

Hil-o hil-o: its role in sustainable community

Kler P. Daradar

Maayon National High School

Maayon, Capiz

Email: daradarkler24@gmail.com

Abstract: The main purpose of this qualitative study was to determine establish the history origin and development and explore the significance contributions of *Hil-o Hil-o* Festival in Maayon, Capiz. Informants of this study were 6 key informants consisting of teachers, cultural workers and experts from Maayon Capiz who discussed about the origin and development of *Hil-o Hil-o* Festival and its significant contributions to the people of Maayon. In determining the respondents, the researcher identified those who had deep knowledge about the festival, especially those who have been actively participating in the *Hil-o Hil-o* Festival. Furthermore, the researcher consulted souvenir programs, books, and other materials that would help her in tracing the history and development of the *Hil-o Hil-o* Festival. A researcher-made interview guide questionnaire was used to gather information which was then subjected to thematic analysis to filter the information and arrive at certain themes necessary to answer the problems of this study.

Keywords: *Hil-o hil-o*, Sustainability, Culture

Date Submitted: July 21, 2023

Date Accepted: October 13, 2023

Date Published: December 16, 2023

INTRODUCTION

Festivals are an expressive way to celebrate glorious heritage, culture and traditions. They are meant to rejoice special moments and emotions in our lives with our loved ones. They play an important role to add structure to our social lives, and connect us with our families and backgrounds. They give us a distraction from our day to day, exhausting routine of life, and give us some inspiration to remember the important things and moments in life. Festivals were started to pass the legends, knowledge and traditions onto the next generation.

Towns, villages and communities give the impression that they share their culture through festivals. Maayon is not exempt from this. The annual Hil-o Hil-o is a manifestation of a cultural tradition that demonstrates mutual interdependence among its folks. Though the etymological origin of the word is up to now unknown, but its concept as practiced in the way of life of taga-Maayon over the years has been visible and already firmly assimilated in the culture of Maayonans.

According to the history as spelled out in the Local Government Unit (LGU), Hil-o Hil-o is reciprocity that demonstrates mutual interdependence among its people. It expressed itself in many forms and in many ways. It could simply be taking turns in helping one another to make a heavy work for one becomes lighter. It can also be rendering services or giving material donation for a relative, a friend or a neighbor who is holding a very important affair in the family.

All through the years, the Maayonanons, generation after generation has preserved this peculiar desirable trait in our community. Nurtured by experience and guided by the admonition of our elders to think well of others, Hil-o Hil-o is now deeply assimilated into the culture of the Maayonanons. Certainly, it will stay and last forever. We are wont to it already. Furthermore, it is a positive attribute that should be kept forever, that helps Maayonanons become more cohesive. Hil-o Hil-o , the Maayonanons way of life.

Statement of the problem

The study aimed to establish the cultural identity and sustainable development of Hil-o Hil-o as festival in Maayon, Capiz.

Specifically, it aimed to provide answers to the following questions:

- 1) What is the origin and development of Hil-o Hil-o festival?
- 2) What is the significant contribution of Hil-o Hil-o to the life of Maayonanon?

METHODOLOGY

Research design

The study employed an ethnographic design, which is a qualitative research approach aimed at understanding social relations and cultural practices through hands-on, in-depth learning. Ethnography is particularly suited for exploring the diversity of cultural experiences, and in this case, it focused on the historical development and significant contributions of the Hil-o Hil-o festival in Maayon, Capiz. Data collection was performed through in-depth interviews and a focus group discussion with key informants, following guidelines from Creswell (2013) and Rubin and Rubin (2005).

Locale of the study and respondents

The research was conducted in Maayon, Capiz, centering on individuals connected to the Hil-o Hil-o festival. The participants included six key informants chosen for their roles and expertise related to the festival. They consisted of a Municipal Tourism officer, a Social Studies teacher, a professor of Humanities, an elder with extensive festival knowledge, a youth leader (preferably the SK chairman), a businessperson, and a religious figure. These individuals were selected for their active participation and support in the festival's organization and development.

Research instruments

Data were gathered using an interview guide developed by the researcher, which ensured focus and depth in exploring participants' lived experiences. The interview guide was based on the research problem, conceptual framework, and related literature. Tools such as notepads, a video camera, and a voice recorder were utilized to document the sessions. Both in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) were employed, allowing for comprehensive exploration of individual and shared narratives related to the festival.

