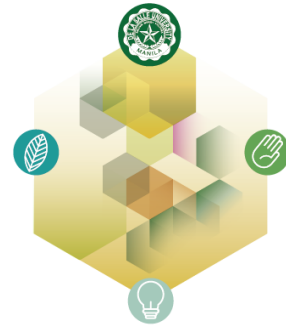


DLSU RESEARCH CONGRESS 2023

MANILA, PHILIPPINES

JULY 5-7, 2023

Fostering a Humane and Green Future: Pathways to Inclusive Societies and Sustainable Development



Museo ng Kultura: Realities and Challenges of the Tech Family's Bahay na Tisa of Pasig City

Retchell Rubin L. Morales¹, and Jeffrey A. Lubang²

¹ De La Salle University

² De La Salle University - Dasmariñas

retchell.morales@dlsu.edu.ph

jalubang@dlsud.edu.ph

Abstract: The research undertaking involves the *Bahay na Tisa* of the Tech family. It is a Spanish colonial period house built in 1846 and recently declared an important cultural property by the National Museum of the Philippines. The centuries-old structure, one of the few remaining essential edifices in the City of Pasig, continues attracting visitors from all over the city and elsewhere. The paper will look into the dynamics of maintaining and preserving a significant structure and the passion of specific individuals whose advocacy has something to do with preserving the local cultural experiences as an instrument of patriotism – the platform of which is an edifice that reflects an interesting historical memory. The paper will focus on the heritage efforts of an individual and his passion and persistence to preserve and maintain a heritage edifice in a locality in the Philippines.

Key Words: bahay na tisa; heritage landmark; patrimony; living museum; provenance

1. INTRODUCTION

Pasig City, located in the National Capital Region (NCR), is a bustling municipality in the eastern part of Metro Manila, Philippines. Its rich history dates back to pre-colonial times when the Tagalog people inhabited the area (Philippines Cities, 2013). The name "Pasig" is believed to have come from the word "pasigan," which means "sandy riverbank" (Roces, 2009), mainly because Pasig City lies along the banks of the Pasig River, which was once a major trade route.

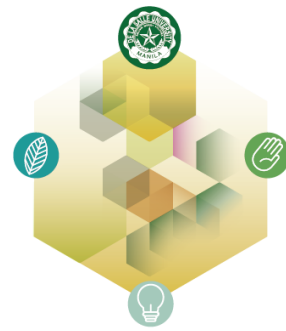
During the Spanish colonial period, Pasig was an important agricultural center known for its rice paddies and fruit orchards (Gonzales, 2010). The Augustinian friars established the Immaculate Conception Cathedral in 1573. It underwent several reconstructions due to natural disasters and war; the current structure was built in 1954 and elevated to a cathedral in 2003 (Giubileo Della Misericordia, 2015). In 1901, Pasig became a municipality and was later incorporated as a city in 1995.

Fast track to 2023, Pasig City is a vibrant and dynamic city that continues to grow and develop. It is

home to many multinational corporations, top-notch educational institutions, and world-class shopping and entertainment centers. Despite its rapid modernization, Pasig City has managed to preserve its cultural heritage and historical landmarks, such as the Pasig City Museum, Immaculate Conception Cathedral, and Bahay Na Tisa.

Bahay Na Tisa, now a living museum, plays a vital role in Pasig City's history and maintaining its cultural heritage. A historic mansion along P. Gomez Street, this house was built and owned by Don Cecilio Tech y Cabrera in 1864. It became a well-known landmark and tourist attraction for its distinctive red brick exterior and elaborate architectural details. The historic structure is an aesthetic wonder and a historical piece, for it played a vital role in the city's local history. During the Philippine Revolution in 1898, Bahay Na Tisa was the headquarters for the local Katipunan chapter. The organization is a militant revolutionary group fighting against Spanish colonial rule. Filipino soldiers also used the edifice as a social refuge during the Philippine-American War.

Fostering a Humane and Green Future: Pathways to Inclusive Societies and Sustainable Development



Today, the 8th generation, originating from the Tech patriarchy, lives and manages the museum for the appreciation of the people within and outside of Pasig. The structure has been with the family ever since it was built. Currently owned by *"Marie Antoinette Tech Mendoza, the direct descendant, inherited the house from her father Carlos Tech Mendoza along with my cousin and niece,"* says Mr. Rivera (the administrator).

Bahay Na Tisa remains proudly standing as a reminder of a once historical role that it essayed; it remains a silent but formidable witness for the general public to see and appreciate. The structure continues to delight its visitors with its rich narratives of cultural history. It is a testament to the heroic contribution of the Pasiguenos, and the house persists to this day in the continuing heritage narrative of the City of Pasig. Mr. Rivera narrates, *"We were just farmers. Many people think that we are wealthy enough just because we have an ancestral house, but I've seen the documents; it took them 150 years to build whatever they had [...] it's the story of Pasigueno."*

Last December 5, 2018, the National Museum officially recognized Bahay Na Tisa as an Important Cultural Property. The structure is a significant historical landmark in Pasig City, with a rich history dating back to the Spanish colonial era. Its unique architecture and cultural significance make it a must-see attraction for visitors to the city.

