

Tumba Festival: A Cultural Platform in Understanding the Intersections Between Heritage, Identity, and Tourism, Among the Ilocanos

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the intersections between heritage, identity, and tourism, among the Ilocanos as manifested in the performative culture of the Tumba Festival in Paoay, Ilocos Norte. Tumba is the direct appropriation of the Spanish word for “tomb” and is similar to the *Dio de Los Muertos* by the Mexican-American celebrated every 1st day of November. In recent years, as cultural tourism has flourished, the Tumba from a purely household and community ritual for remembering and honoring the dead, was staged in the town’s plaza, became a competition and a popular cultural tourist attraction. Guided by the constructivist paradigm, the researcher employed Ethnographic methodologies such as ethnographic interviewing and social epistemological theory to explore this unique heritage and cultural identity as greatly expressed through tourism. The findings revealed that tumba is a *tawid* (heritage) and the cultural practices manifested in the performance of Tumba reflect the *saripatpat-lubong* (worldview) of the Ilocanos particularly the interconnections and relationships of the *sibibiag* (living) and *di-katataoan* (dead/spirits). It is noteworthy that the processes of globalization, such as tourism and migration altered and reconstructed the process and performance of Ilocano practices. However, the motivation for continuing the heritage is the sense of individual and collective pride in identity and translocalities. Despite the social, cultural, and economic benefits that it provides, the added “attractions” to the festival are also creating a gap between the old and the young, between the profane and the sacred. Thus, it has become an arena of contestations and negotiations among the social actors regarding culture and tradition particularly preservation over aesthetics and cosmopolitanism. This study adds a positive contribution to make local cultural heritage tourism such as Tumba, becomes more visible in the local and global academic discourse and literature.

Keywords: *Tumba Festival, Ritual, Translocalities, Globalization, Attractions*

Introduction

Phelan stated that before the conquest of the Philippines by the Spaniards, the sacred and profane were often indistinguishable among the early Filipinos as the pagan religion permeated all phases of their life.¹ As Catholicism continued to grip in their consciousness, this distinction became more apparent and needed more radical means for it to be eradicated. In aid of eradicating such practices, the *reduccion* system was utilized. Mojares laments that the *reduccion* system of the Spaniards did not only reduce the Islands and villages but bodies and souls of the natives too.² However, pagan rituals were not completely eradicated as early Filipinos remarkably retained their animistic religion, adapted, and assimilated doctrines from the new faith. Like other ethnolinguistic groups in the Island, Ilocanos retained, assimilated, and adapted the doctrine of Catholicism.

Isabelo De los Reyes discussed in the first volume of his book *El Folklore Filipino* the beliefs of karma, kararua, katataoan or sangkabagi, mangmangkik, and others that were widespread even before the Spanish conquest.³ Ceremonial death and burial practices are particularly important to the Ilocanos, even the efficient and precise performance of various burial. Additionally, Woods in exploring the early American missionaries in the Ilocos mentioned that, when they first arrived in the region in 1818, they wanted to change not only the “natural indolence” of the Ilocano people but also most of their tradition of performing animistic rituals.⁴ The Ilocanos, like other people in the Philippines, were not submissive to the doctrines of the new faith.

One of the most significant tools of the colonizers in indoctrinating the Catholic faith and eradicating pagan religion was luring the natives to the cabecera through colorful pageantries and religious fiestas. Not only did fiestas provide a splendid opportunity to indoctrinate the Filipinos by the performance of religious rituals, but they also afforded the participants a welcome holiday from the drudgery of toil. The religious processions, dances, music, and theatrical presentations of the fiesta also gave the Filipinos their

¹ John Ledy Phelan, *Catholicism in Folk Trappings* (Manila, Philippines: Lahing Pilipino Publishing Inc., 1987), 1252.

² Resil Mojares, *Isabelo's Archives* (Mandaluyong, Philippines: Anvil Publishing, Inc., 2013), 50.

³ Isabelo Delos Reyes, *El Folklore Filipino* (Diliman, Quezon City: University of the Philippine Press, 1995), 33.

