

Contemplating Instances of Kapampangan Heritage Projected in Two, 2019 San Fernando Lantern Displays

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ABSTRACT

This paper covers a close reading of lantern displays from two locations in San Fernando — Heroes Hall & Park and the Giant Lantern Festival of 2019. It is proposed here that the displays have references coincidentally or deliberately nodding to the theme of the United Nations General Assembly in the program of reaffirming and promoting heritage, which includes language, as proclaimed in the International Year of Indigenous Languages.

In addition, the close reading gains its substance from historical and cultural contexts influencing the reception of lantern designs, as well as a proposed step formula which breaks down gimmicks into subjects, structure, symbols on the iconographic level, and form-qualities, which are in turn organized via visual-kinesthetic and cultural group thematic classification. Furthermore, in some instances applicable, several ruminations are included on the topic of alternate discourses suggested for the design.

Keywords: Giant-Lantern-Festival-2019; San-Fernando; Heroes-Hall; Kapampangan; International-Year-of-Indigenous-Languages.

Introduction

he year 2019 was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly as the International Year of Indigenous Languages, framing the significance of the diversity of languages in terms of development, peace building, and reconciliation.¹ The Assembly states that regardless of their immense value, languages around the globe continue to disappear at a disquieting pace.² The United Nations General Assembly expresses that Languages serve as ‘a repository for each person’s unique identity, cultural history, traditions, and memory’³ which in turn call for the revisiting and securing of heritage. They further reiterate that the death of language affects culture. Culture is framed comprising of history, customs, traditions, memory, unique modes of thinking, meaning, and expression. All of these influence the identity of the individual. With the disappearance of language, there is likewise the gradual vanishing of information which goes with it, due to the difficulty and accuracy in retaining it.⁴

¹ UNESCO. 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages Official Website. <http://en.iyil2019.org>

² UNESCO, International Year of Indigenous Languages Official Website, 2019

³ UNESCO, International Year of Indigenous Languages Official Website, 2019

⁴ Laurie Bauer, Janet Holmes, and Paul Warren, *Language Matters* (UK: Macmillan Education, 2006).

The Lantern Crafts and Giant Lantern tradition are among the oldest artistic practices of Pampanga, textured by spoken language⁵ and visual language devices⁶. As time went on, audiences have witnessed how these creations could no longer be considered limited to the territory of ‘The Longest Christmas’, due to the more complex themes interwoven with the lit narratives of the holiday season.⁷ Given language’s intimate interlocking with culture, it is contemplated here that Lanterns can and may contribute in delivering ideas with visual language. Where, because of their tendency to disarm due to their associations with things ‘seasonal’, events, histories, and both personal and collective memories, could encourage making new mental associations, which may permit the aspired ‘creation of favorable conditions for knowledge-sharing... with regards to indigenous languages’⁸ and the respective cultures expressed.

The designs of the 2019 festivities: Heroes Hall Display and Giant Lantern Festival, appear to coincide with the theme of the United Nations International Year of Indigenous Languages. Moreover, what follows is an appreciation of the lantern displays involving an interweaving of the historical and cultural contexts, which influence the designs. In some applicable instances, some ruminations are included on the topic of alternative discourses suggested for the design.

Some Notes on Close Reading of the Lantern Displays

Christmas Lanterns, being a variation of art, can have the function of conveying messages. Additionally, the criticism of the lantern displays discussed in this study were developed first through the method of Close Reading. Close reading is a process of careful and purposeful (re)reading, in which the researcher places focus on the message of the author (in this case the artist) within the text (the discussed object); reading involves the attempt to understand what the structure of the material has to tell.⁹ While traditionally a method which is native in studies on literature, its usage has also become applicable to non-textual data. This is seen in the contribution of Tucker Harding¹⁰ who maintains: “Regardless of the medium, the basic premise behind analysis of this kind is that all objects of human creation carry layers of meaning, each open to discernment and interpretation if perceived and studied, and each adding to the educational value of studying the object (text or other) as a whole.” Similarly, reinforcing this are Butterworth and Thwaites¹¹ who scribe that reading involves dealing with ‘texts’. Though conventional understanding calls ‘texts’ as literal written words, Butterworth and Thwaites use the word in its broadest sense, these being ‘objects of critical focus’. Hence, these points provide the conceptual flexibility needed for close reading to fit appropriately in the context of this study.

⁵ The researcher’s dissertation titled ‘Star Gazing: The Giant Lanterns of Pampanga as Political Culture’ has two chapters dedicated to this topic. One is how lantern creation and performance reflect certain Kapampangan values; the other is about how years of lantern artistry and working in guilds had been conducive for the development of certain vocabulary inspired and exclusive to lantern craft.

⁶ See Dominique Angela M. Juntado, “Ligligan Parul: Pampanga’s Giant Lanterns as Political and Cultural Thought,” *TALA KASAYSAYAN* Vol. 2 No. 2 (2019): 182-184, http://talakasaysayan.org/Tala_Archives/Second_Volume/2/volume2-no.2-art6_juntado.pdf

⁷ Juntado, “Ligligan Parul,” 182-184.

⁸ UNESCO, International Year of Indigenous Languages Official Website, 2019

⁹ Douglas Fischer and Nancy Frey, *Close Reading and Writing from Sources* (USA: International Reading Association, 2014)

¹⁰ Tucker Harding, ‘Using Annotations for Close Reading Exercises’. ENHANCED. May 3, 2010.

¹¹ John Butterworth and Geoff Thwaites, *Thinking Skills Critical Thinking and Problem Solving* (UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013)

Moreover, this study revolves around two types of lanterns. The lanterns forming the Heroes Hall display is non-conventional in that it does not follow the shape of the Star (five-pointed design)¹² or *Tala* (eight-pointed star design; also translates to ‘bright shine’ which corresponds to the source of light emanating from the Star which shone and announced Christ being born)¹³ and does not have the default circular framing typically associated with San Fernando lanterns. It is a static display in which the shape is set and fixed by wire frame and its colors are tangibly supplied with the use of colored plastic films and illuminated with standard white/yellow bulbs. These lanterns are more literal in their render.

Furthermore, the interpretation of the giant lanterns follows a method as seen in a previous study by Dominique A.M. Juntado.¹⁴ In deriving meaning of a lantern, this begins with the recognition that there is a sign, which is used to communicate a message; in the case of the lantern, this could either be the overall theme expressed by the *gimmicks* (the changing designs on the face of the lantern) or individually, per display, provided that there is more than one message being expressed on the lantern. Symbols are incorporated in the design, its meanings ‘all established by social convention or through the channel of historical tradition’¹⁵ The process of deciphering and reading relies on three components: subjects, symbols on the iconographic level, and form-qualities.¹⁶ Each discloses a message, but to obtain the messages rendered in each code in a particular event, the reader must have some understanding of how each code functions, as in a system. Visual communication has similarities with linguistic communication in the manner that artworks have parts which can be paralleled to utterances, speech, and a cultural style found in a language.¹⁷ For Gimmicks, these can be composed through a consolidation of tiled imagery to form a unified display.¹⁸ The visual-kinesthetic properties of Giant Lanterns include synthesis and patterns; where the categorization of these design details make them closer to relatable analysis. The subject or the content can be representational in their forms.

The potential challenge hovering attempts of reading into a work is the occasional lapse that the visual realities in the artist’s vista may be significantly off in many respects from the vista of the audience.¹⁹ The lantern, like any other item or event of heritage, is likely to have another set of personal meanings to someone especially since the objective aimed by lantern artists is to trigger reflective thinking.²⁰ Spectatorship cannot be separate from the ‘personal baggage’, be these values and memories, that audiences carry²¹ which contains their appreciation of heritage potentially divertive from, yet connected to, the more dominant narrative.²² With heritage divided by ‘type’, ‘market’, and by ‘identity level’, this is to say that heritage should be approached more as a

¹² Arnel Flores, Lantern Artist from Purok 10 Santa Lucia. Interview by author, Santa Lucia, San Fernando Pampanga, Philippines. October 10, 2017.

¹³ Flores, Interview, 2017.

¹⁴ Juntado, “Ligligan Parul,” 182-184.