Therefore, this paper highlights that maintaining significant cultural heritage structures in the Philippines poses challenges and opportunities, particularly in negotiating the influence of existing paradigms from other countries and the unique characteristics and realities of Philippine heritage efforts. Bahay na Tisa of the Tech family, a Spanish colonial period house recently declared an important cultural property by the National Museum of the Philippines, serves as a case study to examine the dynamics of heritage preservation and advocacy. This research aims to investigate the motivations and strategies of individuals who advocate for preserving local cultural experiences and provide insights into the practical aspects of heritage preservation and advocacy in the country, contributing to the theoretical perspectives associated with cultural heritage concepts in the Philippines.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study utilized a qualitative research methodology to delve deeper into the experiences and perspectives of Angelo Noel Rivera, the museum's

Administrator and a member of the family's 8th generation. At the same time, to gather data, the researchers employed a semi-structured interview format conducted online last November 5, 2022.

The researchers used an existing questionnaire from a previous heritage study of them, validated by other researchers in the heritage sector, to elicit rich and detailed responses from Mr. Rivera, thus, understanding his views on the museum's operations, history, and significance. The interview, which lasted for an extensive period of 72 minutes, provided ample opportunity for the researchers to explore various aspects of Mr. Rivera's initiative, work, passion, and personal life, gaining valuable insights into his experiences and perspectives. His responses were insightful and informative, providing information critical in formulating this study's findings. Furthermore, the researchers conducted a site visit last November 17, 2022.

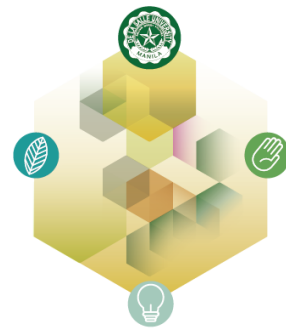
3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The interview results of the researchers utilizing qualitative research trajectory yielded fascinating outcomes. An interesting story about why Mr. Rivera is very passionate about caring for the house is his promise to his grandfather. His initiative is done out of love. *"Actually, I'm self-appointed, not really self-appointed, but we just have agreed because they feel that I'm more capable of interacting with others and managing the conservation of the property. I'm glad my family put their trust in me despite our family issues. But I do this out of love because I promised my grandfather that I would never forsake Bahay na Tisa, and I'm keeping that promise,"* shared Mr. Rivera.

Furthermore, the researchers learned that there is no external support regarding the museum's day-to-day operations, despite the dynamism in the public appearance of the living museum. Mr. Rivera said, *"Funding is the main issue since the restoration of the windows can be fixed by my uncle and me since we know how the house was built, but sometimes we have other priorities, so we do it as a sideline or favor of love. But basically, the bottom line is the financial support."*

Museum management faces a myriad of challenges. It continues to be confronted by physical and financial issues. A single individual who takes care of everything keeps their humble existence intact. A major setback is that the property is on the brink of being divided among the present descendants, and the possibility of it being torn down may be imminent in the

Fostering a Humane and Green Future: Pathways to Inclusive Societies and Sustainable Development



coming days. Financial challenges and internal squabbles continue to haunt the current generation of heirs. Some family members are still trying to prevent this unfortunate eventuality.

Despite the National Museum of the Philippines' declaration of the Bahay na Tisa as an essential cultural property – the fate and existence of the establishment will still be in the hands of the family unless a measure from the local government unit to forge a partnership with owners for any future collaboration to maintain and preserve the building and a lease contract to be able to provide some financial package for the family to keep them financially afloat. To somehow combat this, Mr. Rivera plans to put up a restaurant to help his Aunt and finance the repairs; this strategy was also advised by the National Museum, *"As per the advice of the National Museum, we can establish a business here like restaurants. Personally, I want to put up at least one in the garden to help my Auntie earn a little, but it will still be a home and open to the public as we have been,"* said Mr. Rivera.

As a result, this passage highlights three critical aspects of a person's efforts to preserve and promote the Bahay na Tisa, a heritage structure located in Pasig City.

The first aspect is the person's efforts in maintaining the physical structure to its original condition. This diligence refers to the person's commitment to preserving the physical elements of the building and ensuring that they are restored or repaired in a way that maintains the structure's original character, involving repairing damage, replacing missing features, or using traditional materials and techniques to preserve the authenticity of the building. Mr. Rivera admitted, *"Formal assessment is needed for the repairs and everything that is needed. The National Museum agrees that we are not for restoration but rather for conservation"* to keep its provenance intact. As of this writing, *"the house is 95% originally intact,"* Mr. Rivera proudly shared.

