

Legacy and Continuity: Assessing the State of Local Sites from the American and Japanese Periods to the Present

Gemaris Y. Jadaone, Mark Jesse P. Atay, Thrisia Mae A. Lapidario

gemaris.jadaone@lnu.edu.ph

Leyte Normal University, Tacloban City, Leyte, 6500, Philippines

Department of Education-Region VIII, Government Center, Palo, Leyte, 6501, Philippines

Abstract

This study, titled "Legacy and Continuity: Assessing the State of Local Sites from the American and Japanese Periods to the Present," examines the preservation and transformation of historical sites in Eastern Visayas, Philippines. These sites, remnants of the American and Japanese occupations, are critical to understanding the region's cultural heritage and collective memory. Grounded in Cultural Heritage Theory, Sustainable Development Theory, and Social Constructivism, the study investigates the current state of these sites, the preservation efforts implemented, and the shifting perceptions within local communities. Utilizing a phenomenological approach, data was collected from community members, historians, and local officials through interviews and thematic analysis.

Findings reveal that while some historical sites are actively preserved, others face neglect due to modernization and limited community engagement. The research highlights the need for inclusive preservation strategies, emphasizing the role of education, youth involvement, and sustainable practices. By fostering greater public awareness and collaboration among stakeholders, the study underscores the importance of integrating heritage conservation with contemporary urban development. This work contributes to the discourse on cultural sustainability and proposes actionable recommendations to safeguard Eastern Visayas' historical legacy.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage Preservation; Sustainable Development; Community Engagement

1. Introduction

This study explores the preservation and transformation of historical sites in Eastern Visayas, Philippines, dating back to the American and Japanese occupations. These sites serve as critical markers of the region's cultural heritage, reflecting its collective memory and socio-political evolution. By employing Cultural Heritage Theory, Sustainable Development Theory, and Social Constructivism, the research investigates the current condition of these landmarks, the effectiveness of preservation efforts, and the shifting perceptions within local communities. This work aims to highlight the importance of inclusive preservation strategies and sustainable practices to maintain the historical significance of these sites amid contemporary challenges.

1.1. Background of the Study

Historical sites are often viewed by people as an important part of the culture of a certain community, reflecting not only its history but also the values and traditions that have shaped it over time. In this essence, historical sites are taken as familiar elements of daily life, representing the “known” and “habitual” part of the community, which is in a wider lens, pertaining to the history. For an instance, buildings and infrastructures that once served as a common place for living, leisure, and social interaction that are integrated in historical narratives and thus define a locality. Such sites contain the collective memories of a community, serving as a reminder of the shared experiences and cultural identity. In a global context, the preservation of these historical sites has become a critical concern as countries strive to maintain their cultural heritage while also facing and trying to adapt or resist modernization, urban development, and globalization. Countries across the world have recognized the importance of protecting, maintaining, and embracing these sites, not only for their historical significance but also for their role in fostering national identity and contributing to the country’s economy through tourism.

In the process of preserving cultural heritage sites, there are a lot of factors that affects people’s action and interest. One of which is the value that people provide to a certain historical site. According to Dastgerdi and De Luca (2018), the value that people associate with these historical sites change over time because the society is constantly in the process of revising what it values; the values of heritage sites are not simply fixed and static. Profoundly, valuing historical sites especially on these times is challenging as people are faced with a lot of opportunities and a lot of places that are of superior in beauty of its structure than what we have on the past. As the value that people give on these sites shifts over time, their preservation is inevitably influenced, sometimes for the better, with efforts to restore and maintain them, and at other times for the worse, leading to neglect or redevelopment.

In the Philippine context, there are a lot of countries and nationalities who colonizes us; indeed, we are a product of many colonization for several years. However, the American and Japanese occupations profoundly transformed our socio-political landscape, that even until today, remains on our society, culture and infrastructure such as the Japanese Tunnel in Baguio, the Corregidor Island at the mouth of Manila Bay, and the Kiangnan National Shrine also known as the Yamashita Shrine in Ifugao. These sites also range from military structures, churches, government buildings, and monuments to cultural landmarks that plays an important role in our history.

