

Appropriating Processional Standards as Symbols of Authority: Inter-ethnic Power Play in the Early 19th-Century Processions of the Historic Cathedral City of Vigan, the Philippines*

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Abstract: The chapter on the ethno-social history of the religious ceremonies of the cathedral City of Vigan in Ilocos Sur, The Philippines is now unknown. Yet, two hundred years ago, power play between ethnic groups flared up to disrupt the celebration of the city's traditional Holy Week procession. The scandalous incident sparked an investigation, providing an account that is the basis of contemporary views on past traditional celebrations of these solemn events. More importantly, it unravels the social structure of the city, its ethnic composition and their inherent privileges. The Holy Week incident in Vigan was a precursor to the tense ethno-social rivalry that would also take place in the extramural towns around Manila later in the 19th century, with grave implications on the solemn traditions of the church. Using archival materials, this paper analyzes the events based on the concept of

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processional standards and images as symbols of authority. The claims of the gremios – the tax collection affinities of ethnicities – are analyzed, unveiling the prevailing events in the city regarding the ascendancy of the Chinese mestizos. This paper further argues that the mestizos' appropriation of the processional standards as symbols of authority was meant to enhance their ascendancy, extending their realm to the religious sphere as an addition to their previous political and economic gains.

Keywords: Religious Processions, Naturales, Mestizos de Sangleyes, Town Elites, Gremio, Social Pre-eminence, Altarpiece

The socio-political aspect of religious processions is a significant yet relatively unexplored field of Philippine Church rites and rituals. Very few studies focus on the social and ethnic background of these public celebratory functions. The historical shift during the turn of the 20th century contributed to the institutionalized obliteration of Spanish culture in the Philippines that serves as the framework for this religious heritage.¹ The Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines, for example, stipulated the separation of the state and the church in Article III, Section 5 and, therefore guarantees religious freedom. Philippine colonial history went through an era when the Governor-General of the Philippines, as head of the colonial government, was also Vice Patron of the Church, wielding authority over the church by virtue of the Royal Patronage.² This authority was an offshoot of the era of exploration, when newly discovered lands provided not only labor and resources to enrich European states, but also pastoral areas for propagating Christianity. King Philip II's quest for an alternative route to the Moluccas brought them to lands that were previously unknown to them. The subjugation of these new lands could only be morally justified if it entailed a mission to evangelize the inhabitants of these lands, subject to their free-will.³ Ultimately, this desire to spread Christianity was recognized by the Vatican in a pact that bestowed royal patronage to the Spanish monarchs.⁴ Hence, the latter gained the authority to

¹ For an in-depth analysis of the various ways Spanish heritage was systematically presented as being backward and even cruel at the out-set of American imperialism in the Philippines, refer to Vergara, Benito M. *Displaying Filipinos: Photography and Colonialism in Early Twentieth Century Philippines*. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1995; urban planning as a means to veer Filipinos away from their Hispanic culture: Morley, Ian. *American Colonisation and the City Beautiful: Filipinos and Planning in the Philippines, 1916-35*. London and New York: Routledge, 2020.

² John N. Schumacher, *Readings in Philippine Church History* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Loyola School of Theology, 1979), 9; Felipe II, "Instructions for Governor Tello," in *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898*, vol. 9, eds. and trans. Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson (Bank of the Philippine Islands, 2001), 225.

³ Schumacher, *Readings* 28, 36.

⁴ Schumacher, *Readings* 4.

approve not only the roster of church hierarchy prior to their assumption to parochial or evangelization duties but also the foundation of ecclesiastical institutions and their edifices, in return for funding the propagation of Christianity and subsidizing the celebration of the Divine Offices.⁵ This phase of Philippine history is worth investigating to unravel the basis of socio-political aspects of the traditional religious processions.

The foregoing is the basis for the union of the church and state in the Philippines, but its implication on the celebratory aspects of the religious ceremonies has been lost through time and is largely unknown in the present times. This paper uses historical research to provide the early 19th-century social dimension of some of the religious celebrations in Vigan, a Cathedral City and a World Heritage Site.⁶ It aims to recuperate an aspect of its unrecorded history and thus foster the significance of geography, heritage structures, and spaces to the religious processions and other rituals.

Continuity during the Spanish colonial rule

Spanish colonists sought to maintain certain freedoms – however limited and curtailed these may be – that the people enjoyed before the conquest. The state bestowed upon the native elite the privilege of holding the lowest positions in the political hierarchy, either as *gobernadorcillo* (town mayor) or *cabeza de barangay* (village head), a greatly modified form of the traditional authority they once held over the people, even though this was then limited only to the collection of taxes and resolution of petty judicial cases.⁷

The *Sangley*, as the Chinese were commonly referred to in the Philippines, would also enjoy these political privileges.⁸ Its origin could be traced to the words

⁵ Felipe II, “Royal Instructions to Gomez Perez Dasmarinas Regarding Ecclesiastical Affairs,” in *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898*, vol. 21, eds. and trans. Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander (Bank of the Philippine Islands, 2001), 19; Francisco de Ortega, “Report Concerning the Filipinas Islands, and Other Papers,” in *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898*, vol. 9, eds. and trans. Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson (Bank of the Philippine Islands, 2001), 107; Santiago de Vera, et al., “Letter from the Audiencia to Felipe II,” in *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898*, vol. 6, eds. and trans. Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson (Bank of the Philippine Islands, 2001), 261.

⁶ Vigan is commonly spelled as “Bigan” in the 17th century sources.

⁷ Antonio de Morga, “Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas (concluded),” in *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898*, vol. 16, eds. and trans. Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander (Bank of the Philippine Islands, 2001), 155-156.

⁸ Lucio Gutiérrez, OP, *Domingo de Salazar, O.P. First Bishop of the Philippines: 1512-1594; A Study of His Life and Work* (Manila, Philippines: University of Santo Tomas, 2001), 168.

“xang” and “li” which means “to deal or to contract.”⁹ Other sources would say “sengdi” or “seng-li” which means “to trade.”¹⁰ As an offshoot of the policy on segregation of races, the *Sangleys* were originally confined to the Parián during the early colonial period.¹¹ Conversion to Christianity bestowed upon the converts various privileges, such as being able to marry native Catholic women and with it, to live outside the Parián and engage in trade elsewhere in the Philippines.¹² The conversion process was frowned upon by a number of people because it was done hastily, as observed in the outward and superficial beliefs exhibited by the new converts.¹³

The rise of a new ethnicity, an offshoot of the intermarriage between the indigenous population and the Chinese immigrant traders began to challenge the native wielders of political authority. In Manila, this rocked the *status quo*, culminating in the intense inter-ethnic rivalry in the late 19th-century.¹⁴ Although Vigan was not known to have a significant *Sangley* population,¹⁵ the roots of the dissenting voices were recorded here much earlier. Analyzed through the *Naturales*’ claims of *Mestizo* provocatory activities during the 18th century, this article delves into an early 19th-century incident in Vigan, together with its mid to late 19th-century repercussions on church furnishings along the framework of an inter-ethnic feud.¹⁶ The Ilocanos, the *naturales* or natives of Vigan, had already bewailed the abuses of the *Mestizos* in the economic sphere during the 18th century. Adept in commercial activities the latter learned from their *Sangley* forebears, they had control of the finances. Realizing the commercial and economic benefits of crops, specifically rice, they invested in lands,

⁹ Lourdes Díaz-Trechuelo, “The Role of the Chinese in the Philippine Domestic Economy (1570-1770),” in *The Chinese in the Philippines 1570-1770*, vol. 1, ed. Alfonso Felix Jr. (Manila, Bombay, New York: Solidaridad Publishing House, 1966), 176.