Data analyses procedure

The study utilized thematic analysis as the primary method for analyzing qualitative data. This approach involved identifying and interpreting patterns and themes within the collected data, following guidelines by Bogdanare et al. (2008). Thematic analysis is recognized for its flexibility and accessibility, particularly for novice researchers. By involving participants in the process, this method facilitated the generation of new insights and concepts relevant to the Hil-o Hil-o festival.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The origin and development of hil-o hil-o festival

Hil-o Hil-o Festival is annual celebration of Maayonanon celebrated in the municipality of Maayon. It was first organized in 1992 during the term of Mayor Honorio B. Diaz in 1992. Mayor Diaz felt that the town of Maayon should have its own festival that would uniquely

represent that town of Maayon and showcase its way of life, particularly give homage to its patron saint, the Sto. Niño who is the patron saint of Maayon.

When the first Hil-o Hil-o festival was organized, it was originally scheduled in the last week of February of each year.

This was supported by key informant 1 who explained about this origin of the Hil-o Hil-o Festival:

“The development of the Hil-o Hil-o festival started with Mayor Honorio Diaz who named the festival Hil-o Hil-o. The fiesta was celebrated every last week of January because the fiesta of Maayon was held in honor of their patron saint of the Roman Catholics Senior Santo Niño.”

When it started in 1992, Hil-o Hil-o was celebrated for only few days. On the civic festivities, a pamukawpukaw takes place in the dawn. This is when a band goes around town, playing drums and other musical instrument. It is a sign that the festivities have begun and that everyone is enjoined to participate in the merriment. It also signifies that the people should awaken and prepare themselves for the most anticipated day has arrived. Then, it will be followed by opening program for the Hil-o Hil-o Festival.

The opening program is usually held in the town plaza. The people would gather together for the program. As explained by one key informant:

“The vibrant Hil-o Hil-o commences with an enchanting opening program held in the heart of the plaza, igniting a contagious wave of excitement among attendees. As the sun begins to set, the air fills with an eclectic blend of music and laughter, while the plaza becomes adorned with colorful decorations and sparkling lights. The program's grandeur unfolds with captivating performances by local artists, showcasing traditional dances, melodious tunes, and mesmerizing cultural showcases.”

Usually during this the mayor welcomes dignitaries and VIP guests, and more especially, the locals to take part of the Hil-o Hil-o Festival. During the first ever Hil-o Hil-o festival, the Mayor underscored the importance of the festival in promoting the town's culture and heritage, as well as the nurturing the values of bayanihan spirit in honor of the Sto. Nino. Indeed, amidst the jubilant atmosphere, the opening program of the town fiesta in the plaza sets the stage for an unforgettable celebration, fostering unity, joy, and a deep sense of community among all who partake in the festivities. Other parts of the opening program includes the flag ceremony, flag raising, speech of the keynote speaker raising of the municipal and barangay flags, and the declaration of the opening of the fiesta.

For two respective evenings, the LGU Night and the DepEd (then DECS) Night was held. The LGU night is held to gather all local government employees and officials of the town, as well as officials of the barangay, to celebrate together with food, music, and dancing. It is a sort of thanksgiving and opportunity to gather together and build camaraderie that working together as civil servants.

A separate gathering is also held for teachers, called the DepEd Night. It was then called DECS Night. Like the LGU Night, the DepEd Night is Teachers' Night is an enchanting evening dedicated to recognizing and appreciating the tireless efforts, dedication, and unwavering commitment of educators of Maayon.

An informant explained:

“The event exudes an atmosphere of heartfelt gratitude and joy as teachers come together to celebrate their invaluable contributions in shaping young minds. The venue comes alive with inspiring speeches, uplifting performances, and touching tributes, all aimed at honoring the teachers' profound impact on society.”

Amidst the warmth and camaraderie, the air is filled with appreciation and admiration, creating a memorable and uplifting experience for all who attend. Teachers' Night is a cherished

occasion that shines a well-deserved spotlight on the remarkable educators who play an instrumental role in shaping the future.

There is also the playground demonstration, which continues to be staged until now. It is an exhilarating showcase of energy and imagination by the elementary and high school students of different participating schools where they perform dances in the public plaza. The demonstration not only showcases the physical prowess of the young people of Maayon but also their ability to collaborate and engage in powerful performance. It is a captivating spectacle that highlights the importance of play in fostering physical, social, and cognitive development.

The highlight of the Hil-o Hil-o Festival is the coronation night. One informant described:

“Before, there is the binayli every Saturday starting in the first Saturday of January and its ends a week before the fiesta. Those who join the search for the fiesta queen would have sponsors. Before a binayli is held, a canvassing was first conducted. Whoever was the candidate who could raise the largest amount of money during the canvassing would be proclaimed the fiesta queen.”