⁴ Woods, L. Shelton, “Early American Missionaries in Ilocos.” *Philippine Studies* 45, no. 3 (1997): 310. Accessed September 4, 2022. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42635049>.

needed outlet for their natural gregariousness, where the sacred and the profane blended together.⁵

Giorgi & Sassatelli explained that in the early days of sociological inquiry, Durkheim recognized festivals as instances of collective effervescence and therefore as channels for expressing and consolidating a sense of community.⁶ Tumba festival belongs to this category as this is practiced and performed by all actors in the community. Additionally, Regev, drawing from Falassi defined festival as a “periodically recurrent, social occasion in which, through a multiplicity of forms and a series of coordinated events, participate directly or indirectly and to various degrees, all members of a whole community, united by ethnic, linguistic, religious, historical bonds, and sharing of worldview. Both the social function and the symbolic meaning of the festival are closely related to a series of overt values that the community recognizes as essential to its ideology and worldview, to its social identity, its historical continuity, and to its physical survival, which is ultimately what festival celebrates”.⁷

Tindall, as cited by Gibson et al., argues that cultural festivals are lively centers of activity, particularly so in small local economies, where their relative monetary impact is greater than in urban areas.⁸ During the past few decade there has been an explosion of festivals throughout the country, due to tourism and the intensification of cultural industry. In the rural communities, benefits are felt most by small businesses such as restaurants, cafes, and stores. This is also an opportunity for local products to be showcased and sold to tourists. Another aspect of globalization that is affecting the process and performance of rituals and festivals is internal and external migration. People ending up in a new country bringing their tangible and intangible cultures with them also undergo changes and assimilation. Migrant families and groups have various ways of living their culture and cultural connectedness in their new homes. This includes cultural involvement in their community as well as online forums and websites. Migrants returning home also bring with them new ways of performing rituals affected by their long stay abroad.

⁵ Phelan, *Catholicism in Folk Trappings*, 1253.

⁶ Liana Giorgi and Monica Sassatelli, introduction to *Festivals and the Cultural Public Sphere* Routledge, ed. Giorgi, Sassatelli and Gerard Delanty (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), xxv.

⁷ Motti Regev, “International Festivals in a small country: Rites of recognition and cosmopolitanism” in *Festivals and the Cultural Public Sphere*, ed. Giorgi, Sassatelli and Gerard Delanty (New York and London: Routledge, 2011), 109

⁸ Chris Gibson et al., “Cultural Festivals and Economic Development in Nonmetropolitan Australia,” *Journal of Planning and Research* 29, no.3 (March 2009): 288, DOI: 10.1177/0739456X09354382

In Paoay, Ilocos Norte, there is a distinct ritual for remembering the dead called Tumba. Tumba is the direct appropriation of the tumba or tomb in Spanish. The death rituals, such as usual visit to cemeteries, *pinagatang* (food offering), *pinagilualo* (novena/prayer) practice during the tumba as a form of *pinanglagip* (remembering) for the departed love ones have been practice pre-colonial times. It is a tradition in every grieving household, but is embraced by the entire community. The tradition is now staged, performed, and displayed outside the home, celebrated on first day of November, during *Fiesta dagiti Natay* (All Saints' Day).

The focus of this study is the town Paoay in Ilocos Norte. It consists of 31 barangays with a size of 76.24 square meters and an estimated population of 25,001 according to the 2020 census. The town was established in 1701 by Royal Decree, Don Martin Guiang as Captain of the Barangay. According to Tejano, the word paway means freedom, the ability to stand alone, and strike which proved to be anchored in the role played by the people during the rebellion that pushed the separation of north and south.⁹ The main occupations of the Paoayenos are fishing, salt production, farming, inland fishing, and weaving. Paoay has maintained its influence in the textile industry that dates to the Spanish Period. The ancient woven sailoco loom is still used in Paoay.

The town is also rich in cultural and historical landmarks. The Malacañang of the North, a two-story brick house, has been converted into a government museum located on a hilltop overlooking the legendary lake of Barangay Suba. The Paoay Church, one of the most beautiful structures left by the Spaniards and built and completed in 1699 to 1707 under forced labor, is a symbol of the Filipino colonial style. This is also why Paoay is included in the World Heritage Sites of UNESCO. Additionally, the town is known for the legend of Lake Paoay. Apart from the old structures, many tourists visit the Guling-Guling Festival, which means "pahiran" or "mark" which is celebrated before the Holy Day. Paoay is also the only town in Ilocos Norte that holds the Tumba Festival every November 1.