The second aspect is the person's passion for imparting knowledge about the history and cultural value of the Bahay na Tisa to the present generation. This persistence refers to the person's desire to educate others about the significance of the building and its role in the cultural heritage of Pasig City. For example, *"Just like our piano, it was bought by my great great grandfather Maximo Tech in 1920, and we still have the receipt for 2,500 pesos, so it is the provenance that we have that makes everything here special,"* says Mr. Rivera. Further, their family offers giving tours, leading workshops or seminars, or writing educational materials

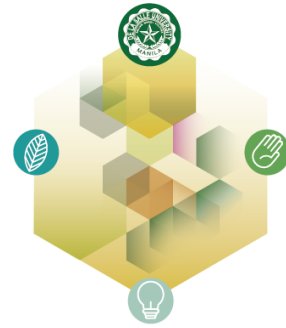
highlighting the building's cultural and historical significance. Despite their passion for sharing their history and heritage, they need to start creating methods and transition from a free visit to a paid and scheduled one. Since Bahay Na Tisa is a "living museum," his cousins and Aunt live in the house; it is their home. There were several instances that *"It doesn't seem to be a home anymore, sometimes it disrupts us like, for example, we were having a drink with my cousins, and then visitors will arrive so we have to pack up,"* Mr. Rivera adds, *"I guess we have to apply strictly about the visiting hours and if ever, the compensation for the upkeep and the tour guide."*

Lastly, the third aspect is the person's undying enthusiasm to serve as a stalwart of the last remaining tangible and intangible heritage edifice in Pasig City. This positive attitude refers to the person's dedication to serving as a champion for the building and ensuring that it remains an integral part of the cultural landscape of Pasig City. This manner could involve working with local authorities, cultural organizations, or community groups to advocate for the preservation and promotion of the building, as well as serving as a spokesperson for the building in the media or other public forums.

What are the challenges and possible solutions? The informant of this study is a severe advocate of heritage preservation. Based on the researchers' interview, the following are the pressing challenges of this individual: the physical deterioration of the structure and the financial support for the upkeep and maintenance. Possible solutions to these challenges include seeking financial grants from government cultural agencies such as the National Museum, the National Historical Commission of the Philippines, or the National Commission for Culture and the Arts. These grants could support the restoration of the building and provide financial support for its upkeep and maintenance. Additionally, a public-private partnership initiated by the local government unit of Pasig City could help to ensure the preservation of the building. This partnership could involve collecting entrance fees from visitors to the museum and sharing the proceeds with the heirs of the historic property.

Ultimately, preserving the Bahay na Tisa living museum will require collaborative efforts between the government, private sector, and family members to ensure its longevity for future generations to appreciate and enjoy.

Fostering a Humane and Green Future: Pathways to Inclusive Societies and Sustainable Development



4. CONCLUSIONS

This paper highlights the importance of preserving cultural heritage structures in the Philippines. It presents Bahay Na Tisa as a case study to examine the dynamics of heritage preservation and advocacy. Through an interview with a heritage warrior, Angelo Noel Rivera, the study reveals some interesting possibilities and solutions for maintaining the royal status of this historic edifice.

Overall, those three aspects mentioned previously of the person's efforts contribute to the larger goal of preserving and promoting the Bahay na Tisa as a valuable cultural heritage site in Pasig City. By working to maintain the physical structure, educating others about its historical and cultural value, and serving as a stalwart advocate for its preservation, the person is helping to ensure that the building remains an essential part of the community for generations to come.

Despite the challenges, individuals like Mr. Rivera may take attractive solutions to carry on with the advocacy for preserving local cultural experiences together with the support of the local government units and official national institutions with similar purposes and advocacy. The local government unit may forge a public-private partnership with the family and help maintain the structure. The government and other agencies looking after the heritage industry may legislate a formal agreement for signing between the two parties. For example, in the case of the National Historical Institute (now National Historical Commission of the Philippines) and the Bonifacio Trial House of Maragondon, Cavite, and as a famous saying goes, "no man is an island." Passion and advocacy are essential in maintaining such a historic structure.

Therefore, Bahay Na Tisa, a living museum, serves as a vital reminder of the heroic contribution of the Pasiguenos and the continuing heritage narrative of the City of Pasig. As an important cultural property recognized by the National Museum of the Philippines, the structure is a must-see attraction for visitors to the city. Through this study, we can learn the importance of preserving and maintaining such cultural heritage structures and that owners and caretakers of the heritage sites would need more than individual efforts. Consequently, the heritage sector must consider the collective efforts of various stakeholders and institutions to ensure that future generations pass down to the next and appreciate our unique culture and heritage.

5. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank Angelo Noel Rivera for his valuable time and inputs in this research.

6. REFERENCES

- Giubileo Della Misericordia. (2015, December 13). *Immaculate Conception Cathedral*. Retrieved March 26, 2023, from <https://www.iubilaeummisericordiae.va/content/gdm/it/mondo/porte-della-misericordia.event.immaculate-conception-cathedral-diocese-of-pasig.html>
- Gonzalez, J. R. (2010). The Spanish colonial period in Pasig City. *Philippine Journal of History*, 58(1), 31-43.
- Philippines Cities. (2013, April 30). *Pasig City*. Retrieved March 26, 2023, from <https://philippinescities.com/pasig-city/>
- Roces, A. R. (2009, July 2). *Pasig's place in history*. PhilStar Global. Retrieved March 26, 2023, from <https://www.philstar.com/opinion/2009/07/02/482669/pasigs-place-history>