Although faced with many challenges, the Philippine government established laws and regulations for the preservation, protection, and valuing these historical sites. In the survey conducted in year 2012 by the Japan Consortium for International Cooperation in Cultural Heritage, a Survey Report on the Protection of Cultural Heritage in Republic of the Philippines, identifies Republic Act No. 10066, an act providing for the protection and conservation of the National Cultural Heritage by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) and other agencies. This legislative basis provides the protection, preservation, conservation and promotion of the nation’s cultural heritage, its property and histories, and the ethnicity of local communities. Legislative actions like this, by a government, is essential to serve as a framework on what the citizens should follow and implement. Further, this also empowers indigenous and local people to ask for support from agencies and departments for maintaining historical sites as they are bounded with law. The preservation of historical sites is a collective responsibility that involves not only government institutions but also local and community leaders, as well as the people who live near or interact with these sites. Local leaders play a pivotal role in advocating for the protection and restoration of these landmarks, often influencing policy

decisions and mobilizing resources. Meanwhile, community members contribute by either valuing and supporting preservation efforts or, in some cases, allowing the deterioration of these sites through neglect. However, there are other detrimental factors that legal protections often fail to safeguard against. As time passed, the state or condition of these local sites has become a matter of concern due to natural disasters, urbanization, and shifting societal priorities.

This study is grounded in the importance of preserving cultural heritage as a means of fostering national identity, collective memory, and historical awareness. The transition from American to Japanese control, followed by the Philippines' independence, marked significant periods of political and cultural change. These changes influenced how local sites were maintained, repurposed, or abandoned, reflecting broader social and political dynamics. Today, many of these historical sites face the threat of deterioration or have been redeveloped, potentially erasing their historical significance. This study aims to assess the current state of these local sites in Eastern Visayas, exploring the efforts made toward their preservation or restoration, and analysing how they have been integrated into contemporary local culture and development.

By exploring the legacy and continuity of these sites, the study seeks to contribute to the discourse on cultural preservation and urban development, offering insights into how local history can be maintained in a rapidly changing society.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In many communities, local leaders are entrusted with the stewardship of these heritage sites, ensuring that they are preserved for future generations. However, the effectiveness of these efforts often depends on the level of community engagement and the value that residents place on their shared history. As societal priorities shift, and as economic and environmental challenges arise, the role of both leadership and the people in safeguarding these sites becomes increasingly critical.

Therefore, this study seeks to address the following key questions:

1. What is the present condition of local historical sites that date back to the American and Japanese periods?
2. What preservation efforts are currently in place, and how effective are they in maintaining the integrity of these sites?
3. How do the changing perceptions of the community influence the value placed on these historical sites?

1.3 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework guiding this study is grounded in three key theories: Cultural Heritage Theory, Sustainable Development Theory, and Social Constructivism. Primarily, this study is anchored on the theory of Ruskin and Riegl (nd), the Cultural Heritage Theory which was first developed during the mid-19th century during the period of romanticism. The concept of this theory dwell on the understanding that heritage sites is characterized by the diverse ways individuals, groups, institutions, and other relative social group, value and engage these sites with adherence to culture and history (Liu, 2022). According to Reigl, monuments and heritage sites encapsulate identity, collective memory, and value of a community. This emphasize the link between the historical sites build in communities and the community and its people. Surviving through different year, these historical sites have faced a lot of challenges that are both anticipated or controlled and otherwise. The openness of the country to the world also opens the gateway for many

cultures to influence the mind and behaviour of Filipinos which then contributes to how they put value and meaning to these sites and how they preserve and protect it. This theory suggests that the need for preserving historical heritages, not only for aesthetic or architectural importance but also for its historical significance.