¹⁵ Marcel Danesi, *Messages, Signs, and Meanings: A Basic Textbook in Semiotics and Communication* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 2004), 31.

¹⁶ Evelyn Payne Hatcher, *Art as Culture an Introduction to the Anthropology of Art* (USA: University Press of America, 1985), 140-141.

¹⁷ Hatcher, *Art as Culture an Introduction to the Anthropology of Art*, 138.

¹⁸ Hatcher, *Art as Culture an Introduction to the Anthropology of Art*, 143.

¹⁹ Juntado, *Ligligan Parul: Pampanga’s Giant Lanterns as Political and Cultural Thought*, 195

²⁰ Howard Peter, *Heritage Management, Interpretation, Identity*, (England: Leicester University Press, 2003), 04

²¹ Peter, *Heritage Management, Interpretation, Identity*,

process rather than a product²². Heritage is for the people²³. These things considered, the possibility of multiple interpretations is a regard that lantern artists are aware of. But to avoid far-fetched meanings, lantern artists use established symbols or icons bearing familiar references so as to reinforce the design. This commonly materializes in the manner of pairing an image(s) with an associated tune or sound byte.²⁴

Working with icons can also be problematic to an extent. Being a category of meaning, it is a form, which is familiar to and among those sharing a culture, while those outside the said culture have to be informed so as to appreciate.²⁵ Theoretical symbolism is defined as ‘the meaning as interpreted in accordance with some theoretical formulation as to the nature of things.’²⁶ With inspecting icons, there is identification of symbols that have universal, basic meanings and distinction from those which are more culture-specific.

Metaphors may also be expressed in a design; these are devices in which one thing is rendered to resemble in some manner via analogy.²⁷ Metaphors, being considered here among the formal qualities of visual art, are not always obvious but are interesting additions.

Content aside, the formal qualities of a work refer to the style in the narrow sense. The understructure consists of the spatial composition, distribution, and alignment of the elements used, degree of symmetry, colors utilized, the nature of the lines, and similar details.²⁸ Color is a definitive component of the giant lantern. While at the denotative level these are interpreted as ‘gradations of hue on the light spectrum’²⁹ the naming of the hues cannot be entirely separate from personal and cultural considerations and would be of interest in determining how these colors are used to express emotional qualities.³⁰

The Heroes Hall Display as an Ode to Seasonal Folklife³¹

Heroes Hall is located in Barangay San Juan of San Fernando, Pampanga. It is one of 10 locations comprising the Heritage District of San Fernando. Serving as an annex of the City Hall, its extension called Heroes Park is a green and concrete space, which holds several monuments of notable figures in both Kapampangan and National Philippine history. Last October 31, 2019, together with the lighting of the street lanterns adorning the Jose Abad Santos and Olongapo-Gapan roads, a lantern display was debuted on the grounds, which would eventually accompany the Giant Lantern Festival exhibitions, and likewise complement the history of the space that is Heroes Hall and Park.

²² Peter, *Heritage Management, Interpretation, Identity*, 12

²³ Peter, *Heritage Management, Interpretation, Identity*, 33

²⁴ Juntado, “Ligligan Parul,” 183

²⁵ Hatcher, *Art as Culture an Introduction to the Anthropology of Art*, 143.

²⁶ Hatcher, *Art as Culture an Introduction to the Anthropology of Art*, 149.

²⁷ Hatcher, *Art as Culture an Introduction to the Anthropology of Art*, 152.

²⁸ Hatcher, *Art as Culture an Introduction to the Anthropology of Art*, 152.

²⁹ Danesi, *Messages, Signs, and Meanings*, 69.

³⁰ Danesi, *Messages, Signs, and Meanings*, 74.

³¹ The original display debuted in 2018; some lanterns were added in 2019 for an updating of the exhibit.



[Image 01]

Heroes Hall Building

Regally dressed in white lights reminiscent of fine lace for an old-school feel.

Photo taken by the Researcher

The exhibit comprises of thirteen lantern pieces which in the combined view appear as a creation of a town scene, highlighting the much-anticipated events that characterize the Philippine Christmas season. Each lantern is strategically spaced so as to be able to encourage a story of its own, while also contributing to the larger theme uniting the lanterns. All pieces are devoid of labels or similar medium of descriptions, which is in turn conducive for visual meditations³² where instead of being instructed what to think word for word (sometimes being accompanied by unforgivably thick body of text), setting the contexts of the display, the audience can frame the pieces partly according to the connections they are able to make with it.



[Image 02]

Collective View of the Heroes Hall & Park Lantern Exhibit

Photo taken by the Researcher

³² A term (and subtopic) encountered in Syed Muhammad Hafiz's 2017 presentation titled VISUAL MEDITATIONS ON ISLAMIC ART WITHIN THE MALAY WORLD at the Fourth International Conference of the International Council for Historical and Cultural Cooperation Southeast Asia with the theme "The Malay World: Connecting the Past to the Present, September 14-16, 2017 Manila.

What is immediately noticeable at first glance about the display overall is how the lanterns are entirely different in form --- these don't follow the traditional structure of the *Parul Sampernandu*.³³ Being crafted instead in a three-dimensional style, they assume the shapes of people, a church, and holiday-related objects; these are therefore static --- without blinking sequence as the form and colors are set and illuminated as they are.

The design of the 'people' follow tertiary sexual characteristics³⁴ where gender and age are conveyed through stereotypes in design. The structure, in this instance the church, is dependent on established references for its recognition; particularly the feature of the Cross.



[Image 03]
Tertiary Sexual Characteristics Exemplified:
Children
Photo taken by the Researcher



[Image 04]
Tertiary Sexual Characteristics
Exemplified: Children, Teen, &
Grandmother
Photo taken by the Researcher



[Image 05]
Tertiary Sexual Characteristics Exemplified:
Adult Men and Woman
Photo taken by the Researcher

³³ *Parul Sampernandu* is a lantern formula exclusive to San Fernando, Pampanga and composes of four consistent parts: 'Tambur' (Center), 'Siku-Siku' (Right-angle designs), 'Palimbun' (Circular shapes on the outer rim), 'Puntetas' (Edges of the lantern)

³⁴ tvtropes.org. *Tertiary Sexual Characteristics*.
<https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/TertiarySexualCharacteristics>



[Image 06]
 Tertiary Sexual Characteristics Exemplified:
 Adults and Children
 Photo taken by Researcher

In an appreciation of these lanterns, there are two sub-themes which have surfaced. The display has been divided into religiosity and holiday gastronomy. On the whole, the play on religiosity is generic in terms of the parts where families and groups of friends appear to flock towards the church. There has also been the observable intertwinability of the national narrative with the local in two of the gastronomical references. These will be discussed in the pages that follow.



[Image 07]
 Snippet of People on their Way to Church
 Photo Taken by the Researcher

On Religiosity and Spirituality

Positioned to the extreme right of the display space, there is a lantern set illustrating a line of people marching towards the left direction to which a church is seen positioned. In cluster with other lanterns appearing as bystanders, and personas facing the church appearing as though they are on their way to midnight mass, these collectively frame the procession known as *Lubenas*.



[Image 08]

The Midnight Mass Procession

The lantern depiction is more to set a mood than to display the actual proxemics and setup.
Photo taken by the researcher.

This display conveys the mood of the Lubenas, a festival which originated in Bacolor and was acquired by San Fernando via osmosis or when the provincial capital was transferred in 1904.³⁵ It is said that the first instances and events of the giant lantern (Kap. *Ligligan*) were found in the Lubenas.

The Lubenas is celebrated by each barrio in a town.³⁶ A Catholic, folk festival, it is a procession which is done on land (Kap. *Lim bun*), where each barangay has two rows of lanterns mounted on bamboo poles accompanied by either the *andas* (shoulder-lugged carriage) or the *carroza* (wheeled carriage) bearing the respective patron saint's image.^{37,38} There are rows of lanterns (five to seven on each file), which are carried by males and on occasions females; except in Mexico where there is only one row of lanterns preceding the *santo*. It is noted that the number of lanterns depends on how many could be afforded by the barangay.