This paper aims to examine the tumba festival as a cultural arena in understanding the intersections of heritage, identity and tourism because of the shift of celebration from a purely religious and household ritual to a ghost festival. Specifically, it sought to enumerate the Ilokano identities and heritage (tangible and intangible) that are manifested in the performance of Tumba festival. How do local and global processes such as tourism affect the practice of community rituals? How do community festivals such as tumba,

⁹ Leonardo Tejano, "Paoay a Makapaway: narativa iti Panagwayawaya iti Maysa a Lokal a Komunidad" (Master Thesis, Mariano Marcos State University, Graduate School, 2018), 18.

becomes an arena for contestations and negotiations among the various social actors in the society over culture and tradition?

From these questions, the content of the paper was divided into three. The section “Tumba Festival and the Ilokano Heritage and Identity” section describes what tumba is all about. It also highlights the values, worldviews and identities of Ilocanos as shown in their various traditions and rituals in remembering and honoring the souls of their departed loved ones, and how these rituals are performed in the tumba festival.

The second section, “Social and Cultural Changes in the Tumba Festival as a Consequence of Tourism and Migration” details the how the processes of globalization, particularly tourism and migration brought social and cultural changes in the performance of the tumba festival.

Lastly, “Tumba Festival as a Venue for Contestations and Negotiation among Social Actors” shows the differing views over culture and tradition by the social actors in the community are expressed and detailed in this section as well as how these contestations are negotiated and respected.

Gathering of Sources

The study examined a certain kind of cultural platform and how this performative art becomes an avenue to understand the intersections of identity, heritage, and tourism. It sought the different perspectives of social actors in the society about tradition and culture, hence, qualitative and ethnographic methodology were utilized. Apart from finding primary and secondary sources, the paper relies heavily in the social epistemological theory drawn from the study of Vicente Villan. Epistemological theory and methodology veer away from positivist empirical methods and uses non-textual research sources instead. This methodology draws data from alternative sources such as expressive cultures, heritages, oral and written visual arts, and performative arts for understanding social and cultural phenomena and are valuable in the formation of new knowledge.¹⁰

In ethnographic interviews, research principles proposed by the founders of Sikolohiyang Pilipino, such as pakikitungo, pakikisalamuha, at pakikipagkapwa were religiously executed to ensure a culturally sensitive,

¹⁰ Vicente Villan, “Gunitang Bayan at salaysaying Bayan: Ang Pamanang Bayan sa Pag-unawa ng Kalakarang Panlipunan at Produksyong Pangkaalaman sa Pilipinas.” *Talas: Interdisiplinaryong Journal sa Edukasyong Pangkultura*, no.5 (2020): 214.
https://history.upd.edu.ph/?rsrch_publications=journal-publication_villan

respectful, and beneficial research and to avoid the “ibang tao” spectrum. For the interview and focus group discussion, the author used the local language (Ilokano) to introduce, explain, and clarify the questions and concerns related to the study. The author also devoted her time to watch not only during the performance, but also during the preparation and conclusion of the festival.

For Ezzy, qualitative research engages with the complexity of analyzing human action in terms of meanings.¹¹ This relates to the ontological assumption of constructivist researchers that adheres to the idea that there are multiple realities constructed by people who experienced such phenomena in certain times and contexts. It is evident that there are differing perspectives among the social groups such as the cultural bearers, young people, religious and festival organizer as well tourist about the changes, modification and addition to the tradition and culture of remembering and honoring the dead as performed during the festival. In data analysis, qualitative and ethnographic research require an interpretative task; hence, this study used the hermeneutic approach/theory. Ezzy defined Hermeneutics as the art and science of interpretation. He likens it to a dance in which interpretations of the observer and the observed are repeatedly interwoven until a sophisticated understanding is developed.¹² The paper involves the interpretation of historical documents and artifacts, research participants that are important in the performance of Tumba. Mertens reiterated that historians use the concept of hermeneutics as they try to interpret these sources within their social milieu.¹³

Tumba Festival and the Ilokano Heritage and Identity

Perlas in his study on the Axiological relevance of the tumba festival, explained that according to McArdle, Tumba is similar to “Dia de Los Muertos” or the day of the dead practiced by Mexican Americans¹⁴. Like Tumba, it is also celebrated on the 1st of November every year, where they offer food for the dead, making altars and performing rituals. It has also been noticed that Chinese and Buddhists also offer food for their dead relatives, an indication of the animistic beliefs of Asian countries before the arrival of Westerners.