Further, this study is also anchored to the Sustainable Development Theory by Gro Harlem Brundtland in 1939; he states that development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, define a sustainable development. In the context of historical sites, this theory emphasizes that development and modernization that are currently and inevitable faced by people nowadays, should not come at the expense of the cultural integrity of these landmarks. Instead, people must conform to sustainable initiatives to ensure that historical sites can be preserved while integrated into current societies. The perspective of this theory aligns with the aim of this study to assess the current condition of the historical sites in Eastern Visayas and how it has been affected by the new developments faced by citizens while examining the strategies used to preserve them amidst the given situation.

Precisely, people in a certain community could only give that much value to historical sites and think of an initiative on how to preserve it, if it is strongly manifested in that community. The theory of Social Constructivism by Lev Vygotsky is bounded with the focus of this study as it emphasizes that community members, through shared experiences, interactions, and changing cultural values, shapes how historical sites are perceived and treated. Collective effort and attitude contribute largely on encouraging a person to take the lead and avoid being passive. This theory is critical on understanding how local leaders and community members contribute to the evolving significance and fate of these historical sites.

1.4 Scope and Delimitation

This study focuses on assessing the current state of local historical sites in Eastern Visayas that were established or significantly influenced during the American and Japanese occupations. These sites hold cultural and historical importance, as they represent key periods in the region's history and reflect the legacies of foreign occupation.

Geographically, the research will be limited to selected municipalities and cities within Eastern Visayas that are known for their historical significance during these periods. This delimitation is intended to provide a focused analysis of sites that have played a role in shaping the historical and cultural identity of the region. While there are many other historical landmarks across the Philippines, this study will concentrate on those within this specific geographical area.

Specifically, the study will allow for a comprehensive review of the evolvement of these sites considering the changes on the preservation initiatives, community engagement, and policies provided to preserve and maintain these sites. However, this study will not cover those Historical sites that have been destroyed or currently inaccessible due to natural disasters, or sites that are undergoing construction. Additionally, this will also not cover historical sites outside Eastern Visayas or those established after Japanese and American occupations.

This study will also limit its analysis to the preservation efforts made within the context of the region, acknowledging that while national policies may influence local actions, the research will primarily focus on local initiatives, challenges, and perceptions regarding these historical sites.

2. Review of Related Literature

The preservation of historical sites is essential for understanding a community's cultural heritage and identity. In the context of the Eastern Visayas, local sites from the American and Japanese periods serve as crucial reminders of the local history, that have shaped contemporary Regions' society. This review of related literature explores the legacy and continuity of these local sites, assessing their fate in the face of modernization, urban development, and changing societal values.

During the American occupation, the Philippines experienced significant growth in infrastructure and architecture. However, this progress was halted with the Japanese occupation. Many structures were severely damaged or destroyed during World War II, and while the Americans rebuilt some were left in ruins along its history forgotten after the war. Now, the present-day Philippines has been progressing than ever. The growing economy and population caused the significant rise on demand for better community structures and facilities, housing and commercial spaces increased. However, growth came at the expense of preserving the existing cultural heritage infrastructures in the country (Cruz, 2019).

According to Cruz (2019) the Philippines cultural heritage buildings are more likely to be demolished than preserved in the present day. This is evident for the past years where historical buildings are being demolished due to safety hazards which was caused neglect and lack of financial support from the government, Poor Urban Planning, Calamities, and Capitalism; turning these historical structures into commercial buildings, condominiums and for other relevant purposes (Cruz, 2019; Chohan, & Wai Ki, 2005; Cruz, 2019; Meniano, 2019; Iliyasu, 2017; Espiritu and Lawas, 2019; Fu et al. 2023)

Local historical sites in the country is safeguarded by the Government through laws that will protect such treasures. Based on the Philippine Constitution, Article XIV of 1987, Sections 14, 15, 16, and 17 of the Philippine Constitution, which mandates the State to promote the preservation, enrichment, and dynamic evolution of a Filipino culture, considering the principle of unity in diversity in a climate of free artistic and intellectual expression. Similarly, based on the Republic Act No. 10066 entitled as "An Act Providing for The Protection and Conservation of The National Cultural Heritage, Strengthening the National Commission for Culture and The Arts (NCCA) And Its Affiliated Cultural Agencies, And for Other Purposes" also known as the National Cultural Heritage Act Of 2009. This law aims to "(a) Protect, preserve, conserve and promote the nation's cultural heritage, its property and histories, and the ethnicity of local communities". Especially those infrastructures above 50 years old infrastructures (Cruz, 2019). This law aligns with UNESCO guidelines but faces challenges in implementation due to urban development pressures and a lack of public awareness about the importance of cultural heritage.