¹⁰ Ma. Rita Santos Borja, “Buhay at Sining ni Maximo Vicente, Sr: Patuloy na Tradisyon sa Pag-uukit ng Santo” (MA Thesis, Unibersidad ng Pilipinas, 1991), 41; Caroline S. Hau, *Necessary Fictions: Philippine Literature and the Nation, 1946-1980* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, c2000), 141; Regalado Trota Jose and Ramon Villegas, *Power + Faith + Image: Philippine Art in Ivory from the 16th to the 19th Century* (Makati: Ayala Foundation Inc., 2004), 22.

¹¹ Antonio de Morga, “Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas (concluded),” in *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898*, vol. 16, eds. and trans. by Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander (Bank of the Philippine Islands, 2001), 198.

¹² Simón de Anda y Salazar, “Anda’s Memorial to the Spanish Government” in *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898*, vol. 50, ed. and trans. Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson (Bank of the Philippine Islands, 2001), 166.

¹³ Anda y Salazar, 157.

¹⁴ Sinibaldo de Mas, “Internal Political Condition of the Philippines,” in *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898*, vol. 52, eds. and trans. Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander (Bank of the Philippine Islands, 2001), 64.

¹⁵ Edgar Wickberg, *The Chinese Mestizo in Philippine History* (Manila: Kaisa Para sa Kaunlaran, Inc., 2001), 23-24, 47.

¹⁶ The term “*naturales*” will be used throughout the article to denote the native people of the Philippines.

some of which they may have inherited from their maternal line – judging from the experience of other provinces, like Pampanga.¹⁷ In any case, they had the financial capability as well as the commercial acuity to acquire land in any way, to further bolster their social status.

The social identity theory and identity theory may well be the basis for the distinct identity of *Mestizos de Sangleyes*.¹⁸ For an emerging group of *Mestizos* within the Ilocano homeland, the individual members were aware of their *gremio*'s capability.¹⁹ The theory discusses the importance of symbols – in the case of the *Mestizos*, the ecclesiastical implements and images – for the enhancement of their class.²⁰ This explains the reason for some actions taken by the *Mestizos* during the 1804 incident. I treat the ecclesiastical implements as symbols of authority, following Oona Paredes' treatment of the "*giling*, the *takalub*, and the *bagobal ha bulawan*" as "common ancestral symbols of political and legal authority" that were indigenized after these were bestowed by Spanish colonial authorities to the indigenous Lumad leaders.²¹ In contrast to the *giling* which traces its origins to the "cane of office" bestowed to the native political leaders,²² and therefore part of their daily regalia, the ecclesiastical implements were carried only during the celebratory functions during the religious ceremonies, particularly the religious processions. The religious implements, therefore, were extensions of political functions within the religious celebratory sphere. Possession of images, in this case, lay outside the political functions of the local elite and are an acknowledgment of their distinguished status.

The growth of Vigan: The road to cityhood

Vigan's earliest recorded history coincided with the Spanish northward expansion. Reaching the Ilocos coast in 1572, the arrival of Juan de Salcedo's armada

¹⁷ John A. Larkin, *The Pampangans: Colonial Society in a Philippine Province* (New Day Publishers, 1993), 36-40, 54-55.

¹⁸ Jan E. Stets and Peter Burke, "Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory," *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 63/3 (2000), 225.

¹⁹ During the Spanish colonial period, ethnicities were segregated and each was mandated to live in its own specific quarters in a multi-ethnic town or city that is known as "*gremio*." Affinity with the *gremio* also facilitated the collection of tributes, which was graduated according to the ethnicities' earning capacity.

²⁰ Stets and Burke, "Identity Theory," 225.

²¹ Oona P. Paredes, *A Mountain of Difference: The Lumad in Early Colonial Mindanao* (Ithaca, New York: Southeast Asia Program Cornell University, 2013), 151-152. Paredes further describes these symbols of authority: the *giling* as a black wooden stick "with markings that refer to the ... ancestral/customary law," the *takalub* as "a bracelet of pig tusks" and the *bagobal ha bulawan* as "the golden cane" (151-152).

²² Paredes, *A Mountain of Difference* 153.

upon the mouth of Vigan River was met by warriors in battle formation. Amidst the natives' echoing shouts and up-raised lances, the Spaniards offered their customary peace but were instead reciprocated with clamors for their decapitated heads to which they responded with shots from arquebuses. The volleys dispersed the native Ilocanos, who abandoned the town. The Spaniards proceeded up the Bantay River and entered a "beautiful town of more than 1500 houses."²³ Salcedo ordered his men not to harm the abandoned women and children and only collect required provisions. Noting the "spaciousness of the site," he later thought of settling in the town, but was met with opposition.²⁴ The Spaniards concurred to just return some other day, and by then, the natives, who realized the Spaniards' peaceful ways, had already returned. The Spaniards then departed after welcoming the returning people.²⁵

After reaching Ylabag River during their reconnaissance of the northern reaches of Luzon, Salcedo commanded *Alférez* (Second Lieutenant) Antonio Hurtado to go back to Vigan and pacify the towns along the route. The natives in Vigan were receptive to the Spaniard's desire to settle in the area, since this would offer security against the hostile people from the surrounding settlements. They realized that the fort the Spaniards planned to build would be beneficial for their defense; hence, they took an active part in its construction by providing wood of sufficient width. The fort had a vantage position, commanding views of both river and seas, although the site was situated quite a distance from the town. At its completion, Salcedo left his *alférez* (second lieutenant) with 26 soldiers at the settlement and proceeded to Cagayan.²⁶

In early 1574, Juan de Salcedo came back to found Villa Fernandina in the town of Vigan, named in memory of Prince D. Fernando, son of King Philip II and Queen Anne.²⁷ With a sufficient amount after providing tribute to the royal coffers, he was able to start the construction of a fort, church and royal houses.²⁸ A convent was founded shortly after the conquest and the towns of Cabayà and Tuley were placed under its spiritual administration.²⁹

The area's spiritual administration was undertaken by the Augustinians, who were also given to tend to the provinces of Pampanga, Ilocos, Iloilo and parts of the

²³ Gaspar de San Agustín, *Libro Segvndo de las Conquistas de las Islas Philipinas, y Coronica de los Religiosos del Orden de N. P. S. Agustín* (Madrid: Imprenta de Manuel Ruiz de Murga, 1698), 263.

²⁴ San Agustín, *Libro Segvndo de las Conquistas* 263.

²⁵ San Agustín, *Libro Segvndo de las Conquistas* 263.

²⁶ San Agustín, *Libro Segvndo de las Conquistas* 266.

²⁷ San Agustín, *Libro Segvndo de las Conquistas* 275, 304.

²⁸ San Agustín, *Libro Segvndo de las Conquistas* 275.

²⁹ San Agustín, *Libro Segvndo de las Conquistas* 304.