Then comes the coronation of the Fiesta Queen. This is the most highly anticipated and enchanting spectacle that marks the pinnacle of the Hil-o Hil-o festival.

Each year, a director-general appointed from among the church, academe, or civil society is appointed to spearhead the organization of the festival.

Usually taking charge of the coronation is a person called the director-general. Since 1992, a long line of director-general has been appointed. They are as follows: Mr. Ruperto D. Conde (1992); SB Member Roy Roxas (1993); Mrs. Linda D. Bayhon (1994); SB Member Belegio D. Dueñas (1995); Mayor Honorio B. Diaz, Sr. (1996); Mr. Sulpicio A. Inocencio (1997); Mr. Edgar D. Alovera (1998); Mayor Miguel R. Delleria (1999); SB Member Edmundo T. Diaz (2000); Rev. Fr. Joedol Dorado (2001); Mr. Johnson D. Patricio (2002); Mr. Rodolfo L. Benjamin (2003); Ex-OIC Mayor Rolando Eleazar (2004); SB Member Ramon D. Dignomo (2005); Vice Mayor Wilfredo E. Bores, Sr. (2006); Mayor Belegio D. Dueñas (2007); SB Member Weldie C. Apolinario, Jr. (2008); SB Member Joel L. Diaz (2009); Mayor Belegio D. Dueñas (2010); Segundina F. Dollete (2011); Mr. Leo D. Durana (2012); Rev. Fr. Conrado B. Palete, Jr. (2013, 2014); Hon. Syvil Grace A. Dueñas (2015); Rev. Fr. Conrado B. Palete, Jr. (2016); Mr. Zaldy B. Caalam (2017); Rev. Fr. Conrado B. Palete, Jr. (2018); Hon. Jose C. Dapulaza (2019); Hon. Syvil Grace A. Dueñas (2020) and Dr. Marcelo JC M. Diaz III (2023).

Adorned in elegant gowns, the radiant candidates exude grace and poise, the atmosphere crackles with anticipation as the audience eagerly awaits the arrival of the new queen. Amidst a backdrop of vibrant decorations and melodious music, the moment arrives when the crown is placed upon the head of the chosen queen, accompanied by cheers of jubilation and applause. The coronation of the Fiesta Queen is a mesmerizing affair that epitomizes beauty, grace, and the embodiment of Maayon's spirit, leaving a lasting impression on all who witness this majestic event.

Since 1992, a long line of lovely maidens have been crowned fiesta queen already. There are also years where there would be a fiesta queen and another lady called the Lin-ay Sang Maayon. They are the following: Sharon Rose Medina (1992); Jerobelle Quiachon (1993); Vangeal D. Robino (1994); Cheryl Marie P. Dordas (1995); Hayna C. Dignomo (1996); Maricel Dordas (1997); Chiesa Diaz-Mayo (1998); Arleme Cantiller (1999); Leslie A. Dordas (2000); Charito Depeña (2001); Bonna May B. Dueñas (2002), Chiqui Diaz (Miss Maayon); Aiza Descalzota (2003); Aileen Alovera (2004); Paula Deocampo (2005); Angel Mary Durana (2006); Angelie Rose Comoro Hubag (2007); Robemar D. Alcazaren (2008); Chriselle Joy Dayao Diaz (2009), Marcella Julia Bargas (Lin-ay Sang Maayon); Mary Mayzee Bernas-Sorongon (2010), Erlyn Joy C. Deroy (Lin-ay Sang Maayon); Vhea Marie D. Dorado (2011),

Charlyn L. Comoro (Lin-ay Sang Maayon); Dianne Joy Fernandez Bores (2012), Jenny Mae Benosa (Lin-ay Sang Maayon) ; Mary Lyn Catalan Fuentes 2013, Thea Faith Dignomo (Lin-ay Sang Maayon); Rose Valerie S. Dongor (2014); Presym Joy DejascoDenosta (2015); Nicole Grace DepolCaputero (2016); Abigael Ramon Duronio (2017); Micah Sofia Borres (2018); Charlyn Mae Patricio Dordas(2019); Lovely Gail Aperoch (Lin-ay Sang Maayon) 2020; Ellaine Ondillo (2023); and Glenda Marra B. Villanueva (Lin-ay Sang Maayon).

Since 1992, almost the same activities were held in the succeeding years. In 2002, on the tenth year of the Hil-o Hil-o Festival, Mayor Billy D. Duenas who gave a deeper meaning on what Hil-o Hil-O is all about.