However, despite this law that aims to conserve this heritage sites, yet, it is still under threat to demolitions. According to Richard Tuazon Bautista (a Heritage Architect), that the implementation of the law at place is on the hands of the local government units who will understand and interpret it (Lago, 2022). In a similar way Centeno and Valerio argued that "The weakness of a heritage site lies in the absence of support, promotion and efforts from the LGU" (Estonanto et al., 2019). This was manifested through the demolition of Redona Residence. The case of the Redoña Residence which highlights the challenges faced in heritage preservation, particularly regarding government support and community involvement.

According to Goral (2017) emphasized the significance of local authorities in overseeing cultural heritage resources, particularly in defining and accomplishing cultural policy objectives. Emphasizing that

collaboration between local authorities and stakeholders in shaping cultural development within the community, along with their active involvement in its execution, demonstrates the substantial value of these resources to the local population. The declaration of Vigan as a UNESCO World Heritage Site significantly aided in the preservation and maintenance of its cultural heritage, making it a leading tourist destination in the Philippines. This recognition has boosted sales for merchants on Crisologo Street and led to the establishment of new businesses, such as hotels, thereby creating jobs. The preservation efforts have spurred economic development in various sectors, including education, health, and public safety. Additionally, the city has committed to providing each citizen with 5 liters of water daily for the next 25 years at no cost. Overall, this demonstrates that preservation acts as a catalyst for development rather than a barrier (Estonanto et al., 2019). Hence, recognizing that it is crucial that the historical infrastructure must be were recognized by the government because this will entitle the property to government funding for protection, conservation, and restoration under the laws and regulation that entitles these historical sites. (Lago, 2022)

Furthermore, Ivan Henares argued that heritage structures should not be viewed merely as financial burden that incur maintenance and preservation costs. Instead, they can enhance real estate ventures and tourism, thereby contributing to urban development and cultural preservation (Flores, 2013). Which is also supported by Espiritu and Lawas (2019) acknowledging the importance of managing heritage sites to attract visitors while promoting conservation. Moreover, Fu et al. (2023). emphasized the importance of adopting a risk-based assessment cumulative method to evaluate how urban development affects cultural heritage. This approach emphasizes the need for systematic assessments to identify vulnerabilities and develop strategies for protection allowing a comprehensive evaluation of the impacts of urbanization on cultural sites. By quantifying risks, stakeholders can prioritize preservation efforts and allocate resources more effectively, Fu et al. (2023). This aligns with broader trends in environmental and urban planning, which emphasize sustainability and adaptive management of our local historical sites.

The current state of cultural heritage sites in the Philippines is concerning due to lack of awareness regarding both the present condition and the value of these cultural heritage sites. Many historical sites, structures, and artifacts remain underappreciated and insufficiently documented. In addition, the number of experts engaged in research on cultural heritage protection within the country is limited. This deficiency in both public understanding and scholarly focus hampers efforts to effectively preserve and promote rich cultural legacy (Japanese Committee for International Cultural Heritage, 2013). On the other hand, it is still worth noting the efforts of the different government agencies, local government units to cope with the ongoing development of the localities. One proof of this effort is the collaboration between Department of Tourism (DOT), Department of Justice - Parole and Probation Administration (DOJ-PPA) and Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) which was launched on April 22, 2024. The “Adopt a Heritage Site” project aims to help parolees and probationers to transition back into society as well as earn (specifically those probationers under the TUPAD program of DOLE) by rendering monthly community work service in maintaining the cleanliness of the historical and heritage sites that they are assigned in within the region. (Meniano, 2024). Moreover, an initiative led by Mr. Nedgar V. Garvez and the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) the Southern Leyte Tourism and Investment Promotions Center (SLTIPC) launched a comprehensive cultural mapping initiative aimed to prosper the regions commitment in preserving the diverse cultural assets that defines the unique identity region (Bacareza, 2023).

