

CULTURAL MAPPING AS A TOOL IN HERITAGE CONSERVATION IN A WORLD HERITAGE SITE: THE VIGAN CITY EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

This paper presents how Vigan utilized cultural mapping as a tool in heritage conservation. It discusses the importance of cultural mapping and the process of documentation, the results of the hands-on cultural mapping activities in terms of documented resources, and the ensuing projects along heritage conservation that were adopted by the City Government of Vigan. The cultural mapping project covered four components of the heritage: natural heritage, built heritage, movable heritage and intangible heritage. The cultural mapping yielded ten volumes of documentation which were submitted to the local government of Vigan and were later exhibited at the University of Santo Tomas in Manila and at the Vigan Cultural Trade Center. Cultural heritage conservation projects ensued from the cultural mapping such as the Buridek: Vigan Children's Museum, Vigan Heritage River Cruise and the *UNESCO World Heritage City of Vigan Philippines Heritage Homeowner's Preservation Manual*.

Keywords: *Cultural Mapping, Cultural Heritage, Heritage Conservation, World Heritage Site, Vigan City*

1. Introduction

The confluence of cultures in Vigan from pre-colonial era to the present time makes the island a valuable educational site and tourist destination. With its unique blend of Asian and European influences in its architecture and its gridlike layout of a Spanish pueblo, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) enlisted Vigan as a World Heritage Site on December 2, 1999. The historic town of Vigan met two criteria for inscription: "1) it represents a unique fusion of Asian building design and construction with European colonial architecture and planning, and 2) it is an exceptionally intact and well-preserved example of a European trading town in East and Southeast Asia"¹. Vigan is regarded as a "site of exceptional universal value" and since it became a World

Heritage Site, Vigan as a living museum has been host to visitors from all over.

Bigan (the old name of Vigan) was already an important trading post even before the coming of the Spaniards to its shores. Don Juan de Salcedo, the Spanish conquistador, established the Spanish settlement of Villa Fernandina in Bigan in June 13, 1572². It flourished during the colonial era and became the third most important city after Manila and Cebu. It was the economic, political, religious and cultural center in the northern part of Luzon.

The bishops of Nueva Segovia preferred Vigan as residence over Lal-lo in Cagayan which was frequently flooded then. When the seat of the diocese was transferred from the City of Nueva Segovia in Lal-lo, Cagayan to Vigan by Decree of September 7, 1758, Vigan automatically earned the title Ciudad Fernandina de Vigan³. It lost its

¹ R. L. Favis. "Why the Historic Town of Vigan was Inscribed in the World Heritage List." *Samtoy*, April-June 2000, pp. 4 -7.

² *Vigan News, July-September 2001*
reprinted in Samtoy, July-September 2001,
p.14.

³ M.A. Foronda, Jr. and J.A. Foronda. "The Age of Preparation 1 The Coming of the Spaniards to

cityhood during the American period but regained it on January 22, 2001 through a plebiscite. Since then it had to attend to issues of keeping pace with modernization while facing its own development needs as well as responding to the needs of its citizens and visitors.

The two developments – enlistment of Vigan as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and regaining its Cityhood—continue to impact on the Bigueño's way of life and endanger the City's heritage.

2. Significance of the Study

UNESCO Representative Richard Englehart posed the challenge of cultural conservation to all Bigueños as stewards of the world patrimony during the unveiling of the World Heritage Site historical marker on April 30, 2000⁴.

The threats to Vigan's cultural heritage are aggravated by the influx of visitors immediately after the announcement that Vigan qualified as one of the Seven Wonders Cities of the World on December 7, 2014.

Vigan now must all the more face squarely the foregoing challenges to its heritage. The documentation of its cultural wealth through cultural mapping conducted in 2006 to 2007 could provide some of the information needed for the crafting of a more relevant cultural conservation program that would ensure the authenticity of its cultural heritage.

This paper could be a source of information for other places that are of historic and cultural values. They may want to replicate the Vigan City experience in conducting a cultural mapping project as a basis in the crafting of their own heritage conservation program.

3. Related Literature

Ilocos." *Samtoy: Essays on Iloko History and Culture*. Manila: De La Salle College, 1972.

⁴ M.R.Q. Rabang. "Notes from the Editor" *Samtoy*, April-June 2000.