Tagalog provinces.³⁰ Their administration was passed on thereafter to the clerics of the Bishopric of Nueva Segovia.³¹ In mid-18th century, the City of Nueva Segovia – also known as Lal-lo – in the province of Cagayan, the original seat of the Bishopric of Nueva Segovia, declined in importance due to its dwindling population and greatly reduced commercial activities. This paved the way for a move towards the bishopric's transfer to Vigan.³² Vigan's geographical position along the western coast of Luzon, placed it in a strategic location for maritime trade and was further endowed with a good road network, helping commerce thrive to support a viable population.³³ With such advantages, Bishop Juan de la Fuente Yepes in 1756, worked for the transfer of the "Episcopal Seat of Nueva Segovia to Vigan, capital of the Province of Ilocos ... which, being at the center or heart of the bishopric, lay in the midst of the two provinces of the Cagayan and Pangasinan."³⁴ Besides its strategic position, Vigan also had "an ample population of both Spanish *Mestizos* and *Naturales* who would attend to the Divine Offices," in contrast to the then demographically impoverished Episcopal Seat of Lal-lo."³⁵ Finally, realizing the advantages of Vigan over Lal-lo, the royal license was issued to officially proclaim the transfer in 1758.³⁶ The parochial church of San Pablo de Vigan, which had always been under secular administration, became the site of the cathedral.³⁷ Shortly thereafter, the town was elevated into a city.³⁸ A replacement for the old church only began in 1790 however, initiated by Bishop Juan Ruiz de San Agustín.³⁹ The Cathedral was finally finished in 1800, but only one of the two projected belltowers was built.⁴⁰

³⁰ Schumacher, *Readings* 17.

³¹ San Agustín, *Libro Segvndo de las Conquistas* 304.

³² Archivo General de Indias (AGI), "Consulta sobre traslado a Vigan del obispo de Nueva Segovia," Filipinas, 98, n.35 (Seville, 1758), 1.

³³ AGI, "Consulta traslado a Vigan," 2.

³⁴ Archivo General de Indias (AGI), "Expediente sobre traslado a Vigan del obispo de Nueva Segovia," Filipinas, 293, N.79 (Seville, 1756), 5.

³⁵ AGI, "Expediente traslado a Vigan," 5, 6.

³⁶ AGI, "Consulta traslado a Vigan," 2; Alicia M. L. Coseteng, *Spanish Churches in the Philippines* (UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines, 1972), 38, 62.

³⁷ Juan Francisco de San Antonio, O.S.F., "The Religious Estate in the Philippines," in *The Philippine islands, 1493-1898*, vol. 28, eds. and trans. Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1903-09), 158; Juan J. Delgado, S.J., "Religious Condition of the Islands," in *The Philippine islands, 1493-1898*, vol. 28, eds. and trans. Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1903-09), 164.

³⁸ Archivo General de Indias (AGI), "Concesión de título de ciudad al pueblo de Vigan," Filipinas, 343.L.12.F.233R-235R (Seville, 1758).

³⁹ Coseteng, *Spanish Churches*, 38-39.

⁴⁰ Nestor Raras, "Fray Juan Garcia Ruiz de San Agustín (1728-1796), Augustinian Recollect Bishop of Nueva Segovia: The Builder of the Church Complex of Vigan," *BINAH: A Treasure Trove of Research Abstracts*, 2 (2007-2019): 48. Binah-Research-Abstract-Vol-2-2007-20192.pdf (rst.edu.ph).

The tribute system during the Spanish colonial years

The tribute system was part of the *Recopilación de las Leyes, Instrucciones, Ordenanzas, Cédulas y Provisiones para el Buen Gobierno de las Indias* or the Laws of the Indies “[Ley I, título 9, libro 8, and ley 63, título 5, libro 6, (tributes when paid in kind); ley 44, título 5, libro 6 (tributes in encomiendas and general appraisements)].”⁴¹ Although tribute collection was instituted by the empire, individual tax collection was executed by the lowest echelon of the colonial bureaucracy – the *cabeza de barangay*, or the native village head, and the *gobernadorcillo*, or the town mayor, – two positions within the Spanish bureaucracy which *Naturales* and *Mestizos* could hold during the Spanish colonial era.

By 1741, the Spanish colonial government identified four distinct populations based on ethnicities: “Spanish and Spanish mestizos, Chinese, indios (i.e. native Malays), and Chinese mestizos.”⁴² Although these ethnic groups assumed legal entities in the Spanish colonial bureaucracy, only the last three groups paid tributes.⁴³ The Spanish colonial government instituted a system of tax collection through the structure of the *gremio*. The *gremio* facilitated the collection of taxes by grouping the people according to ethnicity. As a result, towns or cities were divided into geographically distinct sections according to their ethnicity. The ample supply of rice harvested in the area soon attracted the *Mestizos de Sangleyes* to settle in Vigan.⁴⁴ Their population increase later since there was already a separate *Gremio de Mestizo* by 1804.⁴⁵ The *Barrio de Mestizos* (district of the *Mestizos*) where the *Mestizos de Sangley* lived was located near the Mestizo River, while the *Barrio de Naturales* (district of the Natives) occupied the other half of the city’s core, demonstrating the separation of *gremios* according to people’s ethnicity.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Francisco Leandro de Viana, “Financial Affairs of the Islands, 1766,” in *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898*, vol. 50, eds. and trans. Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1903-09), 101.

⁴² John A. Larkin, *The Pampangans*, 49.

⁴³ John A. Larkin, *The Pampangans*, 49.

⁴⁴ Felix M. Keesing, *The Ethnohistory of Northern Luzon* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1962), 32.

⁴⁵ “Expediente creado a representación del Gobernadorcillo y principales del Gremio de naturales de Vigan contra el Gremio de mestizos del mismo pueblo por cierta ocurrencia en las procesiones de Semana Santa,” *Patronato 1793-1830*, B39, SDS 2050, Expediente 23 (Manila: National Archives of the Philippines, 1804), S-533v. The *Gremio* of the *Mestizos* was indirectly referred through the phrase “ambos *Gremios*” (both *Gremios*) throughout the *expediente*.

⁴⁶ “Expediente de Semana Santa,” S-556v. In the narrative, although the *Gremio de Naturales* or “ambos *Gremios*” is often used for the domain, or location where the two ethnicities lived, in folio S-556v, *Barrio* was used for both *Naturales* and *Mestizos*. See also footnote 45.

It must be noted that the *Gremio de Mestizo* was already being referred to as the *Pariancillo* in 1804.⁴⁷ In the 1804 narrative, *Pariancillo* rather than *Gremio*, was more often used to refer to the area where the *Mestizos* lived. By the late 19th century, the Chinese would establish their stores and most likely their residences, along Calle San Jose—now known as Calle Crisologo—located at the business area within the core of Vigan.⁴⁸ Incidentally, San Jose also refers to the 1784 market place within the walled City of Manila – Alcaicería de San Jose – that catered to Chinese who returned after the expulsions.⁴⁹

There are indications in various documents that the ethnicities mixed with each other within the same geographic space after sometime. As discussed, each of these *gremios* was headed by a *gobernadorcillo* (mayor). With an area having more than one *gremio*, it was not unusual for a certain town or city to have two *gobernadorcillos*. Such structure was dictated by the tribute that varied according to ethnicity. For example, for the *naturales* or the natives (the Ilocanos in this case), the tribute was “8 reales per family” but the state’s spending eventually increased the amount to 10 reales.⁵⁰ The *Mestizos de Sangleyes* in contrast, whose earning capacity was twice that of the *Naturales*, paid twice the amount of the latter’s tribute. The *Sangleyes*, who exacted enormous profit from their toils, were levied 6 pesos per person.⁵¹

Such a system, whilst efficient for tax collection purposes, oftentimes led to conflict. The 1804 Holy Thursday incident, which is the basis for this analysis, is therefore important not only for unmasking some of the sources of trouble between the two *gremios* of Vigan City but also for elaborating on the undiscussed dynamics of the early 19th century social, political, and economic milieu of the northern Luzon cathedral city.