In conclusion, the fate of local historical sites in Eastern Visayas is precarious in the face of modern pressures. Despite legislative frameworks intended to protect and preserve these vital cultural assets, the reality reveals a troubling trend towards neglect and demolition, often driven by urbanization and economic

imperatives. The need for effective collaboration between government entities and community stakeholders is paramount to safeguard our heritage. Successful examples, such as the preservation efforts in Vigan, underscore the potential benefits of integrating heritage conservation with economic development. Moving forward, it is essential to foster greater public awareness and appreciation of cultural heritage, ensuring that these irreplaceable sites are not only recognized for their historical significance but also valued as catalysts for sustainable growth and community identity. By prioritizing preservation and strategic planning, we can honor our past while paving the way for a culturally rich and resilient future.

3. Methodology

This chapter outlines the research design, sampling methods, data collection procedures, and analytical techniques used in the study. It details the phenomenological approach adopted to understand participants' lived experiences with historical sites in Eastern Visayas, focusing on their preservation and cultural significance. The chapter also explains the rationale behind selecting specific respondents, the tools used for gathering data, and the steps taken to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings.

3.1 Research Design

This study will employ a phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of individual participants, such as community members, local historians, and government officials, regarding the preservation initiatives, transformation, and continuity of local sites in Eastern Visayas from the American and Japanese periods. According to Creswell (2013), phenomenological research aims to understand individuals' lived experiences and focuses on the meanings they ascribe to a particular phenomenon. This approach facilitates a deeper exploration of how participants perceive and engage with historical sites, providing insights into their personal and collective experiences.

3.2 Research Locale

The study will be conducted in selected local sites in Eastern Visayas that hold historical significance from the American and Japanese periods. These include sites known for their cultural and historical value, such as memorials, landmarks, and community spaces that have been preserved or transformed over time. These locations will be chosen based on their accessibility, historical relevance, and the availability of key participants knowledgeable about their history and transformation.

3.3 Research Respondents

The respondents for this study will be composed of individuals with diverse yet interconnected perspectives on the preservation and transformation of local historical sites in Eastern Visayas. These include community members, local historians, and government officials, each offering unique insights into the research topic.

1. Community members, who either reside near or have ancestral connections to the sites, will be involved as they can provide rich, first-hand accounts of the sites' historical and cultural significance.

2. Local historians, recognized for their expertise and research on Eastern Visayas' historical heritage, will also be vital respondents. Their scholarly perspectives and documentation will shed light on the historical context, evolution, and enduring value of these sites.
3. Local officials from local government units and cultural agencies will be included to represent the institutional and policy-driven efforts in preserving and transforming these sites.

3.4 Sampling Technique/Method

A purposive sampling technique will be employed for selecting respondents. This method is appropriate as it allows the researcher to identify and include individuals with specific knowledge, experience, or involvement relevant to the research objectives. Based on the definition of Robinson (2014), purposive sampling is the intentional selection of informants based on their capability to explicate a concept or theme. Below are the criteria that the researcher conformed to in choosing the research participant:

1. Participants will be selected based on their direct involvement with or knowledge of the local historical sites, such as community members who have lived near these sites, local historians who have studied their significance, and government officials responsible for their preservation and transformation.
2. Only individuals who expressed willingness to share their experiences, perceptions, and insights regarding the preservation and transformation of the sites were included, ensuring ethical compliance and the quality of data.
3. Participants will be chosen for their substantial knowledge or lived experiences relevant to the study, such as having ancestral ties to the sites, academic expertise in local history, or professional roles in heritage preservation and management.