The proxemic structure of the traditional procession is described as follows: a lantern in the shape of a cross can be found at the head of the procession, followed by another lantern, which is in semblance of a fish (with movable fins, mouth, and tail). Also, succeeding the *santo* is a solitary lantern, which is larger than the rest.³⁹ Notably, the local choir is positioned behind the *carroza*, singing "Dios Te Salve" as they march, and are usually accompanied by either a brass band or a lone guitarist.⁴⁰

³⁵ Robby Tangingco and Arwin Paul Lingat, "The Lanterns of San Fernando and Angeles," *Singsing* Vol. 4 No. 1(2008): 98.

³⁶ Ricardo Galang, *Ethnographic Study of the Pampangans* (Manila: National History Museum Division, 1940), 96.

³⁷ Robby Tangingco, "8 Unique Kapampangan Folk Festivals," *Singsing* Vol. 3 No. 2(2007): 16

³⁸ Galang, *Ethnographic Study of the Pampangans*, 96

³⁹ Tangingco, 8 Unique Kapampangan Folk Festivals, 16

⁴⁰ Tangingco, 8 Unique Kapampangan Folk Festivals, 17



[Image 10]

The Lubenas

The image depicts the segment of the procession which bears the Saint's image.
 Photo taken by the researcher



[Image 11]

The Lubenas Brass Band

Photo taken by the researcher

From 16-24 of December, the barangays of the town hold simultaneous lantern processions in their respective locations. It is right before the Midnight Mass of Christmas Eve that the lantern processions from these barangays come together at the church patio⁴¹ 'creating a wonderland of hundreds of lanterns of various shapes and colors.'⁴² This is called the *maitinis*, which is hypothesized to have originated from the word 'matins' or 'early evening prayers'.⁴³ Today, the Lubenas is a feature of San Fernando's neighbor, Angeles City; it is conducted at the Holy Rosary Parish in the heart of the Heritage District on 14 December.

Originally, the Ligligan was the climax of the Lubenas. 'Ligligan' is said to be translated as 'Royal Rumble'.⁴⁴ As a ritual, with the different barangays having come together with their assemblies and lanterns (the first generation of the humble giant and the matching handheld variants), the event involves the play of the giants while teams from each respective barangay strategically divide

⁴¹ Galang, *Ethnographic Study of the Pampangans*, 96.

⁴² Tantingco, 8 Unique Kapampangan Folk Festivals, 17.

⁴³ Tantingco, 8 Unique Kapampangan Folk Festivals, 17.

⁴⁴ Ernesto Quiwa, Lantern Artist. Personal Interview with the Researcher. Purok 10 Santa Lucia, San Fernando, Pampanga. October 2017.

themselves for defense of their lantern to whack away at the giant lanterns of the other barangays; just as those on the defensive use theirs to avert those on the attack of their lantern. It was all in the spirit of good sportsmanship as everyone knew that the ultimate end of the event involved the raze of each respective lantern --- just as it was created with care, pace, and joy, it meets its end with much less time and with merry mayhem. This act of willfully discarding finished art was more an expression of traditional practice more than anything else.



[Image 12]
 A Tribute to the Old-Timers
 Photo taken by the researcher

The barangays Del Pilar, Santa Lucia, and San Jose are given tribute with parul samperandu object renders as depicted; they are the oldest participating barangays in the festival.⁴⁵

The Lubenas and the Ligligan Parul are now considered two different events, yet being complimentary in that they are in essence the binary opposites of each other. The Lubenas is expected to be a more solemn ceremony, where appreciation of the lanterns simultaneously encourages a reverential form of contemplation and communing with others likewise present. It is also rich with Catholic religious references such as the cross, the fish, and the star, all of which are lit with steady light and banking on classic symbolism. Part of its performance is in the procession which most intimately ties the lantern to the people who made it along with the barangay. In terms of spaces, Lubenas is held in the church patio. The Ligligan Parul on the other hand gains its contrast primarily in its loud performance and its eventual tour to other spaces for exhibition. Unlike the Lubenas, it has begun to venture into more ecumenical moods as designs have deviated from the purely religious and into reflection of the spirit of the year with a juxtaposition of worded religious references and icons which, could be more easily associated. The 'rumble' has also been done away with, partly due to the numerous exhibition dates and locations. The lanterns have also become celebrities in their own right.

⁴⁵ Ching Pangilinan, City Tourism and Investment Promotion Officer of the City of San Fernando. Conversation with the Researcher. Facebook Messenger. January 2020

On Holiday Food Culture

Food determines the passing of the seasons.⁴⁶ It is also in San Fernando, Pampanga where one may find the most delicious and generous food during the holiday season,⁴⁷ in what can be called by some as an attitude of ‘seasonal prodigality’ of the folk, exemplified in the ‘go for broke fiesta of the overlooked fiesta table’.⁴⁸ The Kapampangan is after all, the archetype of the obstinate foodie --- someone ‘...said to eat anything that breathes, walks, flies, or swims’.⁴⁹



[Image 13]

Preparing the Roast

It is customary for the roast to be of pig, but depending on one's budget and eaters, it often extends to roast cow. The split hooves and the outline in this image references [Lechon](#).
 Photo taken by the researcher.

The image above nods to the roast subculture of the holiday season. There are three personas, all male. One is seen standing, appearing to coat the skin of the roast in oil, while the other two, seated on *banquitos*, are manning the spit and anticipating orders for its rotation. The portrayal of the lechon as seasonal fare, taken into the context of this display, can be appreciated as the incorporation of ‘things national’, not because of prescription, but because of the general relatability of the symbol among the varied ethnolinguistic groups.

The *Lechon* resembles the most celebrated Castilian dish called *Cochinillo Asado*⁵⁰ (Eng. Roasted Suckling Pig), a sumptuous roast, which is ubiquitous and also definitive of the countryside Christmas in Madrid.⁵¹ Lechon is popular in countries, which are former colonies of Spain. For Ramon Ferreros (Owner of Monchie's Lechon and former President of the La Loma Lechoneros Association), the foundation of lechon culture was set as early as 15th century Philippines, when the Audiencia de Manila required households to raise

⁴⁶ Lord Francis Musni, Holy Angel University Center for Kapampangan Studies Consultant on Kapampangan Culture, Literature, & Gastronomic Heritage. Personal Interview with the researcher. Brgy. Maimpis, San Fernando, Pampanga. 2015.

⁴⁷ Roland Quiambao, Giant Lantern Artist. Personal Interview with the researcher. Brgy. Del Pilar, San Fernando, Pampanga, 2015.

⁴⁸ Alice Guillermo “The Superstars of San Fernando,” In Cid Reyes and Ige Ramos *Pasko Essays on the Filipino Christmas* (Quezon City: Larawan Books, 1993), 73-75.

⁴⁹ Musni, Personal Interview. 2015.

⁵⁰ Holy Angel University Center for Kapampangan Studies, *Kaplistorian*.
<http://kaplistorian.blogspot.com/2016/> This is a blogspot page run by the HAU-CKS consultant Alex R. Castro, with contributions from the Director Robby Tantingco, and Consultant Lord Francis Musni who are both active in the Kapampangan advocacy as public intellectuals who post both on the CKS Facebook page and their personal pages. Some contributions in the *Kaplistorian* site contain direct lifts from Sun Star Pampanga's *The Peanut Gallery* which Tantingco authors.

⁵¹ Malcom Coxall, *Traditional Christmas Recipes of Spain* (Google Books, 2013).

livestock, particularly pigs and chicken, in their backyard. It was a practice, which continued from generation to generation up until present times; hence, it has become part of Philippine culture.⁵²

While there are assumptions as to the first lechoneros of Cebu being of Talisay City during the 1920s⁵³ and Laloma and Lechon culture increasing in popularity in the late 40s and early 50s,⁵⁴ the question of when Lechon became recognized as proper Christmas fare seems to be insufficiently explored; likewise, the case of when it became appreciated on a national level. From limited sources, it could be that William Maca Chua and his family business, Pingping Lechon at Laloma,⁵⁵ assisted in setting the trend. In his interview by CNN Philippines, he recounted trying their luck at selling Lechon back in 1978, when it was nearing December; they displayed samples of the dish and did their best at encouraging people to try it.