This paper discusses cultural mapping as a tool for heritage conservation in Vigan City, its purposes, the cultural mapping methodology undertaken by the City Government, outputs of the cultural mapping and the cultural programs and projects that ensued from the cultural mapping.

This paper used a qualitative approach to data collection, in particular library research, documents review, interview, ocular survey, photo documentation and personal experience of the paper presenter as a participant in the cultural mapping project.

This paper is based on the cultural mapping project conducted by the City Government of Vigan in 2006 to 2007.

3.1. Cultural Mapping

Cultural mapping is the process of identifying and systematically documenting the heritage resources distinct to a community. This approach uses the idea of recording various layers of information, historical and current, about an area in a map format⁵. The cultural mapping project was adopted as a facilitative way of coming up with an inventory of the heritage

resources of Vigan City.

⁵ A. Warr. "Cultural Mapping." *In Place*. The Commonwealth Department and the Arts, 1995. Handout for the Cultural Mapping Project, Vigan City, 2006

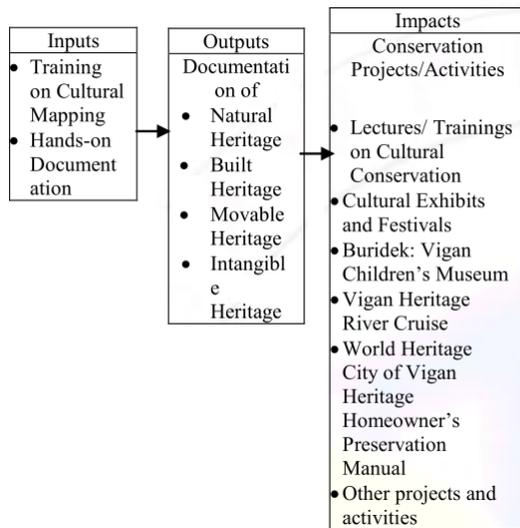


Figure 1. The Cultural Mapping Framework

The documentation can serve as basis in the formulation of cultural conservation projects and activities.

3.2. Cultural Heritage

Cultural heritage are valuable resources passed on from past and present generations to the succeeding generations.

Former Chair of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, Evelyn B. Pantig, stresses the importance of cultural heritage as a landmark of human creativity and excellence, to which the Bigueños must constantly direct their heritage conservation efforts,

Pantig said that in this fast changing world, cultural heritage gives people their identity, what their lives mean and where they came from. Heritage buildings, monuments and sites, artworks and artifacts as well as languages, customs, communal practices and traditional skills are fast becoming the essential means of expressing identity and meaning for local communities, regions, nations and mankind as a whole⁶.

⁶ E. B. Pantig. "Importance of Cultural Heritage." *Samtoy*. April-June 2003, p. 21

The World Heritage Convention has categorized heritage into cultural heritage and natural heritage. The former are of two types: tangible heritage and intangible heritage.

Heritage that can be touched are tangible heritage. This category includes immovable heritage such as architectural works, monuments, archaeological sites, historic centers, groups of buildings, cultural landscapes, historical parks and gardens, botanical gardens and industrial archaeology.

Movable heritage can easily be transferred from one place to another. This includes museum collections, libraries, archives and other collections.

Intangible heritage, on the other hand, exists in non-physical forms as music, dance, literature, theatre, local expressions such as traditions, know-how, crafts and religious ceremonies.

Natural heritage includes 1) natural features and 2) natural sites. The first type are physical and biological formations, geological and physiographical formations and which constitute the habitat of threatened species of animals and plants of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science and conservation. Natural sites include areas of outstanding universal value .

To the World Heritage Convention, a cultural heritage must have outstanding universal value, that means "cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity"⁷.

The foregoing related literature would provide understanding on the classification of Vigan City's heritage.

4. Results and Discussion

⁷ UNESCO and Institute for Tourism Studies, Macao, S.A.R., China. *Cultural Heritage Specialist Guide Training and Certification Programme for UNESCO Word Heritage Sites*. Training Handbook (Core Module), June 2007.