According to Mayor Duenas:

“The etymological origin of the word is up to now yet unknown, but its concept as practiced in our way of life over the years has been very visible and already firmly assimilated in the culture of Maayonanons. Hil-o Hil-o is reciprocity that demonstrates mutual interdependence among our people. It expressed itself in many forms and in many ways. It could simply be taking turns in helping one another to make a heavy work for one becomes lighter. It can also be rendering services or giving material donation for a relative, a friend or a neighbor who is holding a very important affair in the family.”

Informant 1 supported the definition of Hil-o Hil-o given by the former mayor and discussed that in their community, if there are occasions, it is common that the neighbor will come to each other's houses to help. In return, if they are also doing some things, they will also have the responsibility to come to their house and help them also. That is the concrete example of what is called Hil-o hil-o.

Informant 2 also shared, in the early times, when you help someone doing their chores like when it comes to harvest, moving their house and many more, in return, they will also help you without question.

Still another informant said “As time passed by, Hil-o Hil-o evolved as well as how it is interpreted. The through the kinaransa sa carsada (street dancing) was later introduced in the mid-2000s so that they and it would be a showcase of dancing talents of different schools and competing groups.”

As years passed by, new activities were added. For example, in 2009, a medical and dental mission as well as a supplemental feeding became part of the event.

Eventually, starting in 2011, the celebration lasted for 5 days. Also this year, the Maayon Tricycle Drivers Association's night became part of the program. Also, a run for a cause/marathon, surgical mission, legal counseling, film showing, business club night, acrobatic show, and farmers' day were part of the festivities, on top of the usual programming of the fiesta.

In 2013, the fun run was added.

In 2020, with the new mayor, the celebration was extended to 7 days. In 2020, the fiesta lasted for 7 days, with a grand motorcade as part of the opening salvo. Also a new part of the program was the color fun run and the disco sa plaza with a celebrity guest. A youth day was likewise added into the program, and also the PNP and BFP night to give honor the police and fire servicemen. Another interesting addition was the trade fair, which gave the people of Maayon and nearby communities the chance to display and showcase their products and crafts. A Motocross and Job Fair was also held. To make the feast day more exciting, a celebrity came to perform in the plaza, together with a live band performance.

In fact, since 2020, the festivities became grander and have started to gain the attraction of tourists within Capiz and outside. Hil-o Hil-o also attracted more media attention. Likewise, compared to its previous celebrations, the 2020 and 2023 fiesta welcomed more sponsors who helped fund and offset the cost of these festivities.

The celebration of the Hil-o Hil-o festival has seen a great revival during the term of Mayor Raymond Malapajo in 2019 who was very supportive of cultural and tourism initiatives and revival in the town. Sadly though, in 2021 and 2022, the town did not celebrate the Hil-o Hil-o festival because of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was only in 2023 that the festival was again revived when the restrictions were eased.

After two years of absence, the Hil-o Hil-o Festival came back as a grander occasion in 2023. Aside from the usual programming, plus new additions, like the food festival in the streets along Maayon Plaza, fireworks display, and the performance of the celebrity band Mayonaise on the main stage fronting the municipal hall.

Other activities included the Sikad Turismo, cooking festival/food festival, Lama Events (zumba in the plaza with Zin Wowie de Guman and RCZF Crew) and Tropa Vibes. To make the festival more inclusive, the LGBTQ community was also involved with the staging of the LGBTQ day in front of the municipal hall. True enough, this year's Hil-o Hil-o Festival was the grandest so far. Battle of the mini sounds made the plaza livelier, while the fireworks display made the night sky vibrant. The performance of celebrity band Hale brought excitement to the folks as well.

In line with this discussion, festivals strengthen community bonds by reinforcing a sense of togetherness and cooperation. They provide a platform for community members to collaborate and work together towards a common goal, such as organizing the festival or participating in cultural performances. Festivals build solidarity, trust, and mutual support within the community.

Findings of this study are supported by previous studies. Festivals are considered intangible heritage because they encompass a wide range of immaterial cultural expressions and practices that are passed down from generation to generation. Unlike tangible heritage, such as physical artifacts or historical sites, festivals are ephemeral and exist in the realm of lived experiences. They embody intangible elements such as rituals, performances, oral traditions, and social practices that hold immense cultural significance (Jamal and Robinson, 2019).

Festivals are inherently communal experiences, fostering a sense of togetherness and shared celebration. For Hil-o Hil-o, people come together from near and far, transcending boundaries of age, gender, and background, to participate in collective joy and revelry (Orsini and Benson, 2015). In connection with this, Getz (2013) discussed that festivals serve as a living embodiment of cultural traditions, values, and practices, passing them on from one generation to the next.

Significant contribution of hil-o hil-o to the life of Maayonanon

Data shows the themes on the significant contributions of Hil-o Hil-o to the life of the Maayonanons.