3.5 Research Instrument

The primary research instrument will be a semi-structured interview guide designed to elicit detailed narratives and insights from respondents. This guide will include open-ended questions aimed at exploring their:

- a. Personal experiences and connections with the sites.
- b. Perceptions of the preservation and transformation efforts.
- c. Views on the cultural, historical, and contemporary significance of these sites.

The instrument will be reviewed by experts in qualitative research and heritage studies to ensure its validity and reliability.

3.6 Data Gathering Procedure

The data gathering process will begin with the preparation phase, where the researcher will identify and secure access to historically significant sites in Eastern Visayas and obtain necessary permissions from local government units and cultural agencies. A validated semi-structured interview guide will be developed to ensure comprehensive data collection. Participants, including community members, local historians, and local government officials, will be identified through purposive sampling and contacted via community leaders, historian networks, and government offices. Once consent is obtained, face-to-face or virtual interviews will be conducted using the semi-structured guide, allowing respondents to narrate their experiences, perceptions,

and insights freely. Interviews will be audio-recorded, with participant consent, and supplemented by field notes to capture non-verbal cues and site-specific observations. The data will be transcribed verbatim and securely stored to maintain confidentiality, forming the foundation for thematic analysis to uncover the essence of participants' experiences and insights.

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the study, followed by a discussion of their implications. The results are analyzed in light of the research objectives, providing insight into the role of student leaders in sustaining community initiatives. The researcher used Thematic analysis because it is the easiest and most commonly used in Qualitative data. Through this, the researcher could summarize the responses of the participants based on major themes, followed by a discussion of the presented results.

4.1 Theme 1: Echoes of the Past: The Roots of Heritage

The first theme covers the responses of participants on the identification of historical sites that played a significant role during the American and Japanese occupations in the Philippines, particularly in Eastern Visayas, where American and Japanese forces established their presence and left lasting impacts. The narratives revealed the enduring historical and cultural value of these locations, emphasizing their roles in shaping local history and identity. Participants shared insights into how these sites were utilized during the occupation, their transformation over time, and their relevance to contemporary heritage preservation efforts.

P1: America-Japanese occupation. I can only think of one na historical site. Combined na an America and Japanese occupation and that is the Old Leyte Provincial Capital ha Magsaysay boulevard Tacloban city. Bagat amo lat ak naiisip nga sure ako. during the American up until the Japanese. An old provincial capital of Leyte.

P2: An akon la бага nakikita na historical sites particularly here in Tacloban that is somehow associated during the American and Japanese period are the Madonna of Japan and Price Mansion. These are notable based on what I can observe especially if may important occasion it City like fiesta and Christmas, nagiging attraction hira for even by the local community.

These responses illustrated an awareness of the historical sites present in the participants' localities, shaped by their personal experiences and the narratives passed down through generations. Many participants shared that their knowledge of these sites stemmed primarily from stories they heard from elders, teachers, or community leaders, highlighting the oral tradition as a key medium for preserving history. For instance, community members recounted tales of how these sites were used during the American and Japanese occupations, emphasizing their significance in local heritage.

P3: As a Leyteneo, what I am really familiar with is the Price Mansion. Habang papalit yung pasko, for example, it is also one of my interest na pumasyal doon with my friends and family kaso nga lang there are times na hindi natutuloy kasi busy.

It could be traced based on the responses that, aside from the ideas participants derived from expertise and studies, some participants identified their knowledge of the historical sites through recommendations from

other people, city-initiated activities involving these landmarks, and the observable behaviour of others when visiting these sites. Participants also noted that events such as historical tours, commemorative programs, and educational campaigns organized by local government units or cultural institutions played a significant role in raising awareness and fostering appreciation for these sites. These activities not only highlighted the sites' historical relevance but also created opportunities for community members to engage with their heritage more actively.

