools in interpreting the data to achieve comprehensive results were utilized. The proponents gathered the responses of multiple individuals who came from different sectors of the community relevant to the study. Hence, both the subjective and objective data were combined in describing the phenomenon in greater detail.

The subject of this research was the *Peñafrancia* Festival, a celebration honoring *Nuestra Señora de Peñafrancia* who is regarded as the Queen and Patroness of *Bicolandia* (Gorospe, 1994). This festival is held to show gratitude to the virgin for its miraculous acts. The *Peñafrancia Festival* is held in *Naga City* annually. *Naga City* is a second-class city, dubbed as the “Pilgrimage City” as it is the center of the biggest Marian devotion in the country. As it is located in the central part of the *Bicol* Peninsula, it is known as the “Heart of *Bicol*”. *Naga*, which earned its status as the third Spanish Royal City in the Philippines, was established in 1575 under the order of Spanish Governor-General Francisco de Sande. Many of the population of the city, which is approximately at 200,000 are devotees of the Our Lady of *Peñafrancia*. The city’s *Peñafrancia* Minor Basilica serves as the home of the *Ina*. This study highlighted the development of the novena masses, *traslacion*, prayers, songs, and the fluvial procession through the years as well as the civic activities that emerged such as the searches for Miss *Naga* and *Bicolandia*, agro-industrial fair, civic parades, band and concert contests and others (Weekend, 1986; Mr. & Ms., 1987; The Philippines Journal, 1989 as cited by Gorospe, 1994).

The case study is based on the facts that were available and gathered from individuals who were interested with the subject and scope of the study. The researchers gathered physical, oral information and documents as evidences for the study. The physical evidences were collected through the observation of the researchers in the locale. These were evidences that the group witnessed in the course of the fieldwork. In addition, a cultural mapping of the intangible heritage of the festival was made. The historical, spiritual, social, aesthetic, symbolical, and economic significance of the festival was indicated in the mapping. The oral evidences were those which came

from the statements of the people involved were gathered through in-depth interviews. These methods included the participation of the head of city events, and tourism officer of *Naga City*, a priest from the *Basilica*, a historian priest, an academe representative from *Ateneo de Naga*, and a private sector representative from the Metro *Naga* Chamber of Commerce and Industry. These participants were chosen because of their authority and knowledge of the research subject. All the statements gathered were analyzed and synthesized. Lastly, archival documentation and analysis was also used for the documentary evidences. These were currently available in the Internet or in the possession of the stakeholders such as photographs, timelines, and journals. The researchers sought archival documents as well and gathered other related documents, which traced the origin and evolution of the *Peñafrancia* Festival.

Ethical consideration is important in a research because different stakeholders are involved and are part of the study. They all give information that may include several details about someone or something that is confidential. It was needed in this study because this served as a basis for future plans and studies. All of the information gathered was purely for academic purposes only. The researchers made sure that everything would undergo proper process before the actual interview and fieldwork as a sign of respect to the stakeholders and locality. To give ample time for the stakeholders to prepare for the interview, the researchers send a copy of the questionnaires attached in the communication letter. If for some personal reasons, some of the participants did not agree to answer some of the questions provided; hence, the researchers sought to get the side of the participants. All the participants must sign a consent form before the researchers conducted the in-depth interview.

The statements gathered during the in-depth interview with the participants were analyzed by the researchers to filter the important details. The interview was recorded and transcribed to accurately gather the information from the sources. Thematic analysis was used to group the participants’ similar statements during the interview, which emphasized and connected related ideas of the participants. The stakeholders that gave information for each objective of the study were identified. Their statements were classified into major themes, and similar or agreeing statements were revealed as well. From the major themes of each objective, the proponents drew sub-themes to specify, simplify, and extract the more important details. An assessment and evaluation based on the Australia International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) Burra Charter which is closely

linked to UNESCO was also done to emphasize the significances of the festival.