4.1. Purposes of Cultural Mapping

The cultural mapping project of Vigan was intended to accomplish certain objectives along with the documentation, "Cultural mapping raises the awareness of stakeholders on the heritage resources and it could generate valuable information as basis for conservation planning, development and legislation. More importantly, it could generate valuable interest in a broader sector beyond the community such as the academe, the government, the business sector, and civil society⁸. The collection of information was hoped to facilitate the integration of cultural heritage in education for transmission of the cultural values to the younger generations who seemingly lack consciousness of their heritage. Furthermore, the documentation could help in the generation of product ideas that could be offered to visitors and which would provide a means of livelihood to the residents while boosting the local economy. In this way, the Bigueños would participate more meaningfully in the cultural exchange with visitors and hopefully would deepen the former's commitment to conserving Vigan's heritage.

The purposes of the cultural mapping are in line with the City's stewardship of the UNESCO World Heritage Site, which Favis⁹ who has worked with UNESCO Bangkok echoes in his article on the UNESCO World Heritage Convention. He explains the commitment of State Parties which was agreed upon during the General Conference of UNESCO on November 16, 1972:

Being listed in the World Heritage List requires long-term commitment on the part of the Government and on the people of the country where the site is located.

⁸ Cultural Mapping Project of the Heritage City of Vigan. Exhibit. Vigan Culture and Trade Center, Vigan City, January-March 2008.

⁹ R. L. Favis. "The UNESCO World Heritage Convention Understanding and Implementing the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage." *Samtoy*, July-September 2000, p. 6-8, 11

World Heritage inscription is very prestigious, for it brings international recognition of the site as having universal value, as a heritage worthy of protection and preservation for humanity as a whole. However, along with this prestige come the obligations and duties of the State Parties, made more difficult as population explodes, industries develop, environments degrade, and mass tourism overwhelms the sites.

4.2. Cultural Mapping Methodology

The cultural mapping project of Vigan was implemented on the basis of a Memorandum of Agreement in 2006 between the City Government represented by City Mayor Ferdinand C. Medina and the University of Santo Tomas Center for Conservation of Cultural Property and Environment in the Tropics (CCCPET) represented by Rev. Father Isidro C. Abaño, Director. The CCCPET was the training partner who provided the team of lecturers.

4.2.1. Participants

Twenty one (21) participants were selected to undergo training and do actual documentation. Representatives came from the City Council and City employees, Department of Education, University of Northern Philippines, Tawid ti Ilocos Foundation, Dadapilan, media, religious sector, professionals and other cultural workers. Craftsmen and residents also supported the project as resource persons.

4.2.2. Phases of the project

The cultural mapping project consisted of two phases: 1) training on heritage documentation from July to December 2006 and 2) hands-on cultural mapping from November 2006 to January 2007.

The training was comprised of ten modules that included lectures on heritage, techniques of documentation, principles of heritage conservation, policy, strategy and planning, organization and mobilization, product development, heritage and education, tourism and education, and heritage marketing.

Lectures were held in the mornings and workshops in the afternoons on Fridays and Saturdays. The

trainees were also brought to historical and cultural sites and were shown the outputs of cultural mapping done in Ilocos Norte. Assignments were given after every module such as the review of legislation on cultural conservation, integration of heritage in the curriculum, planning the re-use of a heritage site, assessment of an ancestral house, product design using heritage resources and sample documentation of heritage resources.

4.2.3. Scope of the Cultural Mapping

The participants were divided into four groups to conduct hands-on cultural mapping or actual documentation of heritage resources after the training. They were grouped according to the category of resources to document: 1) natural heritage, 2) built heritage, 3) movable heritage and 4) intangible heritage. The mapping included all heritage resources in the *poblacion* (city proper) and the *barangays* (villages) that could be covered within the limited period of actual documentation (November 2006 to January 2007).

4.2.4. Data Gathering Tools

During the workshop, each group was given a briefing on the templates/documentation forms and how to use them in the actual documentation. The templates were those used by CCCPET. The trainees reviewed the templates/forms and revised them to include other important information related to the heritage resources.

The template for natural heritage includes the name/other name/s of the resource, its location, physical features, significance, flora and fauna in the site, maps and pictures.

For built heritage, the template includes name/historic name/other name of the resource, special features, historical significance, physical description of façade, interiors, materials and decorative features; also ownership, location and approach, usage in the past and present, state or preservation, condition description, designer, date of construction, maps, plans and pictures.

For movable heritage, the template includes title/name of resource, popular name, object category, artist/maker, theme, medium and techniques, period/year, nature of acquisition, material, color, dimension, functional description,

inscriptions, present condition, and relation to other objects.