These responses could also be anchored to the theory of Cultural Heritage, where, according to Liu (2022), people have diverse ways of interacting with historical sites. Based on these varied forms of connection, individuals tend to create different perceptions and experiences that can either promote or diminish the image of these sites within the community. This underscores the idea that the meaning and significance of historical sites are not fixed but are influenced by the personal and collective interactions of the people who engage with them. As participants engage with these sites, their perspectives and the experiences they associate with these locations shape how these landmarks are perceived and valued within the community.

In a much deeper sense, participants also showed interest in these local sites based on their understanding of the historical events tied to them. Many participants expressed a strong sense of curiosity about the events that took place at these sites, such as their role during key moments in history, and how those experiences have shaped local identities. However, some participants showed no awareness at all when it comes to its importance historically or during the period when these sites were established.

P1: siguro it akon naiisip why they choose around ito na area dida ha may Magsaysay boulevard an site han old leyte provincial capital because from what I can remember the are where the of the leyte park resort and hotel ... ito na area leyte park resort and hotel...kuan kasi ito dati han una base ito han mga americano han dati. So, if marerecall naton during han attack han balingiga on September 28 1901 so han pag escape han mga American usa ito an ira mga gin kadtuan as ...camp kasi ito han mga americano and I think ka strategic gihapon han place because it is the center of Tacloban near la hiya ha dt are so an pinaka dt and near la han port and facing cancabato bay kubaga harani la ba hiya ha port ba so madali la makuan. So amo tak nakikita na reason kun kayano why they choose to build the old provincial capital dida.

P3: I am not that sure as to what was the reason why Price Mansion was built within the downtown area but maybe because it is within the heart of the City, bagan most of the times yung mga tao kapag gusting mamasyal lahat ang puntahan doon. But I don't think na yung site na yun is pasyalan na talaga before, I think it has more politically related purpose.

P1: okay, basically old leyte provincial capitol is the seat of the highest official of the province, so it is the official, it is the symbol ito nga highest office of the province of leyte. So, it is where you can find the office of the governor of course of the vice governor and the other officers or officials of the province, so amo tak nakikita na ano.

The responses from the participants emphasize the complex layers of historical meaning and significance attached to the local sites in Eastern Visayas. These sites are not merely physical spaces but are imbued with personal, historical, and political narratives. According to Liu (2022), such perspectives demonstrate how individuals' experiences and perceptions are shaped by their historical and geographical contexts. In this case, P1's understanding of the historical sites is grounded in military history, which adds depth to the significance of the place beyond its present-day status.

P1: Warai gud ak necessarily nga nareremember during han th American period but during han deliberation of leyte on oct 19, 1944 during that week uhm mc Arthur went there osmina went there literally In the staircase infornt han capital. They had a short program mc athur and osmena uhm talked to the troops. Both the American the filipino troops guerillas and I think in that ceremony they awarded cournel roperto kanglion the head of the leyte are command during the Japanese occupation during that short ceremony immediately after their landing at palo so they immediately proceeded ha capitolyo they had a short program. May mga video gihap ito.

Their response also points to how local knowledge and personal experiences inform a sense of identity and understanding of historical narratives. On the other hand, P3's response about the location of Price Mansion in the downtown area of the city suggests that its placement was likely due to its central position, making it easily accessible to the public. This aligns with the idea that historical sites were often chosen for political reasons, a view supported by scholars like Silverman (2011), who argue that buildings such as the Price Mansion were constructed to assert authority and visibility within the community. These sites functioned as symbols of governance and control, reflecting the social and political dynamics of the time.

4.2 Theme 2: Crafted Through Time: Building and Preserving History

As time goes by, with the advent of changes in communities and the inherent human drive to adapt and survive, challenges to the existence and preservation of historical sites arise. Participants in this study demonstrated varying levels of awareness and lack thereof regarding the preservation initiatives undertaken for these sites. Some participants expressed a clear understanding of ongoing preservation efforts, citing government programs, local projects, and initiatives led by cultural organizations aimed at maintaining the historical significance of these landmarks. These participants emphasized the importance of preserving these sites as symbols of local identity, collective memory, and cultural heritage.