Lechon is usually reserved for special occasions due to its size, typically recommending a certain number of people to eat it that it may not go to waste. There is this rhetoric of sharing, of communal ties, and prosperity, which is associated with the roast.⁵⁶ These considered, there couldn't be a better reason than a Christmas feast to indulge in a roast.

Additionally, its popularity along both national and regional levels can be grounded on two points. One detail is that there are variations to the roast itself, differing from province to province in terms of interpretation. George Pua (CEO of Rico's Lechon)⁵⁷ takes pride in the Cebu formula, which he remarks is defined by selectiveness in terms of the type of pig⁵⁸, marination, and the strategic preparation and cooking process, which make all the difference. Compared to the Manila Lechon, which Pua finds bland and describes as perennially paired with Sarsa, the Cebu Lechon, he opines, is more on the salty side; that it is super tasty and does not need Sarsa to accompany it. Pua shares that the differences among Lechon raises question to the dining experience itself --- Does one eat the lechon in appreciation of the roast itself, or do they eat lechon because they seek the flavor of sarsa, which tends to mask the roast? But point driven home --- the Filipino would love Lechon all the same.

A second point would be how nothing goes to waste. While Lechon is best enjoyed in the hours after having been freshly roasted, the leftovers are something to look forward to as well as these are turned into hearty viands such as *lechon paksi*, and dishes similar to *carnitas*, among other possibilities. These points speak of the sense of versatility, a personalization according to ethno-gastronomic taste, which permits distinctions yet at the same time, unifies people; consequently, this makes it no surprise that Lechon is included in the roster of the national dishes among others.⁵⁹

⁵² CNN Philippines. "#Eats More Fun in the Philippines: Lechon." YouTube Video. March 7, 2020

⁵³ GMA News Online. A brief history of the yummy Cebu lechon. December 15, 2017 <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/lifestyle/food/636587/a-brief-history-of-the-yummy-cebu-lechon/story/>

⁵⁴ CNN Philippines. "#Eats More Fun in the Philippines: Lechon."

⁵⁵ CNN Philippines. "#Eats More Fun in the Philippines: Lechon."

⁵⁶ CNN Philippines. "#Eats More Fun in the Philippines: Lechon."

⁵⁷ CNN Philippines. "#Eats More Fun in the Philippines: Lechon."

⁵⁸ CNN Philippines. "#Eats More Fun in the Philippines: Lechon."

⁵⁹ Edgie Polistico. *Philippine Food, Cooking, & Dining Dictionary* (Quezon City: Anvil Publishing Inc., 2017).

Aside from Lechon, exploring Ham as an alternative for this narrative would've been promising. It is after all, customary for the majority of the population to either purchase or receive ham as a token for the holiday season. A particularly traditional Kapampangan choice for example, would've been *Hamon de Funda* or whole-leg ham, bone-in, and neatly tied in net stocking. Hamon de Funda was traditionally sold at Chinese stores.⁶⁰ Ham is one of the non-negotiable ingredients in what Kapampangans call *Ligang Pascu* --- a soup prepared with long, simmered ham bone, beef, pork, and chicken; boiled with potatoes, cabbage, *saguin saba*, *labanus*, *pechay*, Baguio beans, white onions, and whole pepper corns, with generous slices of onion leeks.^{61,62} A staple on both Christmas dinner and New Year's Eve. It is a democratic dish warming both stomachs and hearts --- it cuts across social boundaries, regardless of class and religious denomination. It is a complete meal; it has meat, starch, and vegetables.⁶³

Also, this dish is usually assigned to be crafted by a member of the family who is the best at cooking *Liga* (Tag. Nilaga). *Ligang Pascu* is a custom in that the dish is a bringer of good luck; it symbolizes the richness and the bounty of the whole year and peoples' wishes for the whole year.⁶⁴ *Ligang Pascu* is the one Kapampangan dish which, if to preserve its meaning, cannot be cooked and sold on a commercial level, nor for mass production. A Kapampangan would believe in the cooking process as being influential to the flavor of the dish; it is 'a consciousness --- an excitement, which begins as early as November, when you already begin thinking about it.'⁶⁵ Another facet to this is how the Kapampangan would treat the activities of cooking and dining as a communal experience⁶⁶, holding all the more the holiday season given the family potluck strategy.

The next image shows two figures opposite each other; one stands, laboriously stirring something on a pan, which sits over an open fire, while his companion sits on a *banquito* appearing to poke at the flames below. However, it is unsure what the content of the pan is; the bulb, which was supposed to illuminate the respective section with the pan is burnt. But two possibilities may be presented here.

⁶⁰ Musni. Personal Interview with the Researcher.

⁶¹ Musni. Personal Interview with the Researcher.

⁶² Holy Angel University Center for Kapampangan Studies, *Kaplistorian*.
<http://kaplistorian.blogspot.com/2016/>

⁶³ Musni. Personal Interview with the Researcher.

⁶⁴ Musni. Personal Interview with the Researcher.

⁶⁵ Musni. Personal Interview with the Researcher.

⁶⁶ Musni. Personal Interview with the Researcher.



[Image 14]

Calame Culture

Two personas appearing to stir something in a pan
 Photo taken by the researcher.

If the content is colored along the dark violet shade, it can be presumed to be either *Alaya Ube* (Eng. Ube Jam) or *Calame Ube* (Eng. Ube Fudge). Ube is in season and in wider availability from October to December.⁶⁷

However, to think of a more authentically Kapampangan seasonal treat, if the content of the pan is a shade of green, then this would reference *Calame Duman*. A variation of rice cake, it is a specialty, which is exclusive to Pampanga, made with a particular kind of rice, which possibly originated with rice brought by Chinese traders in the early 1800s.⁶⁸ *Duman* is a relative of a red glutinous rice variation called 'lakatan malutu' (Tag. Malagkit); it is a fragrant variety, which is only in season during Christmas⁶⁹, with its harvest being only in November and December.^{70,71} *Duman* is roughly translated as 'parched, pounded green rice'⁷², which was beaten from its husks and toasted in a clay oven.⁷³

Its authenticity is not defined by its geographic exclusivity alone; equally significant are the linguistic considerations that *duman* as a cultural practice has imprinted into both the Kapampangan language and its parlance. Documented in Fray Diego Bergano's [1732] the *Vocabulario de Pampango en Romance Y Diccionario de Romance en Pampango*⁷⁴, there are several Kapampangan words, which are rooted in *Duman* and the *Duman* as process --- from care, harvest, to preparation.

The process of tending to the rice grain can be traced in three words. *Duman* itself indicates the age of the grain, 'the grains of the glutinous rice nearing maturity, or about to mature'; *magduman* is a description pertaining to 'the rice grains arriving at that stage of development' or can also be used as an action 'to

⁶⁷ Musni, Personal Interview with the Researcher.

⁶⁸ Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity. *Duman* <https://www.fondazione Slow Food.com/en/ark-of-taste-slow-food/duman/>

⁶⁹ Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity. *Duman*

⁷⁰ Ian Ocampo Flora. 'Duman Festival all set on December' *SunStar Pampanga*. October 5, 2019 <https://www.sunstar.com.ph/article/1826303>

⁷¹ Claude Tayag. 'When it's 'Duman' Time, Christmas Must be Near' *STAR* December 17, 2004.

⁷² Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity, *Duman*

⁷³ Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity, *Duman*

⁷⁴ Fray Diego Bergano, *Vocabulario de Pampango en Romance Y Diccionario de Romance en Pampango* (Angeles City: Holy Angel University Press, 2007)

gather in such grains, to pound them to make duman'.^{75,76} The word *marumanduman* ascribes to rice when 'it is already near the stage that it could be made into duman'.⁷⁷

Harvest appears as an influencing theme in the words *Atab, yatab*. The action *Manatab* or *yumatab* is 'to cut the ears of grain at a certain age, and that is when they cut the spikes of grains for duman;' the root, *atab* or *yatab*, is 'a small knife with a special shape used for such cutting.'⁷⁸ *Inataban* or *piyataban* refers to 'the field' or 'the remaining grains.' These provide the context to the interrogative *Magcanung ayatab mu queting banuang iti?* which translates to 'How much did you produce this year?'