Two templates were used for intangible heritage because of the variety of resources: one for general use and another for personalities. The template for general use includes name of the resource, kind of resource (whether music, dance, cuisine, etc.), location, season/period, process, costume, chants, vocabulary, bibliography, photographs/illustrations. For personalities, the template includes the name, place of birth, date of birth, residence/address, parents, spouse, children, brothers/sisters, achievements and contributions, significance, photographs, related bibliography.

Various ways of obtaining information appropriate to the heritage resource were done as follows: ocular survey, photo documentation, interview, library research, document analysis, illustrations. Maps and photographs, both oldest and more recent ones if available and related literature were collected/photocopied and attached to the templates/forms .

4.3. Outputs of Cultural Mapping

Within a period of two months and working only during their vacant time, the cultural mapping groups were able to submit 10 volumes of documentation to¹⁰ the CCCPET which exhibited them at the UST Museum of Arts and Sciences on October 16-30, 2007¹¹. After the exhibition, the outputs were turned over to the City Government of Vigan who also exhibited them during the 2008 City Fiesta in January. The exhibit ran to the end of March 2008.

¹⁰ Cultural Mapping of the Heritage City of Vigan (10 vols.) Output of the Cultural Mapping Project, Vigan City, 2007

¹¹ "Mapping of the Past, Charting the Future: The Cultural Mapping of the Heritage City of Vigan." Exhibit. University of Santo Tomas, Manila, November 16-30, 2007.

The outputs were as follows:

4.3.1. Natural heritage – one volume that includes rivers, hills, flora and fauna found in the river banks, shore and quarry. Among them are

- 1) Abra River - gateway to Vigan from Manila
- 2) South China Sea (now West Philippine Sea) and Mindoro Beach – passageway for traders to Cagayan in earlier era
- 3) Mestizo River – entry point of early traders and Juan Salcedo who founded Villa Fernandina de Vigan on June 13, 1572
- 4) Govantes River – a trade and transportation route in the 15th to 19th c.
- 5) Pagbantayan (Mira Hills) – highest place in Vigan, where a watchman was assigned to sight for incoming ships and pirates in past eras

4.3.2. Built heritage – one volume on 48 structures that include ancestral houses, government buildings, churches and cemeteries, among which are:

- 1) Adora Ancestral House – the only surviving century old *kalapaw* (hut)
- 2) Don Ladislao Donato Granary – one of the oldest commercial structures
- 3) Don Gregorio Syquia House – the only two-storey brick and masonry structure at the Gremio de Naturales (section where the natives resided)
- 4) Don Eugenio Singson House – two-storey solid brick stone structure with original clay roof tiles
- 5) Don Leocadio Sebastian House – small wood and brick house
- 6) Don Juan Gonzales Ancestral House (1788 – also known as Father Burgos House – birthplace of Father Jose Burgos, hero and martyr
- 7) Doña Felipa F. Florentino House (c. 1860) – was used as supply depot of the *katipuneros* (revolutionaries against the Spaniards)
- 8) Don Jose Gabriel Florentino House – was used as the Vigan Christian Hospital in 1899-1938
- 9) Protestant Church – constructed in 1901

10) Vigan Central School (Gabaldon) – American structure that was used as a camp and hospital during World War I and World War II

11) Ong Kai Dragon Kiln – a brick kiln where the *burnay* (jar) is fired

12) Colonial Period Monuments – one brick marker between Cuta and Pagpandayan and another between the San Jose-San Julian Road and Vigan-Raois Road

13) Sentry House – the only remaining sentry of its kind

14) Municipal Jail (1657)/Provincial Jail – oldest surviving structure in Vigan

15) Tombs I – IX – century-old tombs made of bricks with superb architectural designs, moldings, sculptures and other decorative features

4.3.3. Movable Heritage – one volume on heritage resources housed in the Museo San Pablo/Conversion of St. Paul Cathedral which include

- 1) furniture, pews, cathedra confessional boxes
- 2) chandeliers
- 3) statues and other religious icons
- 4) carved religious images
- 5) framed photographs
- 6) framed paintings of saints
- 7) molded art: Stations of the Cross
- 8) Tabernacle
- 9) other fixtures such as altar table, main retablo, pulpits and choir loft