¹¹ Douglas Ezzy, *Qualitative Analysis practice and innovation*. (Crows Nest, Australia: Routledge Taylor & Francis, 2020), 29.

¹² Ezzy, 24–25.

¹³ Donna Mertens, *Research and Evaluation in Education and Psychology: Integrating Diversity With Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methods* (United States of America: Sage Publications, 2015), 218.

¹⁴ Christian Ziggy Perlas, “The Axiological Relevance of Tumba-tumba Festival in Paoay, Ilocos Norte,” *International Forum Journal* 21, no.1(2018): 119, accessed November 5, 2022, <https://journals.aiias.edu/info/article/view/54>

Over time when the province revitalized its tourism industry, tumba was transformed into a tourist attraction, from the original ritual, *parada ti ar-aria* as well as visit to horror houses were added. According to the cultural bearers, the rituals for remembering and honoring the dead before it became a festival is a family and community affair done in the homes of each family.

Building the tumba (hut) is primarily a man's job. They collect the needed materials several days before the festival. The materials needed to construct the tumba are mostly bamboo, coconut tree, and talahib. While the men are constructing the tumba, women are also busy preparing the ornaments and decorations inside and outside the tumba. Women are also responsible in making sure that the components of atang (food offering) is complete and ready before the performance at night. The children and youth are active in participating in the parade and supporting their barangay by visiting them during the performance. There is indeed a division of labor, but it revolves around the cooperation of the entire barangay.

Inside the Tumba, there is an altar with images of saints, crosses, and pictures of the dead. The traditional *inabel* (woven) cloth takes center stage. Already described in pre-colonial times, an Ilocano home was not complete without woven fabric such as blankets, table runners, chair covers, and so on. The *Biag ni Lam-ang* epic also portrays this identity of the Ilocano people. Apart from this epic, the list of Ilocano words compiled by Father Andress Carro (1849) and descriptive John Crawford's dictionary (1956) confirms that the art of weaving cloth is an old tradition among the Ilocano people.¹⁵ Noticeable also in the tumba are the antique kitchen utensils and wardrobes such as *burnay*, *malabi damili*, *silong*, *karatay*, *dalikan*, *unggot*, *buyoboy* and *sagapa*. For the Ilocanos, all these things are *patawid* (pamana) passed down (inherited) by their (*appo*) ancestors.

In the middle of the tumba lay the *atang* (food offerings). The atang is made up different types of Ilocano snacks, such as baduya, linapet, patupat, pilais, busi (rice puff), and sesame. The number of plates for atang can be five, seven, nine, twelve, or thirteen plates. According to Ama Ador, a key informant, the number of plates for atang is determined by the economic and financial capacity of the family.¹⁶ As for the egg and rice, these are offered as a sign of gratitude by the locals for the abundance of agricultural produce and poultry products.

¹⁵Luis Dery, *Ili a Nasudi A Cultural History of Ilocos Norte* (Sarrat Ilocos Norte: Kannawidan Foundation, Inc., 2007), 86-91.

¹⁶ Amador Gayya (carpenter and cultural bearer) in discussion with the author, November 1, 2023

On the outside of the tumba, an *atong* (bonfire) is placed. This is a sign that someone has passed away in that house, and that the family is grieving. Also, next to it are niches with lit candles. The candles on the altar are always lit too. According to the elders, the smoke of the candle also guides the souls of the dead. Pictures of their dead as well as images and rebulto of saints, Mama Mary, and the crucifix Christ are also placed in the altar. The performance of Tumba formally starts in the evening. All the performers inside the hut are old women. The older men are outside the hut singing Ilokano songs, playing their rondalla and musical instruments. Other women joined by a few children are cooking native delicacies.

Tumba is believed to have been celebrated for generations and it is considered by the Ilocanos as a *tawid* (heritage) inherited from their ancestors. As detailed above there are numerous tangible and intangible elements that are present in the performance of Tumba. Before UNESCO's inclusive definition of what heritage is, in the eyes of the culturally superior world such tradition is deemed as "exotic and dark". UNESCO defines heritage as the full range of our inherited traditions, monuments, objects, and culture. Most importantly, it is the range of contemporary activities, meanings, and behaviors that we draw from them.¹⁷

Tumba festival is a kind of ritual that is staged once a year. This practice falls to the category of tangible heritage explained by Lipp as a heritage mediated by human mediums engaging in real-time performances.¹⁸ In most cases this type of cultural expressions and practices, let alone with shades of "spirituality" are performed in remote areas causing it to be viewed by relatively few individuals. For the tumba, though it is staged yearly, the practices are performed rather as often for families who are currently in mourning as well as those who are remembering and honoring the souls of their departed loved ones.