In terms of turning the grain into food, *Quisquis* is 'to husk the pale; to shake or thresh the pale'⁷⁹, spike by spike, to make duman'. *Dimanan* pertains to 'such grains pounded and made into duman'.⁸⁰

The seasonality of the rice variation, its limited production area, high cost, and painstaking creation process make Duman hard to come by. It is still however, a dining festival in Santa Rita, featuring Duman in its variants, along with other Kapampangan delicacies.⁸¹

How then does the Heroes Park lantern display complement the history of the park? Heroes Hall has been regarded as one of the more traditional venues for the Giant Lanterns, being colored by nostalgia and unspoiled by the glitz and glam of holiday consumerism (typically associated with mall locations) due to its location being distant from the likes of SM and Robinsons Starmills. While today Heroes Hall is still used, though for the nightly exhibition of giant lanterns and not the main event, the installment of the 3D lantern display provides a glimpse into how a Kapampangan would traditionally celebrate the holiday season and reflect inwardly before they assume their personas as Filipinos. It's a call to reconnect with their roots through as many senses as possible. The lanterns are designed to anchor memories of celebrations (the Lubenas is designed to feed the soul); treats and recipes to trigger cravings and the wishes to cook with an old and distinct palate (deemed the best way to honor culture, to commune with and tribute those who have passed on) --- all of these which happen in one season.

Giant Lantern Festival 2019 as a Reflection on Language & Heritage

It is acknowledged that Lanterns 'can tell stories in the moods and lyrics of the songs they dance to, with the pairing of the color combination and shapes projected, provided that the lantern maker is skilled in interpretation.'⁸² For the festival of 2019, three barangays had lantern entries in which there were gimmicks that commonly played on the concept of Kapampangan advocacy; one

⁷⁵ Bergano, *Vocabulario de Pampango en Romance Y Diccionario de Romance en Pampango*

⁷⁶ Tangingco, 'Rice in the Life of the Ancient Kapampangans' Singsing Vol. 4 No. 2, 43

⁷⁷ Bergano, *Vocabulario de Pampango en Romance Y Diccionario de Romance en Pampango*. Tangingco, 'Rice in the Life of the Ancient Kapampangans' Singsing', 43.

⁷⁸ Bergano, *Vocabulario de Pampango en Romance Y Diccionario de Romance en Pampango*. Tangingco, 'Rice in the Life of the Ancient Kapampangans' Singsing', 43.

⁷⁹ This is the word for 'rice grain(s)'

⁸⁰ Bergano, *Vocabulario de Pampango en Romance Y Diccionario de Romance en Pampango*. Tangingco, 'Rice in the Life of the Ancient Kapampangans' Singsing', 43.

⁸¹ Flora, 'Duman Festival all set on December'

⁸² Juntado, "Ligligan Parul."

of those three also featured a gimmick which referenced the 2019 Southeast Asian Games which New Clark City partly hosted.

Barangay Bulaon and Framing Christmas with the Lubenas

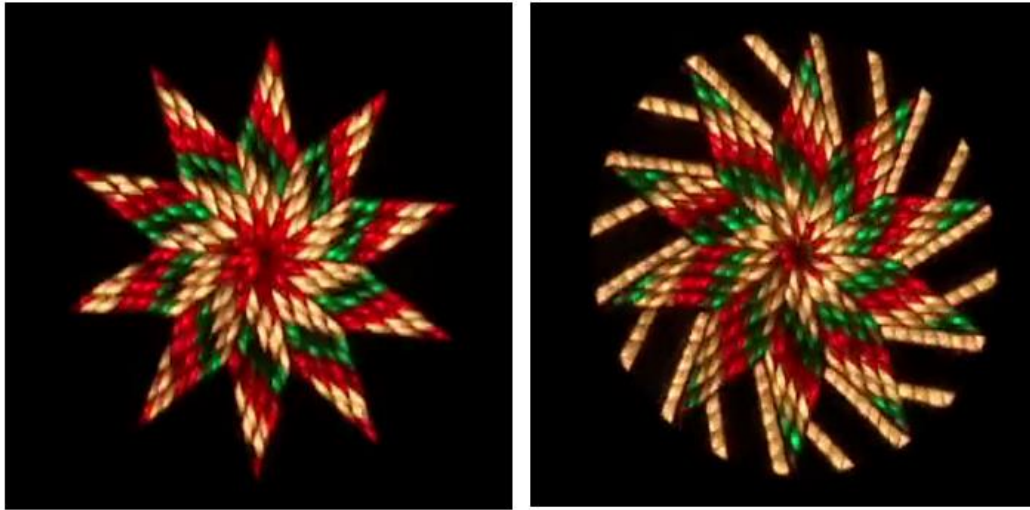
Barangay Bulaon's lantern was designed by Florante Parilla. The consistent colors played comprise of red, green, and a pale shade of gold. In a post-festival conversation with Parilla⁸³, he shares that these colors are a combination pleasing to the eyes. Aside from his perspective, the lantern's colors could also be interpreted as a coincidental appreciation of the colors of the Kapampangan flag.

The most praiseworthy aspect of Bulaon's entry was its gimmick, which tributed the Lubenas. Its diligence has to do with its complementarity with the respective track *Dios te Salve, Maria* — the edges of the lantern visually accompany the toll of the bells, animated as the sound loops before some children's choir begins singing the song in the recording. It seems as though the song makes up for the lack of visual reference to the choir in the Lubenas; if not giving the idea of the choir being behind the image of the saint. Either way, it is still a pleasing effect. Instead, the design gives the impression of panning on a cross-section of the procession, front-facing and focusing on the part with the saint propped up and the people kneeling in prayer and reflection. It is juxtaposed with the word 'Lubenas' spread at the top, which periodically wedges out with the word 'Pascu' — a colloquial spelling of the word 'Pasko' — replacing it and vice-versa. Parilla shares that for lantern artists such as himself, the Lubenas is very much cherished and so as much as possible he would like to have a complete attendance of the masses from the 16th to the 24th of December.

SEA Games Referenced in the Barangay Sindalan Lantern

A design by Christian Lervin Quiwa, there are gimmicks which seem to illustrate influences from the motifs of Arvin Bondoc Quiwa who had been developing the concept of contemplative and politically themed lanterns since the festival of 2016. Likewise, the case with the Bulaon lantern, shades of red, green, and pale gold, were predominant colors in the Sindalan lantern motif. Significantly, the first gimmick was a star, which played these colors in transition in what could be made to also be a reference of Kapampangan pride interpreted by a lantern maker. The Star is a particular tiled shape in the rhetoric of design where the center of the lantern conventionally begins with it.

⁸³ Florante Parilla, Lantern Artist. Conversation with the researcher via Facebook Messenger. 27 May 2020.



[Image 17]

Barangay Sindalan Lantern

Gimmicks by Frame.

Color references in the star nod to the Kapampangan flag.

Derived from CLTV36 documentation of GLF 2019 via Screenshot using VLC

As the play progresses, one feature has the words ‘Maligayang Pasku’ arched above the star motif of the lantern; a colloquial pronunciation of the more national ‘Maligayang Pasko’ (Eng. Merry Christmas).



[Image 18]

Barangay Sindalan Lantern

Gimmicks by Frame.

Left: Christmas Greeting; Right: Commemoration of SEA Games Event using native motif

Derived from CLTV36 documentation of GLF 2019 via Screenshot using VLC

But the distinction of the Sindalan lantern lies in one particular gimmick, which incorporated the Southeast Asian Games motto ‘We Win as One’ in an inversed arch positioned at the bottom. It is in juxtaposition with a design in which the tiled diamond shapes are reminiscent of Abaca weaving, all the more emphasized with the color scheme, which characteristically speaks ‘native’. It commemorates the event while also serving as a diplomatic postscript.