4.3.4. Intangible Heritage – seven volumes, some of the resources are:

- 1) Technology – *abel* (local cloth) weaving, *burnay* (jar) making, *damili* (pottery)
- 2) Food – *dudol* (rice custard), *miki* (flat noodles), *empanada* (rice pastry with vegetable, egg and meat filling), *pinakbet* (vegetable stew cooked with little broth), *sinanglao* (innards and beef stew),

dinengdeng (vegetable stew with generous amount of broth)

3) Festivals – Solidarity Day (September 7), Semana Santa (Holy Week), Viva Vigan Festival (First week of May), Tres de Mayo (Feast of the Black Nazarene, May 3)

4) Music – includes songs traditionally sang as folk songs and other compositions on Vigan and by Bigueños. Francisca C. Quitariano composed liturgical songs compiled in *Just a People* that were sung in all Paulinian schools in the country in the 70's.

5) Personalities – this category includes heroes, writers, persons with significant contributions to the Bigueños and society, among them are: Padre Jose Burgos – martyr who championed for the cause of the Filipino clergy; Diego Silang – liberator of the Ilocos; Isabelo delos Reyes – father of the Philippine Labor Movement; Elpidio Rivera Quirino – first Ilokano President of the Philippines; Bishop Alfredo F. Verzosa, D.D.- first Ilokano Bishop and founder of the Congregacion de la B. Maria de Eusefinanza Cristiano; Leona Florentino – first Filipina poetess whose poems were exhibited at the Exposicion General de Filipinas in Madrid then in Paris; Fidel Antiporda Go – 1990 National Folk Artist; Esteban Villanueva – painter of the Basi Revolt series

6) Literature – includes *pagsasao* (proverbs), *burburitia* (riddles), *daniw* (poems), *sarsarita* (tales, fables – “*Baro a Sagad, Rutrot a Sagad*”- “New Broom, Old Broom” by Antonio S. Encarnacion) *ken sarita* (short stories – “*Ti Narra, ti Bagyo ken ti Sagut*”- “The Narra, the Storm and the Gift” by Antonio S. Encarnacio) , *bukanegan* (poetic joust of Mariano N. Gaerlan, Godofredo S. Reyes and Leon C. Pichay), *comedia* (theatrical presentation - “*Biag ni Infante Flor de Sencion*” “Life of Flor de Sencion”) and *zarzuela* (a musical melodrama – “*Ni Napudno nga Ayat Isu’t Cacan-canonong*” “True Love that I Trust”); journals and books – *The Ilocos Review*; “*Bonubon* – “*Seedlings*” by *Hermenegildo Vilorio*; *Marasaba* – *Tamarind* by Marie Rose Q. Rabang)

7) History – “A History of the Ilocos (Digna B. Apilado),” “The 1807 Basi Revolt” (Pablo B. Ramirez), “A History of the Diocese of Nueva Segovia” (Friedrich Scharpf, SVD), “Nursing

Practice in Vigan” (Rhoda Rivada Redulla), “Why the Historic Town of Vigan was inscribed in the World Heritage List” (Ricardo L. Favis)

8) Beliefs and rituals to ward off harmful spirits

9) Games – *sikki* (catching stones with the palm and back of the hand), *lastiko* (rubber bands), *bending*, (carrying one’s slipper in bended position), *siatung* (hitting the stick (shuttle))

4.3.5 Other Outputs

Other outputs were the assignments during the training as follows:

1) review and annotation of the conservation guidelines for built heritage¹² – one volume

2) adaptive re-use of cultural sites¹³ – one volume

3) integration of cultural heritage in the basic education curriculum, both in the elementary and high school levels – one volume.

Some of the documented resources may not be of significant universal value as defined by UNESCO, but to the cultural mapping teams and the Vigan residents, they give meaning to the people and life of the City, as a community based on Pantig’s definition of cultural heritage. As such, they are worth protecting and conserving as well as transmitting to future generations.

The documentation of heritage resources as outputs of cultural mapping represent only a portion of the heritage resources.

¹² “Adaptive Re-use of Heritage Resource.” Output of the Cultural Mapping Project, Vigan City, 2007.

¹³ “Annotated Conservation Guidelines for Vigan Ancestral Houses.” Output of the Cultural Mapping Project, Vigan City, 2007

From this initial documentation, one can look more closely at the Bigueños born in the land of Samtoy, whose life and character was enriched by the blending of Asian and European cultures. The story of the Bigueños and their lessons in life are woven in their tales, poems and riddles. Their resourcefulness and frugality are expressed and blended in their cuisine. Their crafts speak of their industry and patience. Their thoughts and depth of faith are felt in their festivals and rituals.