### 3. Findings

#### 3.1 *El corazón recuerda* (The Heart Remembers): The Heritage Significance of the Festival

Before the arrival of Christianity to the province, the highest position held in the society was by a female priestess called the *babaylan*. The *Bicolanos* were keen to devotion to female deities or goddesses; thus, the arrival of the image of *Ina* and its devotion was easily accepted as *Ina* as the mother of God and in essence, a Goddess. *Peñafrancia* Festival is a long Marian devotion that has been celebrated for more than three centuries. The devotion of this festival started in the mountain, *Peña de Francia* in *Salamanca*, Spain led by a French devout, Simon Vela. The devotion had reached beyond the western world and arrived in the Philippines in 1710. This devotion was brought by the missionaries from Spain, and through their student Miguel Robles de Covarrubias, propagated it in *Bicol*, particularly in *Nueva Caceres*, now known as, *Naga*. Long time ago, the rich, the Spaniards, the friars, the *peninsulares*, the *mestizos* were in front, while the commoners stayed at the back of the procession. The *Indios*, who were living on the other side of *Naga*, demanded to see the image, which started the fluvial procession. *Naga* was spared from the cholera outbreak in 1882 and associated this miracle to *El Divino Rostro*, thus, they decided to include it in the *Peñafrancia* Festival, during the same year. On the eve of the *Peñafrancia* Festival during the Spanish revolt, the Spanish soldiers were given the ultimatum to surrender rather than be executed, during the attack at the San Francisco Church. The first *pagoda* used was a simple and unsinkable barge that would accommodate the image of *Divino Rostro* and *Ina*, as well as, in the fluvial procession and was built in the 1980's. The first book about the history of the *Peñafrancia* Festival was published by Bishop Francisco Gainza, OP titled "*An Kasaysayan kan Simbahan kan Peñafrancia*". Pope Leon XII announced Our Lady of *Peñafrancia* as the Patroness of the City of *Nueva Caceres* in 1895. During World War II, the devotees would take the image from the shrine and hide it from one house to another to spare it from the bombing and being stolen. On September 1920, Pope Benedict XV gave the Vatican Canonical Approval for the proclamation of Our Lady of *Peñafrancia* as the Queen of *Bicolandia*. The official proclamation happened on September 1924 and the crowning was led by Monsignor Guglielmo Piani. During the *traslacion* procession in 1972, the Colgante Bridge was broken which caused the death of a number of devotees. 2 years later, the

Golden Jubilee of the coronation was celebrated. A reenactment of the coronation 50 years ago was done in the celebration. On August 1981, the image of Our Lady of *Peñafrancia* was stolen from the shrine. A year later, the image was found destroyed and pieced in six parts. It was then surrendered to *Intramuros*, Manila by the person who found it. Proclamation Decree no. 33 series of 2010 declared the City of *Naga* and the provinces of *Camarines Sur* as Pilgrimage Capitals of the *Bicol* Region and recognized as Top Tourist Destinations of the Philippines. The devotion to the *Ina* grew from a community of *Cimarrones*, a national celebration to a global fest. The celebration of the festival starts with the *traslacion* to the Shrine of Our Lady of *Peñafrancia*, followed by a procession to the Cathedral and then, going to *danlungan* for the fluvial procession. The fluvial procession would end at the port and to be followed by a last procession to the *Basilica*.

The themes used for every festival are from the Vatican. The whole festival serves as a way for the relationship with God and *Ina* to deepen and was supposed to uplift your spirituality and your senses towards the divine, as said by Fr. Francis Tordilla. The faith in the Church and the devotion to Our Lady of *Peñafrancia* leads the people to eternal life with God in the kingdom of heaven (J. P. Carpio, personal communication, March 24, 2019). *Bicolanos* are God-fearing people and they value their devotion to *Ina*. The celebration of the festival is a thanksgiving for all the answered prayers and the different miraculous healings of sickness and death that has occurred because of their devotion to *Ina*. Just like what Mary had said in her *Magnificat* "and the lowly shall rise and they will be driven away, from there drowns those powerful". According to Fr. Francis Tordilla, the songs and prayers used in the festival were: The Prayer to Our Lady of *Peñafrancia*, Prayer to *El Divino Rostro*, *Salve Regina*, Hail Holy Queen and the highlighted song being used is the Hymn to Our Lady of *Peñafrancia* called *Resuene Vibrante* which depicts the experiences of the devotees to *Ina*. Mary, as described by Mr. Kristian Cordero, is a radical figure known for her beauty, as it was quoted from The Catena Legions, "who is she that comes forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in a battle array" discusses its other aspects as no one can talk about beauty without tackling its terrifying aspect. As said by Fr. Tordilla and Fr. Carpio, the decorations used in the celebration gives a festive atmosphere making the devotees feel the joy in praise, honor and thanksgiving to God and Mother Mary for her patronage. The Queen of *Bicol* is adorned with clothing and accessories; the crown of *Ina* was embellished with 12 diamonds associated with the crown with 12 stars given to the Virgin Mary when