The Holy Week ceremonies in the Philippines

According to tradition, Holy Week ceremonies in the Philippines start on Palm Sunday, when Jesus is welcomed into Jerusalem by his followers. Celebration

⁴⁷ “Expediente de Semana Santa,” S-534v. The *gobernadorcillo* of the *Naturales* in 1804 made the reference to the *Pariancillo* of Vigan. In the narrative, *Pariancillo* was used for the domain of the *Gobernadorcillo* of the *Mestizos*. The *Pariancillo* can also be found in the canonical books of Vigan, particularly the *Defunciones* during the mid-19th century.

⁴⁸ *Contribución Industrial, Ilocos Sur, 1896 – 97*, SDS 15284 (Manila: National Archives of the Philippines, 1897), S-291, S-351.

⁴⁹ J. R. Jiménez Verdejo, et. al. “Spanish fortifications in Asia: A case study of Intramuros district in Manila – Current situation and future prospects,” *WIT Transactions on the Built Environment*, 143 (2014): 396.

⁵⁰ Tomás de Comyn, *Estado de las Islas Filipinas en 1810 brevemente descrito por Tomás Comyn* (Madrid: Imprenta de Repullés, 1820), 113.

⁵¹ Comyn, *Estado de las Islas Filipinas*, 113-114.

continues on through the week and is marked by celebrations of specific Biblical events such as Holy Wednesday (when St. Peter denies knowing Jesus), Holy Thursday (when the Last Supper is held) and Good Friday (when Jesus is crucified on the cross). The celebrations culminate on Easter Sunday, marked by the resurrection of Jesus. The Holy Week rites and rituals, notably the religious processions, figure prominently in various travelogues written by foreign visitors to the Philippines. These were however, mostly written in the late 19th or early 20th centuries. Nevertheless, more than giving Western, non-Catholic insights on the religious rituals, these also document the continuity in the practices that were staged in various towns throughout the Philippines during that time. Campbell Dauncey's account is about Iloilo's Good Friday procession which was similar to Vigan in some respects, like the shoulder-borne image of grieving Mary and the dead Christ on a glass-sided bier.⁵² The Emblems of the Passion, which was described in the procession of the "Aglipayanos," consists of the implements used during the Passion of Christ such as the hammer, the nails, the crown of thorns, among other things.⁵³ In the town of Panay, in addition to the carried emblems, the boys also chant the *Considerad*, verses about the meditations on the passion and suffering of Jesus, a practice introduced in 1895.⁵⁴ Although the Emblems of the Passion were commonly carried during the Good Friday procession, it was not mentioned in the accounts of Vigan.

The rituals spanned the whole lenten season and included the gradually lengthening, weekly Sunday processions which were witnessed by Ralph Kent Buckland in "Calivo."⁵⁵ These were headed by candle-bearing children walking in two lines.⁵⁶ The author opines that families "wishing to do special penance for some wrong-doing, or wishing to express their gratitude for some blessing, or for some good fortune that has befallen them," sponsor a float that depicts scenes from Christ's life and passion.⁵⁷ The accounts also give details on how the procession was conducted, from family sponsorship of images on wheeled floats, to roles played by certain people who ensure that the images' vestments do not brush upon lighted candles, to the number of people who took on roles as pullers.⁵⁸

⁵² Campbell Dauncey, *An Englishwoman in the Philippines* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1906), 196.

⁵³ Dauncey, *An Englishwoman*, 198.

⁵⁴ Noel Vincent B. Abalajon, "The Considerad in the Religious Tradition of Panay," *Philippiniana Sacra*, 46/136 (January-April, 2021): 136.

⁵⁵ The present-day city of Kalibo is now part of the province of Aklan.

⁵⁶ Ralph Kent Buckland, *In the Land of the Filipino* (New York: Every Where Publishing Company, 1912), 119-120.

⁵⁷ Buckland, *In the Land of the Filipino*, 121.

⁵⁸ Buckland, *In the Land of the Filipino*, 119-124.

After the rituals in the church were done on Holy Thursday, the Blessed Sacrament was transferred to the *Monumento*, the temporary, but often towering structure that would hold the Blessed Sacrament after the rituals of Maundy Thursday. The candles placed all over the structure were then lit. The religious procession opened with the *estandarte* or religious standard, which was carried by a prominent member of the society at the head of the procession. The *guion* was borne by the *gobernadorcillo* of the town. This is a silver standard with an effigy of the *Agnus Dei* or the Lamb of God on the obverse, and images of angels bearing censers on the reverse. This is a representation of Jesus Christ, who offered his life as the sacrificial lamb for the salvation of mankind. The various scenes of the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ, and images of holy personages were borne aloft by means of processional floats called *andas*. In many towns and cities – Vigan being one of them – the image of the Virgin of Sorrows was borne by women. As in any other religious processions, the wax candles were handed out by the church or its religious confraternities.

The association of the *estandarte* and *guion* with the positions of the two high ranking members of the political elite invested them with symbolic authority. This symbolic authority was likewise extended to the members of the preeminent gremio who carry the processional floats. In the case of Vigan, which was a multi-ethnic city, the native Ilocanos take precedence in public functions over their *Mestizo* counterpart. In 1804, Vigan's ascending ethnic group, the *Mestizos*, would challenge these long-standing traditions. There was never a more opportune time for the *Mestizos* to usurp the social preeminence than those moments when the Bishopric of Nueva Segovia was *sede vacante* upon the death of Bishop Agustín Pedro Blaquier, O.E.S.A. on 31 December, 1803.⁵⁹

The suspension of Vigan's Maundy Thursday Procession

In spite of the prevalence of Holy Week accounts, very few delved further on their socio-ethnic aspects. In this respect, the Vigan incident is significant in documenting the suspension of the Holy Thursday procession, based on the narration of the protest filed by the *gobernadorcillo* of the *Naturales*, Don Agathon Vicente

⁵⁹ Domingo Abella, "The Bishops of Nueva Segobia," *Philippine Studies*, 10/4 (1962): 583; David M. Cheney. "Bishop Agustín Pedro Blaquier, O.E.S.A." *The Hierarchy of the Catholic Church*. (1996-2020). Bishop Agustín Pedro Blaquier, O.E.S.A. succeeded Bishop Juan Ruiz de San Agustín, O.A.R. on 20 July, 1801. The 1804 incident happened after the death of Bishop Blaquier on 31 December, 1803. His successor, Bishop Cayetano Pallás, O.P. would only be appointed on 6 October, 1806 (Abella, "The Bishops," 583).