The Hil-o Hil-o Festival serves as a platform to promote the unique culture and tradition of Maayon, especially its heritage, traditional knowledge and practices, and artistic expressions of the locals in the community.

Based on the thematic analysis of the researcher, the following themes emerged: social significance, religious significance, cultural significance, and economic significance.

Festivals evoke a range of emotions, from pure joy and excitement to nostalgia, reverence, and even contemplation.

For Informant 1, it is a sense of joy during the highlight of the festival. "The people of Maayon are so happy to see that participating in this festival creates a sense of fervor among Maayonanon."

Furthermore, the festival is a reminder of the inherent values practiced by the people of Maayon and that is helping one another. This was expounded by Informant 2: "Helping each other, especially in these times, is very important. Sometimes all you need to do is to lessen the burden of one another with noble intentions."

On the other hand, one threat was seen in the sustainability of the Hil-o Hil-o festival and that is the disinterest among the younger generation. The disinterest of the younger generation in sustaining traditional practices can stem from several factors. This was raised by the informants who repeated said. According to Informant 2: "This time the younger generations doesn't even know what the word means." Informant 4 also added: "Maybe the practice is deteriorating when it comes to younger generations because of the lack of the LGU."

Informant 1: "That's the part that is unfortunate. The younger generation thinks that Hil-o hil-o is only a festival which is celebrated every January. It is not a festival, it is only given a festival because it is a known behavior here in the municipality of Maayon. Maybe it should be significant, that one group or sector which can propagate is the Department of Education."

In relation to the previous theme which discussed the disinterest of the younger generation to participate in the Hil-o Hil-o festival, the theme support from the LGU emerged.

This was expounded by Informant 1 who said: "They should make an advocacy program. Example, they hold a contest like essay about Hil-o hil-o. The organizers can also let them draw an example of Hil-o hil-o in 21st Century. It is important to educate the young because this culture is not bad but teaches them to help each other. "

Informant 4 added: "Maybe the LGU should hold contests and programs and many more. The key word is awareness."

This is where an integrated involvement among key stake holders in the community comes into play. The involvement of grassroots community leaders would help a lot. This was emphasized by Informant 2:

"Maybe the LGU needs to mobilize the leaders of each barangay to start practicing the culture. Especially, tasking them to educate every person about the importance of always helping one another."

But amidst the innovation introduced, the core theme of the Hil-o Hil-o, which is helping one another should never disappear. This was the core of Informant 3's discussion:

"Every year, the festival should be celebrated in that way, the people can show the importance of being generous to one another or what they like to call it Hil-o hil-o."

In terms of its social significance, Hil-o Hil-o Festival can be seen as a community activity that brings the people of Maayon together. Through the years, it has seen improvement, according to Informant 2:

"Compared to the festival of Maayon today and in the early times. It is really different because the festival today is really a time that the Maayonanons can boast the pride and culture of Maayon."

On the contrary, Informant 4 did not feel the festival because there is a span of time that is being celebrated and it is not consistent.

Informant 4 explained: "The program has no powerful impact because after the festival, it's like nothing happened."

Likewise, Informant 3 explained that it is an opportunity for the younger generation to become more interested of the past:

"Yes, because by celebrating this festival, it is where the younger generations are being informed on how important the Hil-o hil-o is to the community."

"As the community practice this behavior, this will give also influence and spark some curiosity of other people that resides in different municipalities," Informant 3 added.

The social importance of the Hil-o Hil-o festival lies in its capability to encourage appreciation for cultural diversity, fostering cross-cultural understanding, especially for the culture and heritage of Maayon.

Just like other festivals, the Hil-o Hil-o promotes a positive impact on wellness and well-being by providing opportunities for relaxation, connection, and cultural enrichment.

Informant 3 said: “The Hil-o Hil-o Festival offers a break from everyday routines and responsibilities. It is not every day that this festival is celebrated, so it is a welcome change from our day-to-day habits.”

The religious significance of the Hil-o Hil-o Festival is anchored on the fact that it is celebrated in time for the feast of the Holy Child or Santo Niño. Historical documents showed that as early as 1894, the town was offered to the Santo Niño as its patron saint, according to Augustinian friar Fernandez.