she ascended into heaven. Her clothing has the royalty look wearing manto that has gems, stones and a breastplate placed to preserve the wood which is *santol*. The one in-charge for the design of the *andas* is the Church. It has a utilitarian design made of shining metal to prevent the devotees from climbing up the image. It also has a ship's bow-like feature in front placed to pave the way. The evolution of the *andas* represented the evolution of the society. Like the *andas*, the *Basilica* has a dome that housed the image of *Ina* when she arrived from the fluvial procession. The *pagoda* houses the image in the fluvial procession. It must be sturdy enough to support the people, light enough to be pulled by the color-coded boats. Aside from the *voyadores*, only those wearing the prescribed shirt, the Catholic clergies and dignitaries are allowed to be on board.

According to the interview with Fr. Carpio, the answered prayers of the devotees proved that her intercessory powers are real. As stated by Mr. Alec Santos, "if faith can move mountains, it can move people to do the right thing and set aside their differences for *Ina*. It showed the oneness of the devotees from all strata of life, brought together by *Ina* and prayer. It is a way for the society to come together to cooperate with each other to make the celebration successful. The *Peñafrancia* Festival, according to Fr. Francis Tordilla, perpetuated a collective memory of the community that included the intimate and heritage stories that reached the level of the heart that remembers. The devotees have a personal connection to the image of the Blessed Virgin Mary and feel a great sense of relief whenever she reaches the *Basilica* safely. It is a time capsule of some sort as it was a tradition, faith and belief, which transcended generations (A. F. Santos, personal communication, March 13, 2019) The celebration is composed of the *traslacion*, the nine days novena and masses, the fluvial procession and the fiesta. For those who are not able to attend the celebration during September, they have the *Peñafrancia de Mayo* which is the *Peñafrancia* Summer Festival. They also have the Saturday novena to *Ina* and the Church is open all year round (F. Tordilla, personal communication, March 12, 2019). People cannot think of *Naga* without associating the *Peñafrancia* Festival. It defines who they are as a city and as a destination. It is the region's religious index and is the only regional fiesta in the country. It shows the identity of *Bicolanos* as God-fearing and religious people who value their devotion to *Ina*. It cements their identity as "*Ina* is *Bicol*" and "*Bicol* is *Ina*" (F. Tordilla, personal communication, March 12, 2019; A. F. Santos, personal communication, March 13, 2019). *Bicol* is called "*Pueblo Amante de Maria*" and *Naga* was declared as "the Pilgrim City". When *Resuene Vibrante* is played,

it signals them that it is September and the *Peñafrancia* Festival is approaching. They say that one will feel more *Bicolano* when you sing the hymn, be able to touch the image and to have a replica of the image in their house (F. Tordilla, personal communication, March 12, 2019). Our Lady of *Peñafrancia* is a figure of resistance, change and something larger than a divine intercessor. However, she then started to look like an object that would symbolize power, richness material and prosperity. The *Peñafrancia* Festival is more than the grand narratives but more on the personal and intimate moments by which the *Bicolanos* would relate to the Virgin. The festival has always been a reason for women empowerment as the Holy Face is being held by a woman, the child Jesus is being held by a mother, and *Ina* being held by all men (K. Cordero, personal communication, March 13, 2019). The festival symbolizes unity, it also represented the *Bicolano*'s special, and particular love to the Blessed Mother and to God, as the cradle of this devotion and their special patronage to the people (A. F. Santos, personal communication, March 13, 2019; F. Tordilla, personal communication, March 12, 2019). The water of the river was symbolic as the image of the Virgin passed through it during the fluvial procession, which makes it sacred (A. F. Santos, personal communication, March 13, 2019). The festival allowed local businesses to sell the products and services that they offer and earn.