This tumba tawid/heritage as a cultural and social activity creates and defines collective identities. As a result of the documentary sources and the interviews the following themes emerged.

First, the animistic belief of the Ilocanos about the human world and the spirit world. Their continued ritual of *pinagatang*, *pinaglualo*, as a *pinanglagip* to the souls of their departed loved ones manifests an enduring indigenous culture. Their tradition of maintaining a strong connection between the

¹⁷ "Tangible Cultural Heritage," UNESCO, archived November 22, 2023, at <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/cairo/culture/tangible-cultural-heritage>.

¹⁸ Thorolf, Lipp, *Materializing the Immaterial, On the Paradox of Medializing Heritage*, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2016), 138.

living and the dead to ensure *ginhawa/talna* (well-being/peace) of the multiverse is a testament to them living up to their philosophy of *nakem*, a conscious will of doing what is right.

Second, tumba festival as a community event highlights the collective identities of the Ilokanos of *pinnakitumpuyog* (unity). As it is shown, though differing and contesting perceptions regarding culture and tradition present among the social actors in the community, they come together to perform their roles responsibly to ensure the success of the festival. Even residents who are not physically present showcase their endless support through social media and sponsorship.

Third, the tumba festival shows the Ilocano identity of *pinangitan-ok* ken *pinangilala* of their *ili* (town/place). There is a sense of belongingness and pride in their place. The response is overwhelming, they all feel proud that there is a unique festival in their town being visited by thousands of tourists every year. This sense of belonging, pride, and support for one's heritage is also shared and heightened such as monetary contributions as well as sharing through different social media channels by Ilocano migrants in trans localities. There is a sense of belonging not only to one another but also a sense of belonging and pride in their town. "I feel very proud that only in Paoay have this kind of fiesta, it is very unique to our place, and I am very proud and happy that people visit our place," said one of the cultural bearers.

In the narratives of the Ilocanos, the three identity levels mentioned by Snow (2001) as cited by Jaeger & Mykletun, the personal identity, social identity, and collective identity are evident in the performance of tumba by the different groups in the society.¹⁹ The younger generations while grappling with the cultural value of the festival connect with their heritage by actively participating not necessarily in performing the rituals but actively participating in the activities during the festival and also promoting to the outsider of their unique festival.

The Social and Cultural Changes in the Tumba Festival as a Consequence of Tourism and Migration

In the modern societies, rituals and festivals undergo social and cultural modification and changes because of many factors, such as individualization, the influence of one's faith and religion, education, and the many effects of the ways of modernization. There are two significant processes of globalization that markedly contributed to the performance of tumba. First

¹⁹ Kari Jaeger and Reidar Mykletun, *Festivals Identities, and Belonging*: (Event Management, Vol.17, 2013) 213-226 <http://dx.doi.org/10.3727/152599513X13708863377791>

is tourism. Talamayan said that tourism, as a practice, involves a projection and performance of identity in response to what the market desires.²⁰ Tumba festival started as a ritual for every Ilokano household in remembering and honoring the dead. When its potential for tourism was known, it was staged in thirty-one barangays. After several years, for convenience and viability, it was clumped into ten districts and as the tourism industry in the province intensified, additional attractions were installed particularly, the horror house and the ghost parade. These added attractions not only provided additional entertainment for visitors, but also boosted economic benefits for locals. It is obvious the line for the horror house was endless, too many young people fall in line to avail for tickets. It is loud and scary inside. When asked young people what tumba for them, general response was, horror house. When asked about the tumba rituals, they responded that it is a time for adults especially their grandparents to perform rituals to remember the dead, but they claimed that it is a gregarious time for them and their friends being entertained by the display of performances.

For the performers, mostly adults, they expressed that they are happy and proud to showcase their culture. Nana Elma, one of the prayer leaders expressed this idea clearly, “For me it is always a memorable and emotional time of the year because we get to celebrate and honor the souls of our departed loved ones and also a time to be proud because many people watch us because it is only here in Paoay that we celebrate this kind.”

