

The Government in the Promotion of the 300 Years Celebration of Filipinos' Cultural Identity- 1710-2010

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1.1. Introduction

A famous world leader, Choue (1997) remarked that culture is the distinct and indispensable mark of human beings from the rest of creatures, while government is the Hallmark institution necessary to enable men to live in a social and developed state.

From the beginning of history, human beings living with animals adapted themselves to the natural environment under the law of jungle, clung to the will for survival by making challenges or taking up challenges, and developed culture by pulling together their wisdom and organizing communal life. Then, they established order and imposed discipline to lay down conditions for ruling and governing.

The Social Contract Theory of John Locke explains that: "Before men and women simply consented to bind themselves in a political system, to pay allegiance to a common authority and entrust governance for their common good and protection hence, consent of the body politic paved the way for the formation of the state and the organization of the government." (Bennagen, 2002).

Thus, "Only cultural assets can enable people to live like human beings and can promise affluent and convenient living ... If culture is removed from our human life, we would return immediately to the primitive life. (Cheou, 1997).

In the Philippines, promotion of culture is a mandate of both the National Government and the Local Government Units (LGUs). In fact, it is a constitutionally guaranteed State's policy and one among the priorities. The state shall give priority to education, science and technology, arts, culture, and sports to foster patriotism and nationalism, accelerate social progress, and promote total human liberation and development as clearly stated in Sec. 17, Art II, of the Philippine Constitution.

The Section 16, R.A. 7160 of the Philippine Local Government Code of 1991, states that: "Every local government unit shall exercise the powers expressly granted, those necessarily implied there from, as well as powers necessary, appropriate, or incidental for its effective and efficient governance, and those which are essential to the promotion of the general welfare. Within their respective territorial jurisdictions, local government units shall ensure and support, among other things, the preservation and enrichment of culture, promote health and safety, enhance the right of the people to a balanced ecology, encourage and support the development of appropriate and self-reliant scientific and technological capabilities, improve public morals, enhance economic prosperity and social justice, promote full employment among their residents, maintain peace and order, and preserve the comfort and convenience of their inhabitants."

At the local level of governance vis-à-vis preservation and enrichment of culture, Naga City is given a cardinal privilege as exemplar. In fact, both the local and national leadership were one in proclaiming Naga City as Pilgrim Capital of the Bicol Region. The essence of this is nothing but promotion of culture through the annual celebration of the Peñafrancia Festival.

At the backdrop of a local government known worldwide for its model governance practices and innovations being adjudged three times by the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry as the most business-friendly in the country Naga City positions itself as the religious, commercial, educational, financial and trading center of Bicol.

Every September, the city takes center stage as Bicolanos celebrate the country's most popular and perhaps biggest Marian devotion – the Peñafrancia fiesta.

Although Peñafrancia celebration is religious in character, the City government of Naga plays a crucial and active role in the conduct of the annual celebration. And, under the “general welfare clause” Naga City plans and performs a number of services and exercises its political powers particularly, legislative and executive powers to ensure and promote both the spiritual and material wellbeing of its people.

Naga City as a Bicol premier city is one where vibrant cultural heritage blends with modern amenities and where throbbing commerce and natural wonders move in harmony. Naga is one of the seven original royal cities founded in 1575 by Spain. It got its name from the Narra tree, known to natives as “naga” which thrive in abundance along the riverside since the pre-Hispanic times (Naga Smiles, September 2010).

The study determined the extent of support of the city government of Naga in the promotion of Bicol Culture during the Tercentenary (300 years) Celebration of the “Our Lady of Peñafrancia Festival.”

In particular, the study examined the role of the local government in the promotion of the religious celebration along the following:

1. enactment of local legislations;
2. allocation of local funds;
3. adoption of regulations for entrepreneurships (businesses) ; and
4. utilization of public properties.

1.2. Literature Review

Under the Philippine Constitution and the Local Government Code of 1991, local government unit has a dual personality, namely: 1) public or governmental; and 2) private or corporate. In its public or governmental capacity, it is an agent of the state for the government of the territory and the inhabitants within the local government limits. In its private capacity, it acts in a similar category of as a business corporation, performing functions not strictly governmental or political.

The local government of the City of Naga and the Archdiocese of Caceres have been able to successfully host a historical, momentous, solemn tercentenary celebration of the devotion of the Our Lady of Peñafrancia thru the support of the concerned government agencies, major religious, civic, and non-governmental organizations as well as the participation of more than three (3) million of pilgrims and devotees to INA from all over the world.