### **3.2 El cambio es inevitable (Change is Inevitable):**

#### **Development of the Festival**

The *Peñafrancia Festival* is a religious festival, which exists to remind the people that the part and partial of the festival such as the masses, is supposed to bring us closer to God. These things led us towards worshipping God, giving homage to Mary, similar to the devotion of the people to *Ina*. Their devotion to *Ina* was a way to strengthen their faith in God where rituals perpetuate a memory of their identity and their love to Mary (J. P. Carpio, personal communication, March 24, 2019). Due to the granted prayers and request of the devotees, people began donating to make the *manto* of *Ina* (F. Tordilla, personal communication, March 12, 2019). Even though there were developments, changes, and innovations happening, they served as basis on promoting and propagating the devotion to *Ina*. Through the promotions and the strong devotion of people, many became devotees and even non-*Bicolanos* were already participating in the festival (J. P. Carpio, personal communication, March 24, 2019).

The planning for the festival is a year-round preparation and it immediately happens after the concluded celebration (A. Reondanga, personal communication, March 12, 2019). In June, they start taking actions then after summer, those involved

government agencies, religious organizations and institutions meet to decide on the logo, program and schedule of activities, decorations and logistics of the festival (J. P. Carpio, personal communication, March 24, 2019). By August, the posters and themes are already prepared, even the letter of the Archbishop to the *Peñafrancia* associations abroad (A. F. Santos, personal communication, March 13, 2019). Based on observations of the previous festival, new activities were proposed and assessed while others were improved (J. P. Carpio, personal communication, March 24, 2019; A. Reondanga, personal communication, March 12, 2019). There was cooperation between the Church and the government, and an agreement was made that no secular activities should be held within the Church properties. If the Church opposes on the activities proposed, the government would not issue a permit (A. Reondanga, personal communication, March 12, 2019; A. F. Santos, personal communication, March 13, 2019). They removed the pageants that were included before the 10-day devotion to *Ina*. The Union of *Bicol* Clergy gathered to share their ideas for the various activities they would be offering. The religious activities in the festival included the usual novena, the feast day masses that were officiated by bishops from the different dioceses in the *Bicol* Region, *traslacion* and fluvial processions (J. P. Carpio, personal communication, March 24, 2019). Some secular activities like the military parade, *Voyadores* Festival, Miss *Bicolandia* which was previously called Miss *Peñafrancia*, became part of the celebration since the 1940s, 1900s, and 1970s respectively. The 10-day festivities turned into a month-long celebration (J. P. Carpio, personal communication, March 24, 2019; A. Reondanga, personal communication, March 12, 2019). The festival starts at the last week of August and covers the whole month of September. The Church included dawn processions, recollections, series of talks, short films about the *Ina*, the Bishop Gainza trade fair that showcased the *Bicolano* culture and arts through food and handicrafts and the octave celebrations which was included last 2018, after the Nativity of Mary (F. Tordilla, personal communication, March 12, 2019; K. Cordero, personal communication, March 13, 2019). The Church also decided to have the *Peñafrancia* Summer Festival in May for the devotees who were not able to participate in the September celebration (A. Reondanga, personal communication, March 12, 2019; A. F. Santos, personal communication, March 13, 2019; A. F. Santos, personal communication, March 13, 2019; F. Tordilla, personal communication, March 12, 2019). Aside from the activities of the Church, the local government also made some developments in the festival –from sports fests to an additional course

about the *Peñafrancia* included in the *Ateneo de Naga curriculum* (A. Reondanga, personal communication, March 12, 2019; F. Tordilla, personal communication, March 12, 2019; K. Cordero, personal communication, March 13, 2019). Security was heightened; military personnel would guard the *Ina* unlike before. These people wore military shoes and the *voyadores* who were barefooted before, started wearing footwear for protection (A. F. Santos, personal communication, March 13, 2019). Somehow, the activities in the festival symbolized the evolution of the society's discipline. Before, the people did not bother to get close with the image as violently or as forceful as they could. Now that the *traslacion* became too chaotic for women to participate in, the dawn procession gave them the chance to be part of a procession for *Ina* (F. Tordilla, personal communication, March 12, 2019; K. Cordero, personal communication, March 13, 2019; A. F. Santos, personal communication, March 13, 2019). Apart from the activities, a development in the aesthetics of the festival was also evident. The design of the *andas* evolved through the years. Before, the image was carried by the *voyadores*, but now, the current design of the *andas* was like a dome, supported by three airplane wheels (F. Tordilla, personal communication, March 12, 2019; A. F. Santos, personal communication, March 13, 2019).