However, the elders lament that the added attractions and entertainments particularly the horror house create a disconnect of values, ideas, and beliefs between them and the younger generation. They claimed that the very ideas, values, and principles the older people want to preserve and transfer are being ignored and rejected because younger people don’t want to accept and learn the skills and responsibilities of a manglualo who is the central figure in performing the tumba.

Thousands of tourists from neighboring towns and provinces are increasingly participating in this unique festival. For the dayo (tourists) their experience and participation in the yearly tradition is not only a fun time but an opportunity to expand their knowledge regarding the diversity and commonality of traditions. Aside from the economic benefit that it generates, mostly by small businesses from this social gathering, tourists can also appreciate other cultural practices than their own.

²⁰ Fernan Talamayan, “Commodifying Cultures, Negotiating Identities: The Reproduction and performance of the Cordilleran Cultural Heritage in Tam-Awan Village”, *The Cordilleran Review*, no. 1&2 (December 2022): 69-91, https://thecordillerareview.upb.edu.ph/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/TCR-12-12_3-TALAMAYAN.pdf.

Second, is internal and external migration. More and more young people migrate to neighboring towns and provinces as well as abroad. They bring with them their intangible heritage, but the practice slowly diminishes and changes as a product of their enculturation. At the same time, returning migrants bring with them new ways of doing social practices, and rituals with their family and community. These social and cultural changes, however, do not invalidate the reaffirmation of their identity and links to their community's tradition.

According to the local historian named Liberato Ramos, this age-old folk Catholicism was brought from Paoay in Ilocos Norte where most San Narciso residents' ancestors came from.²¹ As years passed, the tumba (hut) are being converted into horror stalls with violent scenes which do not sit well with community leaders. Quoting further, the town parish priest Fr. Roque Villanueva lamented the proliferation of horror houses during the All Saints and All Souls Days and the conversion of a religious practice into horror-themed tumbas with prayer replaced by horrific scenes. He describes these changes as, "It is holiness to horribleness," of the shift to the unholy practice.²² Watching videos and news reports, the tumba festival in San Narciso Zambales really captures this description.

Interestingly, immigrants in three different areas in Hawaii revealed that Ilokanos in Hawaii still practice the traditions of remembering and honoring the dead. In other homes, they don't prepare the complete atang anymore, they just set aside a table where they can offer special food offering. In other areas, they still prepare the complete atang, and those who don't have time to prepare will just buy from a fellow Ilokana/o. In another, they do not prepare atang anymore in their homes, what they do is to just send money and instruct their relatives in their homeland to do the rituals in honoring and remembering their departed loved ones. Because of the cultural environment these migrants are in as well as their upward mobility economically in the society upon returning, the practice of tradition is altered and reconstructed. However, the moods and motivations of doing the practice are always rooted with their sense of identity, belongingness, and place identity.

It is apparent from the narratives of the cultural bearers that the purpose and meanings of several symbols and material culture from this tawid were not transformed and commercialized, except for it being staged in the public

²¹ Edgar Allan M. Sembrano, "San Narciso in Zambales revives unique hallow ritual," *Lifestyle.INQ*, January 20, 2020, <https://lifestyle.inquirer.net/355683/san-narciso-in-zambales-revives-unique-hallow-ritual/#ixzz7preibkBI>.

²² . Sembrano, "San Narciso in Zambales revives unique hallow ritual."

and becoming a yearly festival as a result of the intensification of cultural tourism. They performed what they claimed to be an authentic and not exotic way of honoring and remembering the dead to satisfy the curiosity of the audience and they do it with pride for their culture. They also recreate the mallong (hut) and material objects that are displayed to showcase their life and ways of “doing in the past”. However, they lament its possibility of being forgotten and discontinued due to the increasing and changing ideals and values of younger generations as influenced by the context of their time which is highly characterized as “technologized.”

Tumba Festival: An Arena of Negotiations and Contestations among Social Actors in Society

Giorgi & Sassatelli stated that culture-in its aesthetic forms as well-can be appropriated and influenced from different standpoints, and by different actors, agendas, and taste preference.²³ For this paper, it is notable that the different actors in the society have varied perceptions as well as interest over their local festival. The old population reminisced their “peaceful and simple” childhood days with their family. Those moments when technological inventions have not yet been a necessity in maintaining family relationships. The key informants expressed their emotions as they remember those days, and that they only want this tradition to be passed on to their sons and daughters, unfortunately, there is little chance their descendants are unwilling to accept the responsibility of being ritual leaders and performers.