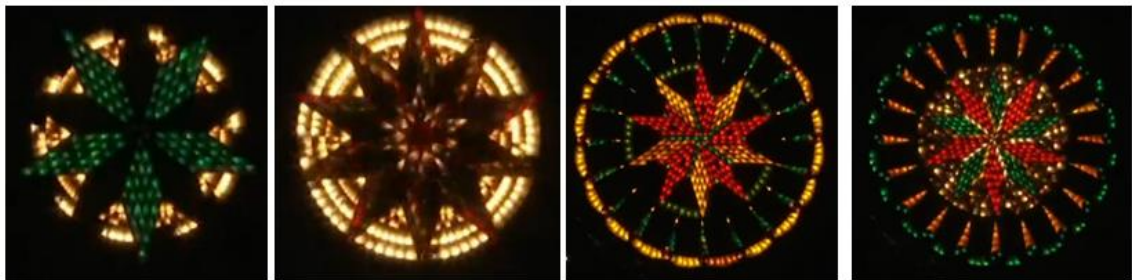
The San Jose Lantern & the Metaphor of the Ring

Barangay San Jose’s entry was a co-creation conceptualized by Lantern Artist Roland Maglaqui Ambrocio and Barangay Captain Mercy Macabali. Also in a post-festival conversation, Ambrocio⁸⁴ mentions that it was particularly

⁸⁴ Roland Maglaqui Ambrocio, Lantern Artist. Conversation with the researcher via Facebook Messenger. 27 May 2020.

Macabali’s wishes that the design have references to Kapampangan, specifically the folksong *Atin Cu Pung Singsing*.⁸⁵

The lantern opens with what appears to be a monochromatic ten-pointed star at the center, which transitions from center-out, beginning with pale gold, to red, to green, and to gold. It can be interpreted as a star in the looser sense, as in the sun, referencing one of the translations of *Alaya* being ‘dawn.’⁸⁶



[Image 19]
Barangay San Jose Lantern Gimmicks
Illustration of Kapampangan Colors with Ring Motif
Derived from CLTV36 documentation of GLF 2019 via Screenshot using VLC

It then follows with setting the outline to, and eventually a color-fill of two, visibly overlapping stars in green and pale gold, with red shadow affording distinctions on each point. It then transitions with a second coloration of the overlapping stars in red and gold gradient, with green outline before going into a more heterogenous color scheme consisting of the three. In similarity to the two previous barangay lantern designs discussed, San Jose likewise incorporates representation of the Kapampangan flag.

San Jose was strong and consistent in terms of structuring and sequencing several of their gimmicks along a sub-theme of Kapampangan advocacy. Their motif did not end with the star but developed their play further from it; a noteworthy gimmick would be the incorporation of a circular motif, which can be interpreted as the Ring.



[Image 20]
Barangay San Jose Gimmick
Setting the Kapampangan Colors
& the Ring

[Image 21]
Barangay San Jose Gimmick
Sweeping Circular Motif

[Image 22]
Barangay San Jose Gimmick
Perfected Ring

*Images above derived from CLTV36 documentation of GLF 2019 via Screenshot using VLC

What would condition the Kapampangan audiences’ frame of mind towards receiving that idea would be the segment in which they are shown a transition from a simple circle with the Kapampangan colors to a progressive wrapping of

⁸⁵ The researcher has attempted to reach out to Hon. Macabali to ask for her insights and remarks. She has not responded.

⁸⁶ Bergano, *Vocabulario de Pampango en Romance Y Diccionario de Romance en Pampango*

the center of the lantern with circular motifs in pure pale gold. There is something about the action of seeing a curved line reach full circle which suffices as the hint.

Once more, the gimmick depicts not merely ‘a’ ring but ‘the’ ring; this is confirmed in the succeeding play, which renders both the designs of the star and the ring in the same gimmick, dancing along the tune of the first stanza of *Atin Cu Pung Singsing*.

The Rhetoric of the Ring in the Song

San Jose’s rendering of the Ring can be read further when considered along the context of Kapampangan historian and cultural specialist Michael Raymon Pangilinan’s discussion covering the mystical and anti-colonial symbolisms of *Atin Ku Pung Singsing*⁸⁷

Taking the concept of the ring, there are two definitive components which make it whole. Pangilinan discusses its metaphysics. Beginning with the ring⁸⁸, in verbatim:

The ring is the symbol of eternity not because the ring loops in such a way that we can no longer see the beginning or the end, but because of the void or empty space contained within the ring. It is this empty space that has no beginning or end. This empty space is **alâ ya** / Aláya. A popular Kapampangan saying goes: ‘King singsing ya mu ati ing ala ya’ (Eng. Only in the ring can you see that which is not there).

While what is framed as a sense of ‘vacancy’ that is ala ya — **Aláya** is the Kapampangan concept of the intangible, the metaphysical, the universal, the infinite, the divine, the life force or spirit. It was originally derived from two Kapampangan words *ala* ‘nothing’ and *ya* which is the third person singular absolute and at times possessive pronoun. Therefore, *ala ya* literally meant “that which is not there”.

Pangilinan proceeds, stating that an understanding of Alaya as a concept is framed in the following four Kapampangan proverbs:

Pilan lang yátâng sísimbul,
 Ibat king makapabúsál?
 Dápot dumúgang alí ya,
 Nung é mú king alâ ya (Aláya).
 (How many spokes radiate from within?
 Yet the turning of the wheel is dependent on Alaya/ ala ya
 ‘that which is not there’.)

Nú ya ing pángasarû ning sarû,
 Nung é mú king alâ ya (Aláya).
 (A cup is not a cup if not for Alaya / ala ya ‘that which is not there’.
 That which make a cup a cup is the empty space that you can fill with coffee, tea or soup.)

Nú ya ing pángabalé ning bale,
 Nung é mú king alâ ya (Aláya).
 (A house is not a house if not for Alaya / ala ya ‘that which is not there’...

⁸⁷ Michael Raymon Pangilinan, ‘Atin Ku Pung Singsing’ *Siuala ding Meangubie*.
<http://siuala.com/alaya/>

⁸⁸ Though in the discussion by Pangilinan, Alaya is tackled first, the decision to go with Singsing has to do with attempting to align the theory with the present gimmick.

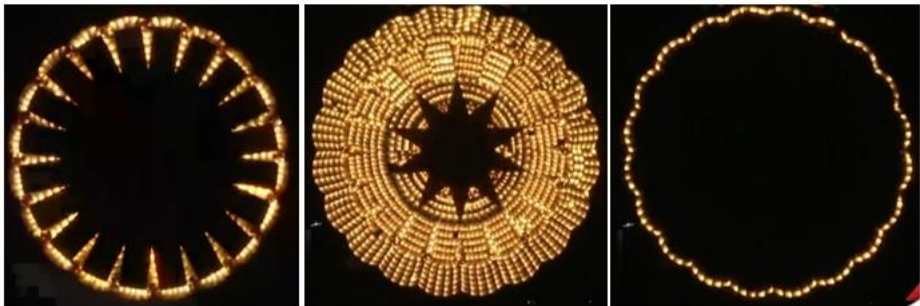
the empty spaces... the rooms, the doors, the windows, the hallways, the passageways.)

Nú ya ing pángatáwu ning táwu,
Nung é mû king alá ya (Aláya).
(Man is not man if not for Alaya / ala ya ‘that which is not there’...
not his face, nor his brain and neither his hands or feet...
but the things in him that you cannot immediately see or grasp...
his love, his kindness, his intelligence, his soul, his spirit...
that which makes him move... that which makes him, him.)

Alaya therefore is the Kapampangan spirit. The one that makes a Kapampangan a Kapampangan.⁸⁹

In appreciation of what composes the Kapampangan spirit, these are partly the values, which were engrained and passed down in the form of oral and written Kapampangan literature. Lessons learned and to be learned relayed in the chronicles and tellings of the province’s history with an intimate intertwine of the language and cultural practices of the people; the sense of taste, which emphasized balance when it came to gastronomy, which likewise informs framings of what constitutes good and evil⁹⁰; the peoples’ relationship with the air, soil, and water, and how they act in times of blessings and adversity, all of which are conditioned by the wisdom of the old generations and tested with time. Most significantly, it has to be supplied.