The festival started to be showcased in the year 2012 through short films like "*Ikaw ang Pag-ibig*", and others showing and connecting the devotion to Our Lady of *Peñafrancia* to *Oryol*, a serpent woman in the *Ibalong* epic (K. Cordero, personal communication, March 13, 2019). The tourists became educated by seeing dioramas and museums like the one that the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA) is currently constructing inside the *Basilica Minore* Grounds. This would ensure the perpetuity of the records about the fiesta and help the future generations to have a deeper understanding about the tradition of the festival (A. Reondanga, personal communication, March 12, 2019). If oral stories and video presentations were provided, as well as other mediums where people would be sharing their experience, then the locals and tourists would become more educated about the biggest Marian Celebration in the country. The festival already reached the international context as *Bicolanos* abroad perform the fluvial procession (K. Cordero, personal communication, March 13, 2019). However, new generations saw the festival as a mere tourism activity because of the imbalance in education and promotion. The festival should be promoted in both its civil and religious aspects, making the people recognize and see the beauty of the festival and its good image that it shares with the City of *Naga*. This made it easier for the government to promote the city not only to the

investors but also to the people outside *Naga* (A. Reondanga, personal communication, March 12, 2019).

Considering the growing number of attendees in the festival, the local government's main objective was to free the festival from any major incidents (A. F. Santos, personal communication, March 13, 2019; A. Reondanga, personal communication, March 12, 2019). Therefore, policies like the gun and liquor bans were to be implemented a day before the *traslacion* to avoid any form of violence (A. F. Santos, personal communication, March 13, 2019; A. Reondanga, personal communication, March 12, 2019; F. Tordilla, personal communication, March 12, 2019). The route of the procession must also be cleared to avoid any obstructions. During the *traslacion*, devotees were not allowed to carry backpacks for security (A. Reondanga, personal communication, March 12, 2019). In the recent years, stricter rules and regulations are implemented during the fluvial procession. The Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) reduced the number of devotees who were allowed to board the *pagoda* from 400 to 200. A designated t-shirt was given to these devotees to identify them, and they were also required to wear a life vest while on board (F. Tordilla, personal communication, March 12, 2019). Through these, the government saw itself playing a supporting role to respond to the needs of the devotees. It had made its resources utilized for the planning, coordination and implementation of the activities. This was manifested through the Tourist Information Center which caters to tourists who were not able to book their rooms because of the volume of the devotees. The center was fully manned by the Philippine National Police (PNP) and The Red Cross was equipped with materials, and brochures of different accommodations, and food establishments. Random and unannounced inspections of the tourism establishments were conducted several weeks before the festival (A. F. Santos, personal communication, March 13, 2019). Invitations were also sent to sponsors, benefactors, mass sponsors, investors, and guest bishops (F. Tordilla, personal communication, March 12, 2019). Since the time of the Spaniards, the Church and the local government had been cooperating in organizing the festival for the use of public spaces and hanging of posters and in 2010 the Joint Operations Center (JOC) was formed (A. F. Santos, personal communication, March 13, 2019; A. Reondanga, personal communication, March 12, 2019; J. P. Carpio, personal communication, March 24, 2019). Representatives from both the Church and the LGU meet annually for the deliberation of the nature of the program and activities, whether they are in contrast to the values and essence of the festival (F. Tordilla, personal communication, March 12, 2019; A.

Reondanga, personal communication, March 12, 2019; J. P. Carpio, personal communication, March 24, 2019).