In the words of the Church, the success of the celebration of the Peñafrancia devotion was compared to the **biblical mustard seed**. According to the pastoral letter of Archbishop Legazpi, “The Peñafrancia devotion, like the biblical mustard seed, which started in 1710 with the small community of Fr. Robles de Covarrubias and his Cimarrones, has grown into a ‘giant tree’ whose branches extend to all parts of the world.

In fact, we can readily say that this devotion is no longer exclusive to the Bicolanos but even to non-Bicolanos who have also joyfully received the gift of devotion from the many Bicolanos around the world.”

On the part of the national government, the constitutional mandate to promote culture as one of the State's priorities was manifested by no less than the President of the Republic of the Philippines who issued Executive Order N0. 33 dated September 10, 2010. In his Executive Order President Benigno Aquino III, took cognizance of the annual celebration of the Feast of Our Lady of Peñafrancia as an "epic historical event that [had] become part of our cultural heritage," and that Naga City "where the 300-year old image is enshrined, has long been recognized and considered as the pilgrimage capital of the Bicol region." Thus, by virtue of said Executive Order, the city of Naga and the province of Camarines Sur have been declared pilgrimage capitals of the Bicol Region and recognized top tourists destinations in the country.

Similarly, the part of the local government of Naga City, measures and efforts towards promotion of Bicol Culture were introduced and worked out as its support to the Tercentenary Celebration of the Devotion to the Our Lady of Peñafrancia in terms of: enactment of local legislations; allocation of local funds; adoption of regulations for entrepreneurships (businesses); and utilization of public properties.

1.3. Methodology

A documentary analysis form part of this study delving into the legal documents, ordinances related to the 300 years (tercentenary) celebration of the devotion to Our Lady of Peñafrancia.

1.4. Findings

The findings of the study show that the city government extended a highly adequate support in terms of local legislations. This finding of a highly adequate support in terms of local legislations was established thru content analysis of the scope of coverage, not necessarily of the number or frequency count of the enactments. The scope of coverage was analyzed content-wise considering the enactment’s comprehensiveness and responsiveness in coverage vis-à-vis with the general welfare needs in line with the Tercentenary Celebration of the Devotion to the Our Lady of Peñafrancia.

1.4.1. Local Legislations

Table1. Enacted Local Legislations

LOCAL ENACTMENT	
E.O. No. 2009 – 003	Creating the Naga City Tercentenary Executive Council and Steering Committees to Coordinate with the Archdiocese of Caceres
E.O. No. 2010 – 006	Reconstructing the Naga City Tercentenary Executive Council and Steering Committees.
E.O. No. 2010 – 012	Amending Executive Order 2010-006 by creating a Joint Committee on Civic Parade and Float Competition and Voyadores Festival.
E.O. No. 2010 – 016	Creating the Naga City Peñafrancia Tercentenary Inter-Agency Task Group and Unified Command Emergency Operations Center and defining its functions and composition.
Resolution No. 2010 – 280	Resolution Declaring Naga City as Pilgrimage City this September 2010 and Every Year Thereafter.

Table 2. Proposed Local Enactments

PROPOSED LOCAL ENACTMENT	
Proposed Ordinance	To name the new historical plaza as “Plaza de Nueva Caceres”
Proposed Ordinance	To rename Tabuco Bridge as “Puente de Claveria”



EXECUTIVE COUNCIL FOR THE 300 YEARS CELEBRATION

CHAIRPERSON Hon. John G. Bongat, City Mayor
 CO-CHAIRPERSON Hon. Gabriel H. Bordado, Jr. City Vice Mayor

MEMBERS

Chairperson, CP Committee in Tourism, Culture & Arts
 Three (3) Representatives of the Archdiocese of Caceres
 Mr. Johanne dela Rosa, Naga City People's Council
 Mr. Emman Llagas, President, KBP Camarines Sur
 Chairperson of the Steering Committees

STEERING COMMITTEES

CHAIRPERSON

Civic Parade & Voyadores Festival	Mr. Allen L. REondanga/DIBA Foundation, Inc.
Regional Military Street Parade	Hon. Jose A. Tuason/Mr. Vicente S. Avila
DXMC/Boy & Girl Scout Parade	Hon. DC Nathan A. Sergio
Search for Ms. Bicolandia	Hon. Cecilia D. De Asis
Trade Fairs & Carnivals	Mr. William G. Del Rosario
Public Safety	Mr. Joselito SA. Del Rosario/PSupt Jacinto C. Sison
Sponsorship	Mr. Florencio T. Mongoso, Jr., CSEE
Secretariat	Mr. Gil A. Dela Torre
Finance	Hon. Salvador M. Del Castillo