During the research, the researcher also looked into the yearly themes: 2009 - Ang Pag-uswag Tayuyon Kon ang Tanan Nagahiliugyon; 2011 - Bugay sang Sto. Niño kag Kauswagan sang Maayon Tayuyon kun Pagbinuligay Magapadayon; 2013 - Tililingob Kita sa Pagpapadayon sa Pag-uswag sang Maayon; 2015 theme - Pagpasalamat, Pagbinuligay Padayunon: Bugay ni Santo Niño Mabaton; 2020 theme – Pagpasalamat Kay Sto. Niño sang mga Bugay nga Nabaton, Pag-umwad sang Maayon Padayunon; and 2023 theme - Magkasadya kag Maghiliusa, Sr. Sto. Niño Pasalamatan sa Padayon nga Pag-asenso sang Banwa.

Based on these themes, Hil-o Hil-o festival is both a religious and civic festivity, a homage to the Santo Niño and a tribute to the Maayonanons' hard work, interdependence and unity to strive further for the development of the town. The festivity is not only in honor of the Santo Niño, but also a reminder for the people to work together and give thanks to the Almighty.

According to Fr. Conrad Palete, “Hil-o Hil-o is a celebration of thanksgiving translated into service. Hil-o Hil-o is a religious festival in honor of the town's patron Saint, the Holy Child, the Sto. Niño(2015 Souvenir).”

Fr. Palete further said:

“To be grateful is one way of acknowledging God's abundant blessings to our Parish, in particular, and in beloved town Maayon, in general. Despite and inspite of all the challenges that people faced, they stood firm in their belief that indeed God is with them. God is merciful and compassionate to all, as Pope Francis told to people, that they cannot but be grateful. In honoring Him on His feast day is actually our way of thanking Him for his graces we received in our homes and in our Christian communities. As a humble response for God's graciousness, we continue to be of service to others, in one's little way, especially to those who need it most. This is the way of showing God's mercy and compassion. (2015 Souvenir).”

Furthermore, Fr. Roque Ortencio, who succeeded Fr. Palete said “The Feast of Sto. Niño is a wonderful gift that the Lord gave to all. On this feast, are challenges to imitate Him in the virtue of humility (2011 Souvenir).”

The religious festivities usually precede the civil festivities. There is the seven-day novena before the fiesta, followed by the Vesper's mass, the religious procession, and the concelebrated mass on the 30th of January.

The devotion to the Santo Niño is common in the Philippines. In fact, the biggest religious festivals in the Philippines, namely the Atiatihan in Aklan, Dinagyang in Iloilo, and Sinulog in Cebu, are staged in honor of the Santo Nino. Similarly, Maayon hosts the Hil-o Hil-o Festival as a way of paying homage to the Santo Nino.

The Philippines has a strong devotion to the Santo Niño, which translates to "Holy Child" or "Child Jesus." This devotion is deeply rooted in the country's history and culture, and it holds significant religious and cultural importance for many Filipinos.

The origins of the Santo Niño devotion in the Philippines can be traced back to the arrival of Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan in 1521. Magellan presented an image of the Child Jesus to Rajah Humabon and his wife, Queen Juana, as a gift when they were baptized as Christians. This event marked the introduction of Christianity to the islands.

Over the centuries, the devotion to the Santo Niño grew and became an integral part of Filipino religious practices. Filipinos believe that the Santo Niño symbolizes Jesus' presence in their lives and represents the qualities of humility, innocence, and childlike faith. The image of the Santo Niño is often depicted as a young boy wearing royal garments, holding a globe, and raising his right hand in a gesture of blessing.

Devotees of the Santo Niño express their devotion through prayers, novenas, and attending religious ceremonies. Many households have an image of the Santo Niño displayed prominently in their homes, and some even hold regular devotional activities or processions within their communities.

The Hil-o Hil-o Festival is also present significant cultural significance to the town. It is already an intangible cultural heritage of Maayon and has been already included in the cultural mapping project, hence, the Municipal Government in the recent years have been working significantly to revive and improve this tradition. Informant 2 explained: "Festivals are deeply rooted in the collective memory, beliefs, and values of communities, reflecting their unique identities and ways of life."

This was further supported by Informant 3: "As living manifestations of cultural heritage, festivals contribute to the continuity of intangible traditions, fostering a sense of belonging, and promoting cultural diversity and intergenerational transmission of knowledge."

The Hil-o Hil-o Festival in Maayon provides an opportunity to immerse oneself in the traditions, customs, and practices of the Maayonon culture. Visitors from different towns come to experience the festival, witnessing and engaging with cultural practices that carry historical and symbolic significance to Maayon. The festival awakens the senses through vibrant colors, rhythmic music, tantalizing aromas, and tactile sensations, creating a multisensory extravaganza. Participating in the festival can challenge preconceived notions, broaden perspectives, and inspire personal growth.

According to Informant 1, there is still a certain degree of involvement among the locals in the practice of the Hil-o Hil-o festival: "Maybe it is still in the culture of the Maayononans. So far, there could be seen some people still help each other when it comes to certain things."