For young people, a fiesta is a fun time, a time out of time, participating in different social activities, and showcasing their talents. It is clear from the narratives of the younger generation that they do not anticipate the tumba festival for its cultural value but the excitement for socialization. One informant lamented, “our generation was really different from now. I just hope that when we die, they still remember us, but I’m afraid that the tradition of remembering and honoring us through atang and lualo will die soon.”²⁴

According to the festival organizers, they are aware of the criticisms of the new attractions especially the horror house, but they ensure that along with the development of tourism in their area, their cultural heritage as well as their identity as *umili* will be preserved through a more inclusive and robust programs to bridge the disconnection of the youth from the real value of the

²³ Liana Giorgi and Monica Sassatelli, introduction to *Festivals and the Cultural Public Sphere* Routledge, ed. Giorgi, Sassatelli and Gerard Delanty (London and New York:Routledge, 2011), xxv .

²⁴ Sally A. (manglualo/prayer leader) in discussion with the author, November 2023.

practices performed during the festival. A local movie director in Paoay directed a film called *Iyallatiw* (to transfer) in their desire to transfer the tradition to the young. The prayer leader in one district trains several young people how to administer the pinaglualo. It is their hope that the youth, as well as the tourist, will be aware of the cultural meanings and values of the traditions and practices, they perform during tumba festival. The intense interest of the youth in visiting horror houses and ghost parades may also extend to learning and relearning their old traditions of remembering and honoring the dead.

In San Narciso Zambales, the creation of the horror houses was inspired by ghost movies from Japan and Korea. In Ilocos Norte, it is an influence of the American and Mexican traditions. Culture like festival is fluid and subject to changes. It is evident that this festival was greatly altered as an effect of tourism intensification in the province. Community members, especially the cultural bearers, take pride in showcasing their traditions and the *tawid* they inherit from their ancestors to tourists and on social media. While they are not indignant about the changes and added attractions to the festival, they share a sentiment similar to that of the early Filipinos—who adapted, assimilated, and retained their old traditions alongside the new faith—wishing the same for the younger generation. For them technological changes, innovations as well as migration that affect how traditions and practice now should not totally eradicate the cultures of the past.

Conclusion

Using Tumba Festival as a cultural platform, the study was able to examine the intersections between heritage, identity, and tourism.

In exploring Ilocano identity as manifested in the performance of the Tumba festival, the Ilocanos consider the *tumba* as a *tawid* (heritage) that is syncretic in nature, a testament to the Ilocanos' cultural ingenuity and adaptability. The culture and traditions and activities that are participated and showcased by the *umili* during the festival highlight the collective identities of Ilocanos of *pannakilangenlangen* (pakikipagkapawa) that is a core value of being a part of the community and being one of the people. More importantly Tumba festival forms a sense of belongingness and pride in one's locality.

On the examination of the social and cultural changes in the shifting practice of a local community festival brought about by tourism and migration, it is noteworthy that the intensification of cultural tourism brought social and cultural changes in the performance of tumba, from a family ritual in honoring and remembering the dead to transforming into a

community and competitive festival. It is also found out that local migration and returning migrants due to their enculturation in their country destination contributed to the way how they and the families they left behind perform rituals for their departed loved ones.

On how Tumba becomes a space for contestations and negotiations among the social actors in the society, it was brought to light that the contestation of opinion over culture and tradition, especially the tradition of honoring and remembering the dead, is often a clash between the old and the young, because of their different circumstances, context, and time. Unfortunately, the added attraction such as the “horror house” where the youth identified what tumba festival is, draws them away from the essence of the community festival. However, the old population and cultural bearers of the community do not abhor such added attraction but only yearn that the youth will not let the tradition die. Especially the ritual of *pinagatang* (offering) chants, and prayers for the souls of their departed loved ones. It is also found out that the discontinuity of the tradition is possible as very few have the desire to accept the responsibility of being a *manglualo* among young people. The locals are happy to perform and proud to showcase their culture. They don’t consider themselves as being othered because for them the traditions and rituals they perform in the tumba are not exotica, but a cultural marker that binds them to their roots and as a people. *

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