SUPPORT COMMITTEES

CHAIRPERSON

Venue Arrangements	Engr. Leon B. Palmiano IV
Communications	Hon. DC Nathan A. Sergio
Documentation	Mr. Jan Rev L. Davila
Transportation	Engr. Joel P. Martin
Tabulation	Mr. Anselmo B, Maño
Invitations	Mr. Jose B. Perez
Medical	Dr. Vito C. Borja II
Food	Mr. Oscar P. Orozco

The different city offices and departments were also mandated by the same Executive Order to provide the necessary support functions and activities for the proper implementation and delivery of targets and activities in connection with the Tercentenary Celebration, to wit:

OFFICE-IN-CHARGE	FUNCTIONS
City Engineer's Office General Services Department	Replacement of lampposts along Cathedral- USI Area Archbishop's Palace; Maintenance of streetlight; Inspection of bridges
City Environment and Natural Resources Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beautification and maintenance of Plaza, Center islands and garden pockets; • Cleanliness of venues and major streets and roads
City Planning and Development Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of historico-religious sites

The Tercentenary Inter-Agency Task Group and Unified Command Emergency Operations Center has the following composition:

Chairman: Hon. John G. Bongat, City Mayor
 Co-Chairman: Hon. Gabriel H. Bordado, Jr. City Vice Mayor
 Vice-Chairman: Rev. Fr. Edgardo Adversario
 Executive Officer: Mr. Joselito Del Rosario, Public Safety Officer
 Members: Mr. Florencio T. Mongoso, Jr. CSEE – Acting City Administrator;
 Mr. Francisco Mendoza, City Budget Officer
 Dr. Vito Borja, City Health Officer
 Dr. Luningning Luciano, Naga City Hospital Chief
 Mr. Jose L. Grageda, City Media Relations Officer
 Mr. Ernesto Elcamel, City Disaster Mitigation Officer
 Mr. Oscar Orozco – City ENRO
 Engr. Leon Palmiano IV – City Engineer

Member Agencies:

Philippine National Police
 Public Safety Office
 Bureau of Fire Protection
 Philippine Army
 Philippine Air Force
 Philippine Navy
 PNP – Maritime Group
 BMC – HEMS
 Communication Group

The Inter-agency Task Group and Unified Command Emergency Operations Center performed the following functions, namely:

1. Supervise operations and pool of vital resources for the security, public safety, health and sanitation, emergency response and disaster preparedness;
2. Carry out the principles of emergency preparedness and emergency management, or disaster management functions at a strategic level in an emergency situation;
3. Establish a command, control, coordination and collaboration, and communication system for the overall disaster emergency response;

The Inter-agency Task Group and Unified Command Emergency Operations Center performed the following functions, namely:

4. Implement plans and programs, provide security and public safety, address threats to internal security and safety, fire suppression, respond to all kinds of emergencies and implement disaster preparedness mechanisms for natural, manmade, human induced hazards, HAZMAT response and bio hazard threats; and
5. Create committees as it may deem necessary to carry out the objectives of this Executive Order.

The most prominent among the local enactments of the local government of Naga City was the passing of City **Resolution No. 2010-280 otherwise known as Resolution Declaring Naga City as Pilgrimage City** this September 2010 and Every Year Thereafter.

This local enactment found its core rationale from the fact that the devotion to Our Lady of Peñafrancia, the Patroness of Bicolandia, has been part of the history of Naga City wherein the 2010 celebration marks its 300th year of celebration with tens of thousands of pilgrims, devotees, tourists from all over the country and the world.

Pursuant to the thrust of the new city administration to provide a productive, innovative and proactive leadership to Naga City and in consonance with recognized significant role of the city government of Naga in the Tercentenary (300 years) Celebration of the Devotion to the Our Lady of Peñafrancia, the city government of Naga has allocated 4-5 million pesos for all the related activities. This fund allocation is three hundred percent (300%) bigger than the previous year's allocation to the Peñafrancia Festival hence, determined to be highly adequate extent of support in terms of fund allocation.