Furthermore, in terms of the economic significance, festivals like the Hil-o Hil-o hold significant economic importance as they stimulate local economies, create employment opportunities, and generate revenue for businesses and industries. In this aspect, the festival contributes to the promotion of economic sustainability, particularly showcasing local products. This has been a longstanding part of the Hil-o Hil-o Festival where trade fairs are done where farm produce are displayed. As what Informant 2 shared: "Maayon is replete with agricultural products like Cassava, sweet potato, ginger, banana and some vegetables."

Informant 4: "The things that the other municipalities sell, more likely that is also the product that are sold."

This was affirmed by Informant 1: "There are agricultural fairs being showcased in the festival, products from the mountains like coconut, corn, and rice. But it's better that it should be more..."

He also added: "As observed during the festival, there are many people that are not from here to explore and experience the Hil-o hil-o festival. In regards to the aspect of economic, one can see that the products are good like food kiosk in the plaza."

It has been discussed already in the earlier theme that the Hil-o Hil-o Festival incorporates an economic significance by promoting the local economy.

Informant 1 explained: “More visitors means better tourism revenue for Maayon. With that, it also means opportunity for additional income and boosting business activities for local business owners.”

Informant 4 added: “Locals find this as an opportunity to see products, food, crafts, and many ways where money can be earned.” In particular, during a festival, sectors such as those in event management, hospitality, and retail benefit.

Festivals also offer a platform for local artisans, vendors, and businesses to showcase and sell their products, stimulating economic growth within the community.

By being celebrated year after year, the Hil-o Hil-o festival is ingrained in the fabric of society, serving as a collective memory and a source of identity for communities. Through the act of repeated celebration, festivals not only pass down cultural knowledge and customs but also adapt and evolve, reflecting the changing needs and aspirations of the community. By maintaining these continued practices, festivals serve as a testament to the resilience, cultural diversity, and the timeless power of human connection (Timmers & Tiesdell, 2018).

Furthermore, societal changes and shifting cultural norms can lead to a reevaluation of traditional practices. Younger individuals may question the relevance, fairness, or inclusivity of certain traditions, especially if they are perceived as discriminatory or restrictive. This critical examination of cultural practices can result in a reluctance to perpetuate traditions that do not align with evolving societal values (Getz, 2018).

On the other hand, there is still hope that this younger generation would be enticed to participate. As what Informant 3 said: "Of course, it should be instilled to them the ways of Maayonanon that is to be a helpful and good person."

Based on the findings of this study it is implied that the Hil-o Hil-o Festival in Maayon contributes significantly to the community in various ways. They celebrate and showcase the unique Maayonanon culture, bringing people together and fostering social connections. Festivals also promote the local economy by attracting visitors and stimulating business activities. Additionally, they promote wellness and well-being by providing opportunities for relaxation, physical activity, and cultural enrichment. Overall, festivals play a crucial role in preserving cultural heritage, fostering unity, supporting the local economy, and enhancing the well-being of the community.

This means that people from all walks of life interact to plan for the festival programs and activities. People from far-flung places come over to join the festivities. And so on.

Furthermore, festivals strengthen community bonds by reinforcing a sense of togetherness and cooperation. Ritchie and Crouch (2013) explained that festivals provide a platform for community members to collaborate and work together towards a common goal, such as organizing the festival or participating in cultural performances. Furthermore, Sharpley and Stone (2019) discussed that festivals build solidarity, trust, and mutual support within the community.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Hil-o Hil-o Festival of Maayon has deeply embedded itself in the culture and identity of the Maayonanons. It symbolizes the essence of reciprocity and mutual interdependence, with community members coming together to share in tasks and responsibilities. The festival serves as a living cultural tradition that preserves and celebrates the heritage of Maayon while fostering a sense of belonging and cultural diversity. It stands as an intangible cultural heritage that contributes to social cohesion and strengthens community ties. Moreover, the festival

significantly impacts the community's social, religious, cultural, and economic aspects by promoting cultural preservation, unity, tourism, and local business activities. It enhances the well-being of the community through its vibrant celebration of Maayonanons' values and traditions, leaving a lasting legacy for future generations.

To ensure the sustained growth and success of the Hil-o Hil-o Festival, it is recommended that the Local Government Unit (LGU) of Maayon conduct further research and documentation of the festival's history and development. There should also be an active campaign to raise awareness among younger generations about its cultural and social importance. Stakeholders are encouraged to collaborate in advocating for funding, infrastructure development, and resource allocation to enhance the festival's organization and impact. Partnerships with government agencies can integrate the festival into cultural tourism and regional development initiatives.

