

nese, as most people think," said Dy. "It's actually multiethnic with other local regional groups populating the district. A lot of the food sellers are actually Kapampangan."

Furthermore, some streets and places have different Chinese, particularly Hokkien, names.

The famous Carvajal Alley Market, for example, is called Ho Sua Hang, which literally means "umbrella."

According to Dy, there was once a famous umbrella maker on that street in the 1900s, and somebody must have coined that word and it stuck.

Hokkien names

"Some streets in Binondo are still called by their Hokkien names by the old timers," he explained. "They're not necessarily directly translations of the Hispanic names but, in my opinion, they can be seen in the light of how the early immigrants viewed the spaces that they inhabited, thus making them their own."

Other places which have Chinese names include Quintin Paredes Street, called Chiu Wah Hua, which means something like a canal or estero embankment where goods are unloaded; Benavidez Street, named Tiong San Kue because the old Mainland Chinese Nationalist party had its institutions on the street; Calle Nueva or Yuchengco Street was Ao Kue-



Binondo is not entirely Chinese, as most people think. It's actually multiethnic with other local regional groups populating the district.

Ya or the back street since it was an alternative back road to Rosario Street, which was the main street back then.

"Unfortunately, not many Tsinoys remember the significance of these streets' names," deplored Ivan Man Dy. "When the city government put up the street signs years ago, they decided to do a bilingual Spanish-Chinese but nobody researched the history of the Chinese names; hence, they ended up putting just transliterated Chinese names which did not have any historical significance whatsoever to the original meanings that the old Chinese community referred them to be."

Secrets inside

The buildings of Binondo, which look like ordinary struc-

Some streets are still called by their Hokkien names by the oldtimers.

tures outside, hold secrets inside, particularly on the upper floors.

A building can have a family clan temple, which is a family association hall akin to the Rotary Club but formed on the basis of family ties.

These temples are bastions of immigrant culture with largely social and cultural functions. One of their functions then was helping new Chinese immigrants settle down in their new-found community.

The oldest Chinese Buddhist



Calesa is the preferred mode of transport of many tourists navigating the crowded and narrow alleys of Binondo.

temple, the Guan Sheng Fu Zi temple, is located on the upper portion of a building on Kipuja Street, the same spot where the original temple built in the late 1800s once stood. It is one of few places where the traditional Chinese opera *kaoka* is performed.

To quote Anson Yu, also of Old Manila Walks, this dying art "continues because of its spiritual function: On feast days, temples hire troupes to entertain the Taoist deities."

Cultural tourism

The next level, according to Dy, is to "have the LGUs (local government units) understand the significance of cultural assets within their neighborhood. That way they can be guided by this knowledge on how to properly manage their constituency with

regards to making their designated areas a better place for the people living within the community."

He explained that Barangay 289 under chair Nelson Ty has embarked on an infrastructure improvement, while at the same time putting up CCTV cameras, as well as posting barangay *tanod*, thus enhancing security and making Chinatown more tourism-friendly.

But tourism marketing should be based on the cultural strengths of Binondo.

"Through our Chinatown Cultural Mapping Project," said Dy, "we are also making them (local leaders) aware of the cultural resources that they can tap into to highlight the cultural uniqueness of the place in the context of Manila." (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*) ■

A Victim of its Own Success?

From page 22

naman maka-cope." Management also has to maintain station services, like elevators and escalators, he adds.

The rehabilitation of trains and system in Line 1 is estimated to cost Php5 billion. Was already allotted Php 1.8 billion for rehabilitation purposes.

Meanwhile, the DOTC has issued invitation to bids for the Light Rail Transit Line 1 Cavite extension project. Interested bidders have until end of April to submit their bids. The P64.9-billion project involves the construction of an 11.7-kilometer railway line from Baclaran to Bacoor, Cavite, with 8 additional stations along the way.

Government subsidy

Cabrera admits that the system is a losing proposition and given its fare structure the system can-

not operate without government subsidy. "All over the world the trains are being subsidized by the government... From what I've read, the only system that's earning is Hong Kong. But they're not earning from rail revenue, they're earning from real estate and advertising."

According to him, LRT has a yearly budget allocation of Php7 billion from the government. A large part of it is used to subsidize operations. Cabrera says the break-even point is Php60 per person per ride but at the moment the government shoulders two-third of the cost, or Php40.

Without government subsidy, the only solution to make the system financially viable is to turn the operations over to the private sector, says Cabrera. He adds that such a move would certainly be opposed by commuters and politicians alike. The only other op-



To stay viable, fares have to be adjusted but commuters oppose the move. What gives?

tion left for LRTA is to raise fares which, Cabrera adds, is also a no-no to many sectors.

Fare adjustment

Cabrera explains that the formula of the fare adjustment approved in 2011 is Php11 for the

boarding fee and Php1 for every kilometer. But this was not implemented because fuel prices, toll fees, and jeepney fares had increased during the intervening period, and DOTC felt it was too much of a burden for the public if the train fare would also be

adjusted. The government has not indicated when the fare adjustment would be revived.

Amid the problems of train shortage and shaky financial condition, there have been talks of ways to mitigate the traffic situation - from adopting the Bus Rapid Transit to constructing subways.

Cabrera has this to say: "To really solve all these things..you have to look at it as a one whole package. So *kahit may subway diyay, there will come a time na mapupuno din 'yan, so maglala-gay ka ng subway sa iba. Always holistic approach 'yan. Putting up a subway will not solve it. Siguro for a time, it will solve. But eventually, hindi rin.*"

The road to traffic salvation in the Metro remains long and winding. For now, the commuting public can only suffer and hope for a magic formula. ■