Gallardo, at the office of the *alcalde mayor* (provincial governor).⁶⁰ It highlighted the growing tension between the *gremios* of Vigan City in the early 19th century. In Vigan, this tension had its beginnings partly in the rising economic prosperity of the *Mestizos*, which from the Ilocanos' perception, were partly gained through fraudulent means. It escalated in 1804, when the *Mestizos* scrambled to take possession of the religious implements that constitute symbolic authority in public functions. It is also one of the earliest documented incidents of the escalating conflict and clashes between the *gremios* not only in the provinces but also in the suburbs of Manila, where it would reach its apogee by the latter half of that century.⁶¹

The protest concerns the events that transpired in the afternoon, shortly before the traditional Maundy Thursday procession was about to leave the Cathedral Church of Vigan. Don Agathon Vicente Gallardo, as the *gobernadorcillo* of the *Gremio de Naturales*, was in possession of the *guion* and was then at the presbytery – the altar area which was delimited from the rest of the congregation by the communion rail.⁶² His subaltern on the other hand, carried the banner or standard.⁶³ The wives of the *principales*⁶⁴ were also at the presbytery, since they would carry the image of Our Lady of Sorrows during the procession.⁶⁵

However, before the procession could even start, the *gobernadorcillo* of the *Pariancillo* of the *Mestizos*, Don Francisco Zales de Angco, at the head of his cohorts and “with violent movements barged into the presbytery, with an intent to seize the *guion*,” and the float of Our Lady of Sorrows from the possession of their native counterparts.⁶⁶ Don Juan Victoriano Angco, the *coadjutor* (assistant parish priest), demonstrated a hostile attitude to the *Naturales* who brought the incident to his attention.⁶⁷ Incidentally, Don Juan Victoriano Angco was the brother of the *gobernadorcillo* of the *Mestizos*. In their protest, the *Naturales* accused him of “failing to respect the sacred precinct of the church.”⁶⁸ The foregoing incident shows that only the natives' restraint and deep reverence for their Creator averted the occurrence of any untoward incident, allowing peace to still prevail during the occasion. When they tried to discuss the matter with the *mestizo* priest, the latter declared that he

⁶⁰ The title “Don” refers to people of distinguished positions, such as those with significant economic and political standing, as well as those privileged with education, like the priests.

⁶¹ Wickberg, *The Chinese Mestizo*, 42.

⁶² “Expediente de Semana Santa,” S-533v.

⁶³ “Expediente de Semana Santa,” S-533v.

⁶⁴ The term “principales” refers to the group of past and incumbent *cabezas de barangay* and *gobernadorcillos*, who were privileged to vote for the election of the next *gobernadorcillo*.

⁶⁵ “Expediente de Semana Santa,” S-533v.

⁶⁶ “Expediente de Semana Santa,” S-533v.

⁶⁷ “Expediente de Semana Santa,” S-533v.

⁶⁸ “Expediente de Semana Santa,” S-533v.

was indisposed.⁶⁹ He also ordered that the “candle lights be extinguished from the *Monumento*”⁷⁰ and “the church doors closed.”⁷¹

After all these efforts by the *Naturales* to restore normalcy failed, they were left with no other recourse but to lodge a protest at the provincial governor’s office. The accounts narrated the travails the *Naturales* endured under the *mestizo* clerics’ abuse of authority. They deplored the *mestizo* clerics’ continued denial of the privileges they were formerly entitled, such as carrying the *guion* and standard during the Black Saturday procession.⁷² Moreover, during the Easter Sunday procession, the *Naturales* were exasperated when only the *Divinísimo* – possibly the image of the Risen Christ or a monstrance – was borne in procession even though their “*Santos and Santas*” – images of holy biblical personages – were already placed in the accustomed places.⁷³ The statue of Our Lady, a key image for the traditional *Encuentro* (meeting of the Risen Christ and Mary), was just relegated to a niche, from where she would proceed for this ceremony.⁷⁴ Even the “most simple, Christian and religious act” expected from the *mestizo* priest to equitably distribute the candles among the *Naturales* as well, was withheld from the latter.⁷⁵ These were only given to the *Mestizos* and the few Spaniards who attended the ceremonies. These were all, supposedly, in accordance with the order of the *mestizo* priest.⁷⁶

An outpouring of pent-up sentiments: The *Naturales*’ litany of travails

The suspension of the Maundy Thursday procession further provoked the already uneasy relations between the *Naturales* and *Mestizos*. The impending loss of the *Naturales*’ social preeminence brought about by the *Mestizo*’s seizure of the *guion*, standard and possibly including the *andas* or shoulder-borne processional float of the Sorrowful Mother left them with no other choice but to recount the *Mestizos*’ excesses that were done with the connivance of Vigan’s *mestizo* clergy. For the *Naturales*, it seemed as if the *mestizo* clergy failed to consider the past efforts exerted by the *Naturales* in providing for the clergy’s needs.

⁶⁹ “Expediente de Semana Santa,” S-533v.

⁷⁰ Parts of the present *Monumento* of Vigan was commissioned in 1790, and may have comprised the one mentioned during the 1804 incident (for details of the *Monumento*, as well as other ecclesiastical artifacts of the Museo del Arzobispado de Nueva Segovia, refer to Regalado Trota Jose, “Is There Folk Knowledge that is neither Folk nor Knowledge? Jottings on the Ecclesiastical Museums in Vigan,” in *Conscripción: Imagining and Inscribing the Ilocano World*, ed. Ino Manalo (Manila: National Archives of the Philippines in partnership with The Provincial Government of Ilocos Sur, 2014), 50.

⁷¹ “Expediente de Semana Santa,” S-534, S-580.

⁷² “Expediente de Semana Santa,” S-535.

⁷³ “Expediente de Semana Santa,” S-535 – 535v.

⁷⁴ “Expediente de Semana Santa,” S-535v.

⁷⁵ “Expediente de Semana Santa,” S-536.

⁷⁶ “Expediente de Semana Santa,” S-536.

The *mestizo* parish priest always had harsh words for the natives, proceeding from the mortal hatred which all *Mestizos* harbored against them and took every opportunity to bring them down.⁷⁷ They narrated how they faithfully carried out their responsibilities concerning their personal services and their tributes by supplying such necessities as “fish, hens, and eggs in addition to the other needs of the past coadjutors.”⁷⁸

The *Naturales*’ commitment was not limited to the personal needs of the clergy but also included the material fabric of the church. As early as 1779, Bishop Miguel García de San Esteban had already noted the unworthiness of the structure as a cathedral both in appearance and condition, prodding him to propose for its reconstruction.⁷⁹ Later, when the project was approved, the *Naturales* supplied the materials, consisting of “firewood, ... wood, hewn stones, coral stones, rocks, gravel, lime and water” which “they, together with their wives, children, families” carried to the site.⁸⁰ They further reasoned further that out of the “thirteen” masonry niches that were constructed for the station of the cross, “only two could be attributed to the *Mestizos*.”⁸¹ They also argued that although the *Mestizos* donated money for the cathedral’s construction and “three of them installed their respective altarpieces,” the natives’ contribution was the main altarpiece.⁸² The foregoing acts were quite disheartening since the *Naturales* claim that their contribution of 290 and six reals for the royal tribute far outweighed the *Mestizos*’ contribution of 50 and two reals.⁸³

The completion of the cathedral further sowed strife between the two *gremios*. The *Naturales* sensed a further erosion of their social preeminence in the public ceremonies of La Naval, Holy Thursday, and Good Friday processions. This arose because the cathedral was re-oriented along the east-west axis during its reconstruction.⁸⁴ The old structure was oriented along the north-south axis; hence, the old structure faced the southern square – the present-day Plaza Burgos. During those times, the processions left the church through the left lateral portal which then faced the expansive Cathedral Square – the present Plaza Salcedo – which adjoins the part of the city where the *Gremio de Naturales* was situated, and later

⁷⁷ “Expediente de Semana Santa,” S-536.