Additionally, the community should be actively involved in the decision-making processes related to the festival to foster a sense of ownership and pride. Organizers may seek open dialogue with locals and incorporate community inputs into planning, programming, and marketing strategies. Engaging local businesses, artisans, and cultural practitioners in festival activities can promote economic growth and support local talent. Lastly, the festival's organizers should prioritize showcasing Maayonon culture while integrating wellness activities that promote physical, mental, and cultural enrichment. These efforts will preserve cultural heritage, foster unity, support economic opportunities, and enhance the overall well-being of the Maayon community.

REFERENCES

- Benson, A. M., & Healy, R. G. (2019). Festival experiences and the subjective well-being of attendees. *Event Management*, 23(2), 227-241.
- Bramwell, B., & Sharman, A. (2019). Tourism and sustainability in the UK's rural festival and event sector: A critical evaluation. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 27(12), 1364-1383.
- Brown, S. A. (2019). Festival spaces and the lived experience of community. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 41(2), 205-225.
- Cohen, E. (2020). Heritage, cultural production and the festivalisation of identity: Performing the world of music. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 35(3), 231-244.
- Getz, D. (2013). *Event studies: Theory, research and policy for planned events*. Routledge.
- Getz, D. (2018). Event studies: An overview. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 36, 21-29.
- Getz, D. (2018). Event tourism: Definition, evolution, and research. *Tourism Management*, 29(3), 403-428.
- Gursoy, D., & Rutherford, D. G. (2014). Host attitudes toward tourism: An improved structural model. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 31(3), 495-516.
- Gursoy, D., Kim, K., & Uysal, M. (2014). Perceived impacts of festivals and special events by organizers: An extension and validation. *Tourism Management*, 25(2), 171-181.
- Jamal, T., & Robinson, M. (2019). *The SAGE handbook of tourism studies*. Sage Publications.
- Johnson, P. (2017). The lived experience of music festival goers: A phenomenological study. *Journal of Convention & Event Tourism*, 18(2), 107-123.
- Koo, G. Y., Lee, S. A., & Choe, J. Y. (2019). Investigating the influence of festival quality, satisfaction, and involvement on festival loyalty: The role of festival experience. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 11, 26-35.
- Kruger, M., Saayman, M., & Saayman, A. (2013). The motivational factors of event attendees: The case of a wine festival. *African Journal of Business Management*, 6(6), 2291-2298.

Hil-o hil-o: its role in sustainable community

- Lee, T. H., & Goh, S. (2020). The relationship between place attachment and behavioral intentions: An exploratory study of visitors to a haunted house attraction. *Journal of Travel Research*, 49(3), 313-325.
- Mason, P. (2015). The lived experience of festival space. *Leisure Studies*, 34(2), 194-212.
- Munar, A. M. (2013). Tourism social media: Transformative consumer empowerment and market transformation. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 1(1-2), 58-61.
- Orsini, F., & Benson, A. (2015). Between continuity and change: Exploring the lived experience of a traditional festival in a small Italian town. *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events*, 7(3), 316-335.
- Pechlaner, H., Smeral, E., & Matzler, K. (2013). Knowledge management and innovation in knowledge-intensive industries: Evidence from the tourism industry. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 17(4), 644-672.
- Pritchard, A., & Morgan, N. J. (2017). Privileging the festival over the everyday: Transforming the social world. *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events*, 4(1), 1-21.
- Richards, G. (2015). *Cultural tourism: Global and local perspectives*. Routledge.
- Richards, G., & Palmer, R. (2020). *Eventful cities: Cultural management and urban revitalization*. Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Ritchie, J. R., & Crouch, G. I. (2013). *The competitive destination: A sustainable tourism perspective*. CABI Publishing.
- Sharpley, R., & Stone, P. R. (Eds.). (2019). *Tourist experience: Contemporary perspectives*. Routledge.
- Smith, M. K. (2013). *Issues in cultural tourism studies*. Routledge.
- Smith, M. K., & Richards, G. (2015). *The Routledge handbook of cultural tourism*. Routledge.
- Timmers, R., & Tiesdell, S. (Eds.). (2018). *Festivalisation of urban spaces: Factors, impacts and globalisation*. Routledge.
- Tribe, J., & Airey, D. (2017). Developments in the event tourism literature: A critical review. *Tourism Management*, 28(3), 886-898.
- Van der Wagen, L., & White, L. (2013). *Sustainable event management: A practical guide*. Routledge.
- Weaver, D. B. (2020). *Sustainable tourism: Theory and practice*. Prentice Hall.