5. Projects After Cultural Mapping

Various projects and activities ensued after the cultural mapping project. The participants of the cultural mapping celebrated their completion of the training with follow-up cultural activities. The City Government of Vigan also implemented cultural projects based on the outputs of the cultural mapping. Some of the activities which exist to this day are the following:

1. Lectures/trainings on built heritage and conservation measures and on cultural education and governance in the schools
2. Cultural exhibits and festivals
3. Buridek: Vigan Children's Museum – the third to be established in the Philippines. This museum presents the heritage resources in miniature sizes or scaled down to children's size. This was launched in 2008.
4. Vigan Heritage River Cruise –this project has revived the historic Mestizo River and the cruise up and down the river narrates the history of Vigan. The refreshing boat ride also makes residents and visitors aware of the need to conserve and protect the environment. This was launched in 2009.
5. *World Heritage City of Vigan Philippines*

Heritage Homeowners Preservation Manual, c 2010 published by UNESCO and the City Government of Vigan

6. Conclusion

The cultural mapping project was successful in documenting the heritage resources of Vigan City. The information already compiled are ready references on Vigan's heritage resources which could be used as basis for further conservation and socio-economic development planning. Cultural

conservation of the intangible heritage is now consciously integrated in the City's programs and activities. However, there is still so much more documentation to be done and as the City has become a new attraction to tourists having been declared one of the New Seven Wonders Cities of the World in December 7, 2014, greater efforts should be undertaken by both the City Government and all other stakeholders to consciously fulfil their responsibility as stewards of this world patrimony.

7. Recommendations

The following measures are recommended:

1. The cultural mapping outputs should be disseminated to libraries in the city so students, researchers and cultural workers can have easy access to them as references.
2. The intangible resources should be translated to other forms for better appreciation by the residents and visitors, e.g. production of zarzuelas, recording of songs, books, and souvenir items.
3. The next batch of cultural mappers should be trained.
4. Cultural mapping should be continued by the City Government in partnership with the schools and non-government organizations.
5. Production of information materials on the heritage and the need to protect and conserve them should be undertaken by tourism and cultural organizations.
6. The City Government must protect and sustain the authenticity of cultural heritage resources and presentations particularly those that are offered to visitors and for transmission to the next generations.

8. Acknowledgments

The author thanks the City Government of Vigan for inviting her to participate in the Cultural Mapping Project, planning of the Buridek Children's Museum, Vigan Heritage River Cruise and in writing some articles on the cultural heritage of Vigan for inclusion in the *World Heritage City of Vigan Philippines Heritage Homeowners Preservation Manual*.

She thanks the Tawid ti Ilocos Foundation for allowing her to utilize the articles in *Samtoy* and other literature as inputs and supporting documents for the Cultural Mapping Project.

She also thanks the University of Northern Philippines for allowing her to attend the 1st International Conference on Interdisciplinary Studies for Cultural Heritage, at Pasundan University, Bandung City, West Java, Indonesia on May 12-13, 2015.

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She finished Doctor of Public Administration with Academic Excellence Award from the University of Northern Philippines in 2006. She was a recipient of the Research Award Program from the Philippine Social Science Council of the Philippines for her dissertation “Cultural Development Programs of State Universities and Colleges in Region I.” She is a Professor V and the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences in UNP since December 2008 to date. She has been actively involved in the cultural heritage conservation program of the City of Vigan and has represented the City Government in the UNESCO training and workshop on Cultural Heritage Specialist Guide Programme held in Macao, S.A.R., China and in Borobudur, Java, Indonesia in 2009. She has conducted researches along cultural heritage and is a member of the National Research Council of the Philippines. As Business Manager and member of the Board of Directors of Nakem Conferences International Philippines, she helps in the conservation and promotion of the Ilokano culture. She wrote articles on Vigan and the Ilocos and edited a cultural magazine, *Samtoy* in 2000-2005. She integrates cultural heritage in her instruction and has just been recognized by the City Government of Vigan as 2015 Biguena awardee for education.

Ancestral Houses in Calle Crisologo



Mestizo River



Abel Iloco