⁷⁸ “Expediente de Semana Santa,” S-534v – S-535.

⁷⁹ Romeo B. Galang, Jr., “Re-Visioning Ilocos,” in *Conscripción: Imagining and Inscribing the Ilocano World*, ed. Ino Manalo (Manila: National Archives of the Philippines in partnership with The Provincial Government of Ilocos Sur, 2014), 39.

⁸⁰ “Expediente de Semana Santa,” S-538v.

⁸¹ “Expediente de Semana Santa,” S-539.

⁸² “Expediente de Semana Santa,” S-536v – S-537.

⁸³ “Expediente de Semana Santa,” S-536 – S-536v.

⁸⁴ “Expediente de Semana Santa,” S-556v.

entering through the right lateral portal which faced the portion of the city where the *Gremio de Mestizos* was situated.⁸⁵ However, when the cathedral was re-oriented, the processions left the church through the part of the city where the *Gremio de Mestizos* was situated.⁸⁶ Further complications arose, when a second procession was instituted for the procession of Our Lady of the Rosary, which leaves through the part where the *Mestizos* lived.⁸⁷ During the last day of this procession, the La Naval procession, their procession leaves through the left lateral portal of the Cathedral that overlooks the *Pariancillo*. On the other days, its egress was made at the side facing west, where the *Gremio de Naturales* was located.⁸⁸

Lastly, the natives pointed out that the *mestizo* priests allowed lay fellow *Mestizos* to keep the images of Santo Domingo de Guzmán and San Pío V in their houses.⁸⁹ The images were commissioned in 1797 during the Episcopalian Visitation, upon the recommendation of the Dominican General Procurator to provide for the two images what were to accompany the old image of Our Lady of the Rosary during the La Naval procession in October.⁹⁰ The *Naturales* claimed that keeping the images in the houses results in irreverent gestures towards the images, particularly when the vestments were changed.⁹¹

The *Alcalde-Mayor* – the Provincial Governor – summoned witnesses

The provincial governor's inquiry provided other details from both camps that served as evidence for the case. The inquiry into the protest uncovered further aspects of life where the *Mestizos* intruded upon the lives of the *Naturales*, as perceived by the latter. In the economic realm, the *Naturales* deplored the greed by which the *Mestizos* bought rice grains at low prices during harvest time, when these abound, storing them to sell later in other provinces, depending upon the prevailing price.⁹²

⁸⁵ "Expediente de Semana Santa," S-557.

⁸⁶ However, later reports narrate that the processions formerly left the cathedral through the door that faced the orient and returns at the opposite door that overlooks the area of the *naturales*, a route that is different from what was disclosed in the earlier narratives ("Expediente de Semana Santa," S – 557, S – 564v – S – 565, S – 565v – S – 566, S – 567v). The seemingly conflicting accounts were resolved when later reports narrated an expounded version when changes were implemented later. This time, it leaves through the opposite direction and returns through the domain of the *Mestizos* ("Expediente de Semana Santa," S – 567v). The Fiscal's report used the cardinal directions (east and west), while the former used the lateral directions (left and right).

⁸⁷ "Expediente de Semana Santa," S-569.

⁸⁸ "Expediente de Semana Santa," S-535v.

⁸⁹ "Expediente de Semana Santa," S-556v.

⁹⁰ "Expediente de Semana Santa," S-556.

⁹¹ "Expediente de Semana Santa," S-556.

⁹² "Expediente de Semana Santa," S-582.

The excess grains were only released at opportune time, when these commanded higher prices, which the *Naturales* believed had a detrimental effect upon them, thus making “their lives more miserable.”⁹³

The former *provisor* (secretary) of the bishopric, a Chinese *Mestizo*, whom the *Naturales* mentioned in their protest, was among those summoned. Dr. Don Eustaquio Bengson recounted that the Holy Thursday procession had always excluded the *Mestizos* “without any complain from the *Gremio de Naturales*” since the time of his predecessor, the by then deceased Dr. Don Manuel Baza.⁹⁴ Those occurred “during the five years that he served as provisor or secretary to Bishop Don Fr. Juan Ruiz de San Agustín.”⁹⁵

Among the responses received by the provincial governor, that of the parish priest of Santa presented historically relevant data. For one, he mentioned the background regarding church fees. He recounted that the fees associated with burial and Sanctorum, which were re-imposed by the *mestizo* provisor, no longer applied during that time because the *Naturales* were already exempted from paying the fee by the past bishop in consideration for their active part in the cathedral’s construction.⁹⁶ In colonial Philippines, “the funds for the construction of the churches come from the burial fee as well as from the ‘eight part of the occasional fees.’”⁹⁷

The parish priest of Santa pointed out that the conflict between the two *gremios* resulted in great scandal and led to the disruption of religious functions, to the detriment of the faith. The social preeminence accorded to the *Naturales* in public functions, whenever the two *gremios* participate, was founded on natural law that was respected in the kingdoms, provinces and cities of both secular and religious realms.⁹⁸ The natives were preferred over foreigners according to the rules that have been admitted as laws and policies.⁹⁹ This he said, was also “based on the Bible.”¹⁰⁰

⁹³ “Expediente de Semana Santa,” S-581v.

⁹⁴ “Expediente de Semana Santa,” S-584.

⁹⁵ “Expediente de Semana Santa,” S-584.

⁹⁶ “Expediente de Semana Santa,” S-553, S-570, S-578v – S-579.

⁹⁷ De Viana, 94.

⁹⁸ “Expediente de Semana Santa,” S-570. This natural law as discussed by the parish priest of Santa states that “where Father and sons are correlatives and were not only born to their fathers but to their countries as well.”

⁹⁹ “Expediente de Semana Santa,” S-570.

¹⁰⁰ “Expediente de Semana Santa,” S-570. The parish priest quoted the Bible verse as: “(Chapter 18, verse 15 of Deuteronomy; Chapter 19, verse 9 of Genesis; Chapter 2, verse 15 of Prophet Hosea)”: “God was pleased that the People asked to speak with him, and govern who is his natural – kindred - and he promised them a prophet of his own, with the exclusion of strangers” (*se agradó Dios de que el Pueblo pidiese que le hablase y gobernase quién era su natural, y les prometió un profeta de los suyos con exclusión de los extraños* [extranjeros]).

Furthermore, The Laws of the Indies and the Royal Decrees mandate that social preeminence resides first upon the Spaniards, second, upon the natives and thirdly upon the *Mestizos*.¹⁰¹ The feud over social preeminence was further clarified in 1840 when a ruling proclaimed that in such disputes, the primacy of the *Gremio de Naturales* prevails over the *Gremio de Mestizos*.¹⁰²

The fiscal's recommendation to the governor-general pointed out the excesses committed by Dr. Don Eustaquio Benson, which resulted not only in scandal and strife, but also in dishonor and lack of respect for the Sacred Mysteries and to the devotion of the faithful. The evidence showed clearly how the *mestizo* priests favored their *mestizo* compatriots to the detriment of the rights of the *Naturales*. To make matters worse, these were shown off with "much publicity."¹⁰³ The recommendation stipulates that "pecuniary damages ought to be imposed on the cause of all the disturbances."¹⁰⁴ A letter was transmitted to the archbishop, urging him to take the necessary steps so that the hierarchy may be instructed on their proper roles and so that the case may serve as a lesson and a deterrent to those who might imitate the conduct of the *mestizo* priest. Such steps ensure that peace and harmony would reign in the Christian settlements of "both Majesties."¹⁰⁵

Discerning the politics in the Vigan Cathedral altarpieces

Accounts seemingly ceased, for no other documented case of strife between the two ethnic groups are known today. However, structures inside the Vigan Cathedral could have been one of the enduring testaments by which the *Naturales* and *Mestizos* settled their differences, or even continuing with their power play. Two collateral altars are dedicated to devotions that were once associated with the two ethnicities.