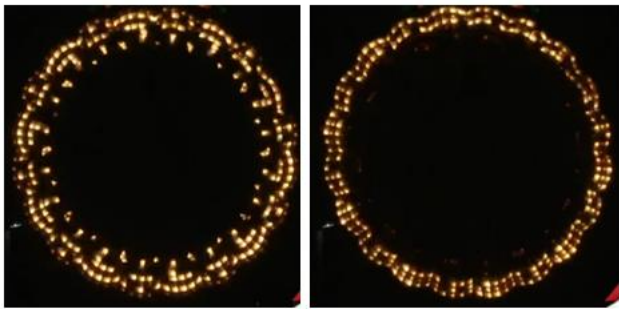
There is a gimmick in the San Jose lantern, which does bear resemblance to the interconnection of singsing and alaya in its original iconography. This is reflected in the image cluster below.



[Image 23]

Clustered Imagery in Appreciation of ‘Singsing’ and ‘Alaya’

**Images derived from CLTV36 documentation of GLF 2019 via Screenshot using VLC*



However, the usage of black in the center cannot be approached with complacency as the interpretation needs to be recognizable. Audiences unfamiliar with the metaphysics of the Ring would merely interpret the encircled black space as a trivial blank space, while in lantern logic this would

⁸⁹ Pangilinan, , ‘Atin Ku Pung Singsing’
⁹⁰ Michael Raymon Pangilinan. Keeper of Heritage Lifetime Title Awardee and Head of the Sinupan Singsing Center for Kapampangan Cultural Heritage. Conversation with the researcher, in-person. Bel Posto Ristorante, Angeles City. 12 May 2018.

mean that contact points on the rotor are not touching with the pins; in other words the central section is merely off, and literally nothing being there. The lantern must illustrate a rendering of the Kapampangan spirit into symbol. In the instance of the San Jose lantern, the usage of the colors of the flag is perfect since the other Kapampangan references are established and interconnected before the gimmick is brought back to the schematic of coloration advanced at the start, full circle along with the audio track.

Framing the Role of the Flag and Significance of the

Flags are cloths with symbolic, graphic representations referencing a sovereign state, a community, an organization, an office, or even an individual⁹¹. It speaks of the autonomy and solidarity of those it represents. The Kapampangan word for 'flag' is *Pandi*⁹² The red, green, and yellow (gold) color scheme is what attributed the proper name *Salagintu* of the Kapampangan flag⁹³. The centrality of the Salagintu in Kapampangan culture is grounded in lore, geography, and virtues.

Colors & Geography⁹⁴

The aspect of geography is divided further into two sub-themes: the connection of colors with location, colors reflecting the realities of the soil, and the realities of the soil as shaped by lore.

Location: Paroba, Pangulu, Bunduk Alaya

Kundiman is a representation of upper Pampanga known as 'Pangulu'; Aluntian corresponds to 'Paroba' which is lower Pampanga; and Dilo represents Mount Arayat.

Realities of the Soil as Shaped by Lore⁹⁵

The depth of the Kundiman (Eng. Red) represents 'Alti' (Eng. Lightning), which is the authority, punishment, or energy of Bapung Aldo (Apung Suku). Kundiman represents the color of destruction.

Aluntian (Eng. Green) references *uran* 'rain' and *sibul* 'spring of water', which comes after 'alti.' Aluntian represents the water, which heals the land and the people.

Dilo (Eng. Yellow) is an expression of Bapung Suku/Apung Suku, the golden sun. Apung Suku is the one who mediates 'alti' and 'danum'.

⁹¹ Encyclopedia Britannica. *Flag: Heraldry*. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/flag-heraldry>

⁹² Anak ning Siuala ning Ginu, 'Pandi ning Indung Kapampangan'. <http://anakningsiuala.blogspot.com/2014/05/pandi-ning-indung-kapampangan-flag-of.html>

This is a blog run by an Advocate of Kapampangan Culture who goes by the pen name Anak ning Siuala ning Ginu. Their creation contained material from conversations with Michael Raymon Pangilinan who runs the Sinupan Singing Kapampangan heritage center in Angeles City. This work was cited in a post by City of San Fernando Tourism and Information Office.

⁹³ *ibid*

⁹⁴ *ibid*

⁹⁵ City of San Fernando, Pampanga 'Colors of the Kapampangan Flag'. Facebook Post. January 4, 2020. Anak ning Siuala ning Ginu, 'Pandi ning Indung Kapampangan.' Michael Raymon Pangilinan, *Siuala ding Meangubie* <http://siuala.org>.

Colors Reflecting the Realities of the Soil⁹⁶

Kundiman reflects Alta Pampanga (Upper Pampanga) with reference to the color of the soil and their product, which was sugar. Aluntian is fitting of Bajo Del Pampanga considering the abundance of its rice fields. Dilo is envisioned as Kasugian (nobility).

The Colors of Virtues⁹⁷

The Salagintu also expresses three virtues, which were specified by the Catholic Church when they adapted the Kapampangan colors. Kundiman is an embodiment of *Katapangan* 'bravery'; Gintung Dilo betokens *Kasugian* 'nobility'; while Aluntian reflects *Kasipagan* 'industriousness'.

The significance of the Salagintu color scheme in Kapampangan culture is also anchored in history. Accounts have noted that Francisco Maniago has used the colors red, golden yellow, and green during the Kapampangan uprising of 1660. There have also been different functions towards the colors. The Salagintu color scheme was also said to be utilized by the Kapampangan nobility during the Spanish period. In the past, it was likewise used by the secular clergy in Pampanga. The Christianized festival Apung Iru Libad in Apalit also made use of the color scheme. There were also claims that the Baluyut clan, who were in priesthood, incorporated the three colors in their insignia. The group also used Salagintu in decorating the churches, streets, and festivals. The Pamintuan family was also claimed to have utilized the Salagintu color scheme in representation of their clan, whether in the army or in the political arena. And in 1950, the Archdiocese of Pampanga adapted the color in its insignia.

Interpretation of the First Stanza of 'Atin Ku Pung Singsing' Shown via the Respective Gimmicks of the San Jose Lantern as Promise from Lantern Artists⁹⁸

Atin Ku Pung Singsing is 'considered the most sacred song among Kapampangan revolutionaries'⁹⁹; it is an anthem for those in the advocacy. As the versions designed to be played in lantern festivals are upbeat and slightly quicker than the standard, the variation played for the San Jose lantern appears to contribute to the already present impression that it is a 'children's song'.¹⁰⁰ But that has only served as a façade, as the first stanza has been interpreted to deliver a message. It is supposedly hinted in the structure of the song itself, which classified as a *Basultu*, characterized by the presence of six syllables in eight lines.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Anak ning Siuala ning Ginu, 'Pandi ning Indung Kapampangan.'

⁹⁷ Anak ning Siuala ning Ginu, 'Pandi ning Indung Kapampangan.'

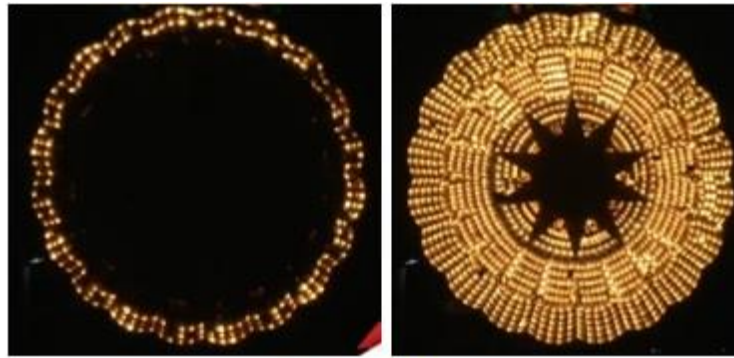
⁹⁸ See Michael Raymon Pangilinan 'Atin Ku Pung Singsing' *Siuala ding Meangubie* <http://siuala.com/alaya> for the expanded version of the interpretation of the song with a line-by-line schematic.

⁹⁹ Pangilinan, 'Atin Ku Pung Singsing.'

¹⁰⁰ Pangilinan, 'Atin Ku Pung Singsing.'

¹⁰¹ Pangilinan, 'Atin Ku Pung Singsing.'