### **3.3 Punto de Vista (Point of View): The Perspectives of the Stakeholders**

One of the priests, Fr. Tordilla clearly stated that the glory of God was to see man fully alive so being religious should be an ally to the happiness that the people have in the secular manner. According to Fr. Carpio of the *Basilica*, the participants do not only receive joy and fun in celebrating the festival but also means in fulfilling their needs. It strengthened their faith in God and the Church. The pledge of the devotees who come and celebrate the festival was to repent on their sins and ask for reformation of life. All of the stakeholders agreed that this devotion to *Ina* was not only limited to *Naga* and *Bicol* only but had spread across the world. This was a manifestation that the devotion to *Ina* is growing stronger.

Both representatives from the Local Government of *Naga*, the tourism officer and the City Events Head, emphasized that the different civic activities had been introduced as part of the festival to complement the church activities. Some of the activities that all of the stakeholders have cited are the beauty pageants, Bishop Gainza trade fair, video and short film presentations, parades, talent competitions and sports competitions. Mr. Kordero from the academe said that these effects in the festival were a sign of maturity and an improvement to the devotion of the people. It translated to the growth of tourism and business. However according to Fr. Tordilla, a historian, these activities sometimes lessen the participation of the people to the religious events and were not in connection to the original spirit of the festival. According to him, the vision for the upcoming activities was that it should always be in line with the essence of the celebration. The stakeholders involved in organizing the festival had different roles to ensure its success. According to the church they prioritized organizing events that were relevant to the purpose of the festival such as the *Ina*, Marian Congress, Marian Vigil and other religious activities. The local government stated that they are more focused on ensuring the safety and security of the devotees and the development of the economy. The Church, the academe and the local government had made efforts in making publications, coffee table books, magazines and storing important documents regarding the festival.

Mr. Santos said that the declaration of *Naga* as a Pilgrim City was the reason why the festival was made known globally. He added that the devotion was an added reason why people come to *Naga* to see *Ina* and return to the traditional way. Fr. Tordilla mentioned that these encouraged the Church to vanguard the

devotion and ensure that the faith was according to the religious intention. Despite having this intention, issues on the festival developments still arose and the stakeholders had different perspectives about it. Fr. Tordilla stated that the evolution of the *andas* reflect how the participants respond to the need of the people in a particular time. Mr. Kordero, was the one who mostly raised the issues, such as the society was still hierarchical despite that Mary is a symbol of anti-hierarchy. Some schools were requiring students to dance in the *Voyadores* Festival as part of their curriculum. Fr. Tordilla emphasized that everyone participating in the development should be equal and should promote the development of human culture by using just means. For the festival to be successful the church, the local government and other sectors of the community were coordinating with each other and regulating the activities included in the festival. JOC was established to identify the different roles of the sectors in the celebration and hear the opinions of each about the activities. Most of the stakeholders did not completely identify that there was an importance when it came to the perspectives, but participation was important for the success of the festival implementation and its developments.

#### 4. Discussion

Hermann (2015) defined intangible heritage as an approach to cultural heritage that was focused on cultural processes which were on the skills, traditions, rituals, historical knowledge and spiritual content on cultural association. Festivals were intangible heritage that communities have built, that allowed the visitors to experience the history and values of the place (Özürk and Yazıcıoğlu, 2002 as cited by Yenipinar, 2016). This was an extensive concept that reflected the perceptions of a community of its activities and rituals shaped by its culture (Yenipinar, 2016). Their culture of devotion resulted to religious celebrations, like the *Peñafrancia* Festival. Miguel de Cobarrubias brought the devotion to *Naga* in 1710 (Gorospe & Javellana, 1995; Gerona, 2010), passed from generation to generation and continues to grow (Gorospe, 1994). The *Peñafrancia* Festival penetrated the culture and identity of *Bicolanos* wherein they felt their sense of belongingness (Cannizaro, Corinto & Nicosia, 2017), thus, it was important to continue the celebration of this festival as to prevent it from losing its meaning and ceasing to exist (Imirgi, 2005 as cited by Yenipinar, 2016). There was no proof that supported the claim that it was the only regional festival in the Philippines, but the main participants of this festival were not limited to the people living in *Naga*, but also extended to the whole *Bicol* region (Gerona, 2010). The celebration of this festival served as an avenue for