Devotions honoring Jesus Christ were historically linked to the *Naturales* or the Ilocanos of Vigan. The Collateral Altarpiece of the Nazarene presides over the gospel side aisle. The central niche of the two-storey altarpiece enshrines the image of the Nazarene, as images of Jesus Christ carrying the cross are known. In the 1804 incident, the *Naturales* spearheaded the commemoration of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus through processions of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday.

¹⁰¹ "Expediente de Semana Santa," S-570. The pertinent laws and decrees are: "Law 14, title 3, book 1 guards the rights of the *naturales*, which was enshrined in the "Decree of November 17, 1493, Decree of May 25, 1596, Decree of August 28, 1602, and Decree of July 9, 1604."

¹⁰² Wickberg, *The Chinese Mestizo*, 42.

¹⁰³ "Expediente de Semana Santa," S-584v.

¹⁰⁴ "Expediente de Semana Santa," S-585.

¹⁰⁵ "Expediente de Semana Santa," S-585. "Both Majesties" refers to "God and King" (Schumacher, *Readings* 114).

Devotions are not limited to images enshrined in the cathedral. In addition to the Nazarene, the miraculous Crucified Christ, whom the Ilocanos refer to with reverence as “*Apo*,” is enshrined in the *Simbaan a Bassit*, the Chapel of the historic cemetery of Vigan. However, this particular edifice was only built in the 1850s. This is the site of masses held for the Feast of the Invention of the Cross, formerly a major celebration in Vigan, where it is known as *Tres de Mayo*, literally “The Third of May.” Drawing on Saint Helen’s discovery of the True Cross, a group of images formerly formed part of the procession taken out during this day: the images of Santa Elena, San Macario, and the Santo Cristo. In 2019, only the image of the Santo Cristo joined the procession.

Notwithstanding the pecuniary damages levied upon the *mestizo* priest, the *Mestizos* continued to exercise certain privileges they gained since 1797, as manifested in the contemporary celebration of the La Naval in Vigan. In the cathedral, the Collateral Altarpiece of Our Lady of the Rosary presides over the epistle-side aisle, whose advocacy was historically linked to the *Mestizos*, as attested by the 1804 document. The two-storey altarpiece enshrines the image of Our Lady of the Rosary in the central niche of the first level. The image is shown bestowing the rosary to Santo Domingo de Guzmán and Santa Catalina de Siena, whose kneeling images flank its left and right sides respectively. Totally carved in-the-round from wood, the images in the tableau used to have ivory head and hands. Unfortunately, the images in this niche lost their ivory head and hands in a spate of robberies that bedeviled the cathedral. The ivory mask of Our Lady was left untouched, although the hands were also lost. All around the central niche are carved medallions in relief showing the 15 mysteries of the holy rosary.

Although Ilocos was a former Augustinian-administered province, Vigan, together with two other curacies, has always been the enclave of the secular priests.¹⁰⁶ The Dominican devotion to the Holy Rosary and the rituals concerning the La Naval form part of its liturgical feasts. It was probably during the transfer of the episcopal seat, from Lal-lo in the Dominican-administered province of Cagayan, that the devotion was introduced to Vigan. Shortly thereafter, the Confraternity of Nuestra Señora del Rosario or Our Lady of the Rosary was founded in 1769, one of the three confraternities in Vigan by the 19th century.¹⁰⁷ In 1876, D. José Montero y Vidal wrote

¹⁰⁶ San Antonio, 158; Delgado, 164.

¹⁰⁷ Bishop Mariano, “Materia de tanto interés para el buen gobierno de estas Yslas – Cofradías del Obispado de Nueva Segovia,” in *Patronato 1840-1897*, SDS 2098 (Manila: National Archives of the Philippines, 1876), S-150.

that the feast of La Naval is very famous and people from all over Ilocos attended the affair.¹⁰⁸

Since this time, however, the procession of La Naval had gone through several significant changes. In the present time, this can be gauged from the images that are still housed in Vigan today. In Museo de San Pablo, in the former sacristy of the cathedral, images under the care of the city's prominent family are loaned for exhibits from time to time. One of these is Santo Domingo, who can be identified by his attribute, the book and the staff, as well as a bejeweled star on the forehead. Although this is also a *de vestir* or dressed image just like the 1797 ivory image, its hands and head were carved from wood. Its scale is nearly life-size, which the ivory image may not have been. In the late 1990s La Naval procession, two other near life-size images of Dominican saints were still taking part in the procession: the images of San Pío V and Santo Tomás de Aquino, both with wooden heads and hands. The image of San Pío Quinto, a pope, is garbed in pontifical attire and is crowned by a papal tiara. The left hand holds a three-barred cross while the right hand is raised in a sign of benediction.

The other image is Santo Tomás de Aquino, who can be identified through his attribute – the star on his breast. It is not known whether the images of San Pío Quinto and Santo Tomás were still part of the La Naval procession since it was last witnessed in the late 1990s. The same is true regarding two other images, that of San Antonio de Padua and San Vicente Ferrer. Although the two latter images appear to be recently made, they could have been replicas of older images that could have been joining the processions a long time ago. Further research is needed to unravel the details regarding these two images.

In contrast, another image can be adequately documented from the heirs and caretakers and its history is closely linked to Vigan's *mestizo* residents. By this time, the *Mestizos de Sangleyes* were already thoroughly hispanized as seen not only through how they lived but also how they practiced their faith.¹⁰⁹ In 1850, Vigan flourished as a result of the Philippines' cash crop economy. One of the main export products during this time was indigo, which was widely cultivated in Ilocos.¹¹⁰ The income from this cash crop made the people of Vigan rich, providing them with the means

¹⁰⁸ Jose Montero y Vidal, *Cuentos Filipinos por José Montero y Vidal* (Madrid: Imp., Estereotipia y Galvanoplastia de Aribau y C^a. (Sucesores de Rivadeneyra), 1876), 146.

¹⁰⁹ Richard T. Chu, "The 'Chinese' and the 'Mestizos' of the Philippines: Towards a New Interpretation," *Philippine Studies*, 50/3 (2002): 329.

¹¹⁰ Marshall M. McLennan, *The Central Luzon Plain: Land and Society on the Inland Frontier* (Quezon City: Alemar-Phoenix Publishing House, Inc., 1980), 118. See also page 181.

to build their widely-acclaimed houses, many of which still stand.¹¹¹ Unfortunately, German blue dye, being cheaper, led to the decline of the cultivation of indigo.¹¹² The Chinese *Mestizos*, however, managed to draw their wealth from other crops like rice, which they traded extensively.