The first line is sung as ‘*Atin ku pûng Singsing*’ which literally means ‘I have a ring’. This is a preamble in which its content goes toward the previous discussion of the symbolism of the ring.¹⁰²



[Image 24]

Imagery of The Ring

*Images derived from CLTV36 documentation of GLF 2019
via Screenshot using Cyberlink Powerdirector

It then proceeds with ‘*Métung yang Timpúkan*’ which translates to ‘It is the center of my life’; the root word is Tampuk which means ‘center of attention’ or ‘seat of honor’ and that which everything else revolves around it.¹⁰³

The persona then sings ‘*Ámána ké iti*’ telling the listener that they inherited it. The stanza curiously makes use of the Kapampangan demonstrative ‘iti’ (‘this’ inclusive) rather than ‘ini’ (‘this’ exclusive), which suggests that the ring is the property of not just the singer, but also the listener. The succeeding line is ‘*King Indûng Íbatan*’; the persona informs the listener that the ring was inherited from their ‘real’ Mother, interpreted by Kapampangans as *Indûng Tibûan* or Indûng Kapampangan, a term of affection to the Kapampangan homeland, which is ‘opposed to Madre España, Madre Santa Iglesia Catolica or even Santa Maria Madre de Dios.’¹⁰⁴

What follows is the line ‘*Sangkan kêng sinínup*’ which is taken literally, meaning that the persona ‘pretended to hide it’. The purpose of the act of concealment, applicable to the message of the song as well as the ring itself, was to secure it from ‘the colonial authorities, from the church, from the unenlightened’ that it would not be destroyed or suppressed.¹⁰⁵ The persona’s succeeding line answers the listener’s question of where they chose to hide the ring by stating ‘*King métung a Kaban*’ which literally translates to ‘In a container’. The container is *Aláya* as sung in ‘*Me-Aláya iti*’ which says that the ring disappeared and became one with *alâ ya*. In essence:

To continue sending the song’s message to generations and generations of Kapampangan, it must be “written” in a medium that cannot be suppressed or destroyed. The message therefore was hidden not in bronze or bamboo or paper but in music. Music is eternal. Music is *Aláya*. So, the message was hidden within the song itself.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Pangilinan, ‘Atin Ku Pung Singsing.’

¹⁰³ Pangilinan, ‘Atin Ku Pung Singsing.’

¹⁰⁴ Pangilinan, ‘Atin Ku Pung Singsing.’

¹⁰⁵ Pangilinan, ‘Atin Ku Pung Singsing.’

¹⁰⁶ Pangilinan, ‘Atin Ku Pung Singsing.’

The last line is ‘É ku Kam-Aláya-n’ which means that the persona too ‘became one with *Aláya*. This went beyond their ‘physical consciousness’ that is *Kamaláyan* and into *Kam-Aláya-n*, which is their Inner Being that is one with *Aláya*.



[Image 25]

Imagery Illustrative of the Kapampangan Spirit filling *Aláya*

*Images derived from CLTV36 documentation of GLF 2019 via Screenshot using Cyberlink Powerdirector

There are several terms which pertain to individuals who make the effort in contributing to activities in line with Kapampangan heritage. ‘*Talasinup ning Singing*’ applies to Kapampangan individuals who specialize in a certain industry and is able to use their skills and passions in their industry in the development or deepening of understanding in Kapampangan culture, history, and/or language. ‘*Pamandulap*’ has been assumed to refer to be on the search of knowledge and skills towards matters to do with Kapampangan culture. In this case, the promise of the lantern artist stems from their persona as keeper of their respective Ring where they have to continue their craft as a medium of relaying the message of the value of one’s identity and heritage in a medium that ‘could not be suppressed nor destroyed’.¹⁰⁷ The lantern is fitting in the sense that half of its performance depends on music, while the other involves a skillful use of imagery and references, which have a degree of cultural-exclusiveness. And yet the lantern also has a duality in the sense that it could cater simultaneously to Kapampangan-ness and Filipino-ness.

A Recapitulation and Concluding Insights on Interpretations Learned from the two 2019 Lantern Displays

Pampanga’s lantern culture is part of its heritage. It is known for its transitions from being an artistic light source during the midnight mass of the Christmas season to being a display and eventually a contemplative spectacle on its own. As a variation of art, they can have the function of conveying messages. Similar to other visual arts, lanterns are subject to multiple interpretations by audiences whose points of view and values, which are shaped by their life experiences and the cultures they belong to or are influenced by. Lantern artists welcome varied readings as it is a sign of the audience trying to process what is being projected, but they also aim to put constraints in the discussion, keeping context via the usage of established symbols or icons bearing familiar references and associated audio material. Discussions of these lantern exhibits, together with photographs circulating on social media platforms are illustrative of heritage being an active, democratic process rather than a product; it encourages cultural discussion among the people.

The Heroes Hall & Park display are a visual social commentary on what constitutes the original cores of Kapampangan and Filipino Christmas. It is devoid of cues of consumerism (a Western invention and fixation) and focuses

¹⁰⁷ Going back to the metaphorical usage of ‘*Me-Aláya iti*’

on spirituality, family ties, friends, community, and reflects on feasting as a form of thanksgiving at the last month of the year. Exhibition-wise, the charms of the Heroes Hall & Park display lie in the detail that they can be walked around, and that people can physically be part of; this presents the opportunity of literally looking at how the different angles can be seen. It may potentially influence a framing of the messages they have to provide. The only visible downside is the doubt if the people are ready for a display which is not corded off --- it was observable how some kept touching the lanterns, some out of curiosity or so as to create a certain mood for a photograph. Some of the lanterns had developed holes from handling.

The Giant Lanterns and the festival of 2019 had a few lanterns which nodded to the philosophies shaping the Kapampangan spirit. Three lanterns played on predominant shades which likewise nod to the colors of the Kapampangan flag. In terms of gimmicks, the Barangay Sindalan lantern reflected on the events of the year, of specific mention is the Kapampangans being among the hosts in the SEA Games. Barangay Bulaon's reference of the Lubenas projected on the lantern links the activity of the Lubenas and the Giant Lantern festival. Barangay San Jose provided a visual ode to the advocacy of Kapampangan culture and language through both its gimmick and track as well in its creation in which the concept was a collaboration between the Barangay Captain and the Lantern Artist; this likewise illustrates the democratized production of heritage.

When it comes to reading Giant Lanterns, symbolisms in any gimmick depend on the colors used in order to cue more specific references to particular ideas. This may pose a challenge to the lantern artists who would like to incorporate particular colored designs while keeping other gimmicks intact and nestled, that don't necessarily nod to a single theme in one lantern. This, while still keeping as accurate as possible to the references.

On the part of audiences, those keen on reading for messages and themes expressed in a lantern may find it useful to be familiar with color spectrums so as to be able to read for the closest matches to certain colors displayed. This is similarly in recognition of the limitations and to be able to work around them. It will also lessen the influence of a reading which may happen in viewing where colors may appear differently than projected, depending on the platform the exhibition is being viewed from. Was this live at the festival? Did they watch the lantern festival on national television? In the case of the latter, were they using a plasma television set or LED LCD or OLED? With a cable TV connection or was the exhibition downloaded onto a flash disk and played on their display of choice? These considerations have to be kept in mind given the misconceptions that high-definition displays consistently turn out high-definition images when using digital cable signals.¹⁰⁸

Once there is an estimation of the color along with an idea of the other dominant colors in the gimmick, a failsafe to consider would be the song(s) being played during the performance of that particular imagery, serving as a confirmation (or perhaps a negation) to an idea.

¹⁰⁸ This detail is based on the personal experience of the researcher. Halfway into watching the Festival of 2019, she switched from watching on a circa 2006 flat screen in her bedroom to an HD OLED which was in the living room so she could watch and converse with her parents. There was a strong difference in the sense that the flat screen provided far better coloration because of the compatibility with the signal.

The two displays overall illustrate how language isn't confined in written or spoken word. A visually rendered concept once seen becomes subject to a continuous judgment of scale, shapes, and relationships between colors and textures. Like verbal language, there is the categorization of these in the mind as in a system of classification so what is seen can be compared and related to, comprehended, and remembered. Just as people can verbalize their thinking, they can visualize it just as well.

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