The major areas of expenditures or program of works were the following:

- a. Measures to ensure the peace and order in the city especially of the pilgrims and visitors;
- b. Replacement of lampposts along Cathedral-USI Area- Archbishop's Palace;
- c. Maintenance of streetlights;
- d. Inspection and beautification of bridges
- e. Beautification and maintenance of Plazas, center islands and garden pockets;
- f. Cleanliness of venues, major streets and roads;
- g. Identification and preparation of historic-religious sites;
- h. Establishment of joint pilgrims and visitors' satellite centers (Tourist Assistance Center) in strategic locations;
- i. Formation of volunteer groups to man the Tourist Assistance Center;
- j. Welcoming rites of Ecclesiastical Officials;
- k. Promotional Activities;
- l. Mass Media coverage of Tercentenary Celebration activities;
- m. Implementation of Night Market, Trade Fairs, and Street Vending.
- n. Facelifting of major routes of INA, instituting pre-hispanic atmosphere where street lights were already placed with Hispanic designs;
- o. Renovations of market for the convenience of the shoppers and other visitors.

What is noteworthy is the joint celebration of the Tinagba: Dolot Ki Ina, Civic Parade, Float Competition and Voyadores Festival, where the church is sharing both three hundred thousand pesos (300,000.00 php) from the church and same amount coming from the city government of Naga. The money goes out for the winners on the following categories:

Moreover, the allotted funds by the city government of Naga went to the successful implementation and carrying out of the outlined major activities, to wit:

The Peñafrancia Tercentenary Events

September 1-20, 2010

SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

SEPTEMEBR 1, WEDNESDAY

- Divino Rostro Pilgrimage, Basilica Minore, 4am
- Harubay Para ki Hesus asin Para ki Ina: Diana, Basilica & Streets of Naga, 4am
- Offering for Ina, Basilica, 5:30a.m. Novena Masses, Basilica, 5:30 & 6:30am (Bikol), 7am & 5pm (English)

- Harubay Motorcade, Peñafrancia Shrine & Streets of Naga, 8am
- Harubay Mass, Basilica, 11:15am
- Archdiocesan Marian Recollection, Basilica, 1:30pm
- Penitential Procession, Basilica Patio, 6pm
- Harubay Youth Torch Parade, Streets of Naga, 7pm
- Taize Youth Prayer, Basilica Pavilion, 7pm
- Cultural Show: Naga College Foundation, Plaza Miguel Robles de Covarrubias, 8pm

SEPTEMBER 3, FRIDAY

- Divino Rostro Pilgrimage, Basilica, 4am
- Offering for Ina, Basilica, 5:30am
- Novena Masses, Basilica, 5:30 & 6:30am (Bikol), 7am & 5pm (English)
- Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confessions), Basilica, 4:30-6pm
- Alay ki Ina: Regional Gathering of Covenant Communities, Basilica, 6pm
- Cultural Show: Caceres Singing Priests, Plaza Covarrubias, 8pm

SEPTEMBER 10, Friday • Day for Families & Migrant Workers

- Penitential Procession, Basilica to Peñafrancia Shrine, 4am Pontifical Mass, Archbp.
- Leonardo Legaspi, Peñafrancia Shrine, 5:30a
- Novena Mass, Basilica, 5pm
- Traslación Procession, Peñafrancia Shrine to Naga Metropolitan Cathedral, 2nn
- Sacrament of Reconciliation (Confessions), Naga Cathedral, 1-5pm
- Community Mass, Plaza Covarrubias, 2pm
- Tercentenary Grand Mass of Thanksgiving, Naga Cathedral, 5:30pm
- Tercentenary Concert, Naga Cathedral Grounds, 8:30pm
- Trade Fair Variety Show: 'The Best of Kulturang Bikolnon', Department of Education
- Camarines Sur, SM Naga, 8:30pm September 11 to 19
- Outreach Activity: Share and Care, 8am (Whole Day Activity)

1.4.2. EXTENT OF SUPPORT ALONG ENTREPRENEURSHIPS (BUSINESSES)

Indeed, Naga City is one of the countries most improved and business friendly cities. In fact, this dynamism and sense of pride extends from its rich cultural heritage to its robust economic activities and business and trade. Being host of the country's and Asia's biggest and most spectacular Marian event, the city government of Naga worked hard in its coordination with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) for adoption of regulations for entrepreneurs/businesses.



The study revealed that for this year's grand celebration, regulations on entrepreneurs and business activities were revisited and implemented with a rationalized flexibility that makes the extent of support of Naga City highly adequate as it readily answered the needs of the entrepreneurs and businessmen during the Tercentenary Celebration of Peñafrancia Festival.

The First Great Naga Sale. In coordination with the Department of Trade and Industry the local government of Naga City adopted a regulation to fast track issuance of business permit by waiving the requirement of a Sale Promo Permit held on August 27- September 1, 2010.

NCPC Monitoring and Enforcement. With the LGU-Naga as lead agency, the monitoring & enforcement team was composed of DTI, DA, DOH-FDA, DENR-CENRO (implementing agencies of the Price Act and Consumer Act), as well as other line agencies and members of the private sector.