Among the families in Vigan that possess fine, ancestral houses are the Crisologos. Don Mena Crisologo's marriage with Doña Felipa Florentino sired Doña Teresa Crisologo.¹¹³ As a young child, Teresa was frail and sickly. In one of Mena Crisologo's voyages, he commissioned and brought home an image of Santa Teresa de Ávila, Teresa's patronal namesake. The wooden body of this image has ivory head and hands. Unfortunately, the image lost the pair of ivory hands in the Florentino ancestral house near the plaza, an area which was formerly associated with the Chinese merchants and the *Gremio de Mestizos*. It was housed there until its transfer to another ancestral house after the theft. A new set of wooden hands was commissioned from Mr. Lazo, a sculptor from the nearby town of San Vicente.¹¹⁴

The preeminence of the city can also be reflected on the vestments of the images, which were clad in expensive imported fabric, such as velvet and silk. These were heavily decorated using gold-thread, woven about cardboard molds to imitate brocades. The vestment of Our Lady of the Rosary and the Child Jesus even had precious metal add-ons that can be clipped on whenever a new vestment replaces the old one. This is an almost life-size image, in contrast to the smaller one mentioned in the accounts.

The titular of Vigan Cathedral's altarpieces are probable indications of how the two ethnicities of Vigan may have settled their feuds. They may have chosen to share between themselves the celebration of the leading public religious ceremonies, although this could also be an indication of the continued rivalry in setting up extravagant altarpieces dedicated to their patronal devotions. The processional images of the patrons, painstakingly guarded by the former *gremios'* members, are publicly processed through the major streets of the city. These patronal processional images correspond to the altar images that are enshrined in the cathedral's altarpieces.

¹¹¹ McLennan, *The Central Luzon Plain*, 118.

¹¹² McLennan, *The Central Luzon Plain*, 118.

¹¹³ Gloria Castillo, interview by author, 1 Oct 2017; Rebecca de los Reyes, email message to author, 4 Oct 2017. I would like to express my gratitude to Rebecca de los Reyes for permitting me to take photographs of the Santa Teresa de Ávila image, graciously welcoming me to her ancestral house and corroborating the data gathered during the fieldwork; I would also like to express my gratitude to Gloria Castillo for the interviews and the warm welcome she extended during the fieldwork.

¹¹⁴ Gloria Castillo, interview by author, 1 Oct 2017.

Conclusion

Religious paraphernalia were once treated as symbols of authority by both the *Naturales* and *Mestizos* in the Philippines. The 1804 account of the Holy Week incident in Vigan points to this view, when the *Mestizo Principales* wrested the standard and the *guion* from their native counterparts. As the *Mestizos* amassed economic advantage by exploiting the supply of and demand for grains, and diverting their grains and funds where it will reap the highest profit, their financial advantage bolstered the gradual ascendancy of their ethnic group along the social ladder. With the connivance of the *mestizo* priest, they found an opportune time to get hold of the material symbols that were associated with the social roles in the religious functions of 19th century Philippine society. The state, through the church, conferred this upon the natives who once had inherent privileges that were respected by both institutions. The conferment, however, problematizes the issue of ethnicity, since *Mestizos de Sangleyes* were also supposed to be entitled to their inherent rights, based on their maternal lineage. However, it is plausible that the merits of this particular case were decided based on the dynamics related to the *mestizo* class, whose offspring followed their father's legal status.

The *Mestizos* were also privy to a symbol of power – the religious images – since select members among them were chosen as the caretakers of the newly-acquired images of Santo Domingo and San Pio V. However, the accounts left out details that could have further helped enlighten the understanding of the events. In the case of the vesting of the images, the accounts were silent on whether the *mestizo* priest offered the *recamadera* or the caretaker status for the images to the whole congregation or just simply to selected individuals from the *Gremio de Mestizos*. Such details may surely help bolster the status of the images as symbols of power.

In the 1804 Holy Thursday incident, the *mestizo* curates of Vigan were instrumental in bestowing the material aspects of authority, or the symbols of authority, upon the *Principales* of the *Gremio de Mestizos*. The absence of supervision due to the vacancy in the Bishopric of Nueva Segovia, may have further emboldened them to resort to such drastic actions. In addition, they probably believed that their positions entitled them to divert stewardship of the images to their favored group by subverting laws. By intervening with the inherent rights of the natives, they were able to control the wielders of the symbols of authority but were met with stiff opposition when the fiscal's recommendation to the governor clipped Fr. Eustaquio Bengson's intrusion into the *Naturales*' inherent privileges. However, the accounts furnished by the various consulted parish priests, most of whom belong to the regular clery, may have

been affected and colored by the secularization movement of the previous decades. Very briefly, the secularization movement gained impetus when the Augustinian friars in Pampanga, refused to subject themselves to diocesan visitation. The refusal led the archbishop to replace them with the secular clergy, who were came mostly from the ranks of the *Natives* and *Mestizos*. Some of these unprepared native and *mestizo* seculars priests persisted with their bad habits, forcing the governor-general of the Philippines to rescind the decree, and halt the secularization.¹¹⁵ Nonetheless, the resolution of the 1804 case followed a strict hierarchy where the *Naturales* and the *Mestizos* were subservient and accountable to the laws implemented by both church (the bishops and archbishops) and the state (the *alcalde-mayor* who was accountable to the governor-general) which in turn had to conform to the decrees of the king. The succeeding accounts, vital towards the understanding of the actual settlement of the bigger issue of inter-ethnic feud, are non-existent. The titular patrons of the two collateral altarpieces in the cathedral, however, hint that the celebration of the leading religious celebrations may have been divided between the two ethnicities.

The deliberation of the case also brought to the fore little-known facets of everyday life in Vigan. In the natives' account, personal services and community labor figure prominently. It recounts, for example, the role the natives, together with their wives, played in the construction of their cathedral and how the nearby river provided such construction materials as the stones, gravel, and sand. On the other hand, the construction of the masonry Stations of the Cross – known as *abong-abong* in Ilocano – shows the participation of both Natives and *Mestizos*. Both ethnic groups also had an active hand in furnishing the cathedral, particularly the altarpieces.

As the natives' account further unfolded, changes in the urban lay-out of Vigan, particularly the significance of city's major squares to the cathedral and to the religious rites and rituals, were also mentioned. It shows that the present orientation of the cathedral only dates back to its 1799 construction. It could therefore be deduced from the accounts that the original cemetery of the city was somewhere in the present-day Plaza Burgos, based on the church-plaza complex configuration of Philippine towns during the Spanish period.

The values that can be gleaned from the article, particularly those shown by the natives such as prudence and fortitude in the face of difficult situations were exemplary cases that deserve to be instilled in the minds of the laity. The built heritage as well as the material culture are worth preserving since the narratives associated with these ecclesiastical artifacts and structures link them to past historical practices

¹¹⁵ For a more exhaustive discussion, refer to Schumacher, *Readings* 193-230.

of the Ilocanos, thereby underscoring their relevance to the present generation. These are the inherent values seen by the Church that led Vatican to create a commission to safeguard the material patrimony of ecclesiastical institutions.

The events that transpired in the article contribute to studies about the everyday life, ethnicities, and power relations in Vigan, which has very few historical accounts in these fields. These snippets provide information that helps enrich the local history of Vigan. The power relations between ethnicities is particularly significant since it predates a similar and often quoted incident in the extramural towns of Binondo and Santa Cruz. The native's references to the orientation of structures, such as their cathedral as well as lay-out of their *gremio* underscore the awareness and importance of the built heritage and spaces to their way of life. Hence, this essay contributes not only to the discourse on ethnicity but also towards the greater appreciation of the urban plan and the enrichment of the universal values of this World Heritage Site.^{PS}

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