the people to come together and to be at the center of their culture (Fahm, 2015). Since time immemorial, there has been an involvement of the local government in the festival and the inclusion of secular activities. However, during the 1900's there has been a change in the focus of the festival. From purely spiritual, it had been an avenue to display talent, wealth and prestige, which was apparent in the band competition (Gerona, 2010). It was important that the different roles of the stakeholders be identified properly (Freeman, 1984; Karlson, 2007 as cited by Niekerk & Getz, 2016) to ensure that the goals of the festival were effectively achieved (Sharples et al., 2014 as cited by Niekerk & Getz, 2016) thus, the creation of JOC. It was consistently stated on the interviews that the festival is to be celebrated every September since the start of the devotion. However, according to Gerona (2010), the festival was still not recognized by the Vatican until a decree was issued in 1895 by Pope Leo XIII where it was also assigned to celebrate it on the first Sunday of July but was never implemented. The novena period used to start from Saturday to Sunday which included spending the first six days in the cathedral and the last three days at the shrine. At present, it starts from Friday to Saturday and takes place in the cathedral only. Processions had been part of the festival due to the expansion of the streets and the extension of the road (Gerona, 2010). The image used to be mounted on a hemisphere-shaped *andas* decorated with clouds (Gorospe & Javellana, 1995) but was later changed into a dome-shaped *andas* to protect the image from the chaotic situation. The fluvial procession had three types of vessels: the small boats used by the *voyadores*, a *pagoda* for the Chinese devotees, and the main pagoda for the image. Ultimately, the pagoda for the Chinese devotees was removed (Gerona, 2010). Religious festivals exist because of their devotion. It had a great impact on the society, and its old tradition had been associated to the culture of the whole population and became its mark (Cannizaro & Carinto, 2017). It was important to get the perspective of the stakeholders for the local activities and the development (Şengul & Genc, 2016 as cited by Yenipinar, 2016). The government works hand-in-hand with the other sectors to provide what was necessary for the participants (Cannizaro & Carinto, 2017), as well as, achieve the goal (Sharples, Crowther, May & Orefice, 2014 as cited by Niekerk & Getz, 2016). They should create and manage programs that would provide the needs of devotees and tourists that would contribute to their overall experience in the festival (Yenipinar, 2016). The developments caused by the stakeholders on these religious festivals must be done with caution (Cannizaro & Carinto, 2017) as to prevent it from losing its essence and the culture of *Bicolanos*.



## 5. Conclusion and Recommendation

This study proved that the *Peñafrancia Festival* is rich in heritage significance including the historical, spiritual, aesthetic, social, symbolical and economic. It transcended time and events, surviving for more than 300 years. Because of the growing faith and devotion of the people, it is still celebrated up until today. The festival is always grand and vibrant as it is flocked by devotees of different origins. It has become known to these people that this festival associated to the region, has become the identity of *Bicol*. It is a way for the different communities to come together and celebrate, sharing the same devotion to *Ina*. From the traditional celebration of the people, the festival underwent developments in its festivities from purely religious to a mixture of non-secular and secular practices. These secular practices are the pageants, civic parades, and trade fairs. These civic activities, according to the stakeholders, complements the religious ones, that is why developments are not regarded as damaging to the essence of the festival. The stakeholders cooperate with each other through delegation of roles to make sure that the objectives of the festival are still met.

The safeguarding plan in this study, in accordance with UNESCO, is aimed to provide measures to ensure the preservation of the intangible cultural heritage. This study ascertained that this festival needs such measures since its heritage significance has been proven. There are 9 dimensions that are involved in this – *Management, Legislation, Viability, Preservation and Protection, Promotions, Enhancement, Stakeholders Participation, Visibility and Research*. The proponents learned a few negative aspects in the festival. The management can still improve the operations of the Joint Information Center (JIC) and JOC, they lack documentations on the festival, and there is no organization whose role is to focus on the festival. There are only few exhibits about *Ina* and the festival, and no compendium of the information about the festival. Lack of promotional videos and advertisement on the festival is also evident. There is little involvement from the non-government organizations and the private sectors as well. From these issues, the proponents came up with a safeguarding plan that can aid the stakeholders in preserving the festival.

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