The First Bishop Francisco Gainza Trade Fair. Another event is Bishop Francisco Gainza Trade Fair for Bicolano entrepreneurs and exhibitors held on September 9 to 20, 2010 at SM City Naga Open Parking A,B and C. The trade fair helps to alleviate poverty by promoting entrepreneurship. The trade fair featured processed food, homestyle and living housewares and wearables), natural products, religious (furniture, gifts, toys, tourism services, organic and and sournir items.



One Town, One Product (OTOP) Assembly. This year's OTOPT Assembly has the theme "Reaping the Gains of Public Private Partnership". It was held at the newly-completed Naga City Coliseum and had a crowd of almost six thousand people, mostly composed of delegations from twenty-five (25) out of the 37 LGUs in Camarines Sur, with some participants from the Most Supportive OTOPT LGU, the Most Outstanding OTOPT SME, the most Supportive OTOPT Partner (Agency), and the Most Outstanding OTOPT Development Officer. Three (3) OTOPT LGUs shared their Best Practices, and five (5) LGUs presented OTOPT Festivals in colorful costumes. The CSCCI announced the launching of their "Support an OTOPT" program, providing LGUs present with another source of support.

Moreover, hotels (numbering about 39) and restaurants (numbering about 88) were recipients of the all out support extended by the city government of Naga. In fact, since June of this year, city coordination was already made to hotels found in the city as well as neighboring hotels in the municipalities. Per record, hotels are already fully booked especially from visitors who will be coming from the church, with confirmed attendance of 300 bishops (for the 300 years celebration) as well as those pilgrims who would be coming to Naga from various parts of the country as well as from different countries participated in by the line agencies and the OTOPT LGU executives.

1.4.3. EXTENT OF SUPPORT UTILIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICE

The property of the city government of Naga, like other LGU's, is divided into property for public use and patrimonial property. The property for public use in Naga City consists of the provincial roads, city streets, the squares, fountains, public waters, promenades, and public works for public service paid for by said city, while all other property possessed by the city of Naga is considered patrimonial.

With all of these regulations of Naga City on the use of public properties, the extent of support along this aspect was determined to be highly adequate as evidenced by the following findings:

The plazas were freed from vendors in order for the pilgrims, tourists, and visitors would use the same as venues to rest and enjoy the cultural shows prepared by the city government and the church. The City Plaza for the 2010 Festival and for the Tercentenary was not used to hold the "Beer Plaza" activity which the city used to have in the previous celebrations as per commitment by the government to the church for the month long celebration.

On the aspect of medical emergencies, **Sickbays were set up** at Abcede Elementary School in Bagumbayan Dur, Sta. Cruz Elementary School in Brgy, Sta. Cruz and Mac Mariano Elementary School in Brgy.

Balagtas in addition to City Health Office, Naga City Hospital and Bicol Medical Center-Health Emergency System (BMC-HEMS). Also, on medical and health services at least 19 ambulances were used as service vehicles in transporting patients or victims of common injuries needing urgent medical treatment and hospitalization.

Moreover, the church and the city government of Naga will also provide **PILGRIM BELITTING CENTERS** in identified schools to provide accommodations and even **private residences**, to offer space for pilgrim for fees.



Finally, both the local government unit of Naga and the Archdiocese of Caceres make **use of the advanced technology**. Websites in the dissemination of information as regards the 300 years celebration of the devotion to Our lady of Peñafrancia, www.naga.gov.ph –Website of city government of Naga and www.penafrancia.net –official Website of Basilica Minore.

1.5. Conclusion

Participative governance towards promotion of general welfare particularly, enhancement and enrichment of culture is continuously at work in Naga City hence, very much possible as proven thru the Partnership between the City

The city government of Naga and the Archdiocese of Caceres together with the various civic organizations, people's organizations, non-government organizations and faithful laity. *"It means, above all, democratic governance: an open, participatory, transparent and accountable process of carrying out government policies and decisions, programs and projects.* (Abueva, 1998) Proven likewise is the fact that *"Culture has a powerful effect on a person's daily life as it influences his mode of thinking, feeling, and acting. **Culture shapes us, but we also shape culture.**"* (Panopio and Rolda, 2000) And, the far reaching effects and influences of governance and culture are brought by and facilitated by the vehicles and media of communications.

In the words of Choue, (1993) *"We must create a **cultural welfare society** through respect of human dignity in a true meaning and through **improvement of the quality of our life** by securing both **spiritual and material welfare** at the same time.*

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