P1: as far as I am concern there are measures na gin hihimo it province to preserve gihapon this important piece of heritage mayda gihapon ginhihimo it mga province because basically amo talaga ini it seat of government han province of Leyte. The original ...provincial capitol so it was the official nga opisina han governor from 1922 up until 2020-2021 because I think 2021-2022 la man an pag transfer han office from old provincial capital ha Magsaysay boulevard Tacloban ha Palo an new provincial capitol so for almost 100 years the Leyte provincial capitol was the office of the highest official of the province of Leyte.

P1: бага so far, бага I don't have information pa but I think there is plan to of course pat of the restoration of the leyte provincial capital. I heard nga it will be turned into a WWII museum so I think the old leyte provincial capital, idunno if the whole capitol or a certain portion la han capitol iton hihimuon nga museum. It will be turned into a World War II museum.

P2: as a member of the SK Council, so far, we don't have direct involvement when it comes ha restoration and preservation efforts, although may mga seminars but if an pag-iisturyahan an initiative by the City we are not somehow tap to be involved. More of our scope la han mga initiative activities is within the barangay level.

The response from P1 shows acknowledgement of the ongoing efforts to preserve it. The recognition that the site has been designated for preservation as part of a broader cultural initiative (such as turning it into a

WWII museum) suggests that the preservation of this historical site is viewed not only as a means of maintaining its physical integrity but also as a way to ensure its continued relevance in the collective memory of the community. According to Smith (2011), such preservation efforts are crucial for maintaining continuity in local identity and promoting public engagement with history. In this case, transforming the site into a museum would serve as a vehicle for educating future generations about the site's historical importance, particularly during World War II. On the same hand, as noted by Lowenthal (2015), museums are powerful spaces for linking the past with the present, allowing communities to engage with their history in a more meaningful way. Turning the Old Leyte Provincial Capitol into a museum would allow it to remain a focal point for the province's identity, while also offering educational value to both locals and visitors.

P2, on the other hand, brings attention to the limited direct involvement of local youth councils (SK) in the preservation efforts, despite having access to seminars and other related activities. P2's statement also reflects a common challenge in heritage preservation, where engagement with local communities, especially at the grassroots level, can be limited due to a lack of awareness or formal involvement in decision-making processes. The disconnect between local youth councils and larger preservation initiatives highlights the need for more inclusive strategies that engage various sectors of the community, including youth, in the safeguarding of cultural heritage. As scholars like Silverman (2011) suggest, successful preservation efforts often require the active participation of a wide range of community members to ensure that the value of historical sites is understood, appreciated, and protected across generations.

P4: Narining ko lang pero waray talaga ako involvement with these historical sites dinhi ha City kun ano it mga initiative hit City pero kun ha pagpapaalam sa iba kung gaano inen kaupay para mapasyadahan, бага amo la tak nahihimo.

This response highlights a common issue in many communities: while there may be awareness about the value of historical sites and some local efforts to preserve them, the level of personal engagement and active participation can be limited. P4's experience reflects a more passive form of community involvement, where individuals are aware of the significance of these sites but may not have opportunities to contribute to their preservation beyond informal advocacy, such as recommending these sites to others.

4.3 Theme 3: Linking Generations: Past to Future

The participants also elaborated on the significance of connecting past and future generations through the preservation and understanding of historical sites. Many of the responses indicated that, beyond just maintaining physical structures, there is a deeper purpose in fostering an ongoing dialogue between the past and the present to ensure that historical knowledge is passed on to younger generations. This theme emphasizes the role of historical sites not only as symbols of the past but as active agents in shaping collective memory and identity for the future.

P2: Me, myself, I am really interested when it comes to historical sites as I am into travelling and visiting places but most especially those that has relevance sa ating history. I really hope na umabot din sa amin the mandate and opportunity to took part with the initiatives upang mas maging aware din kami. As times will go, our generation will take place the position of the officials seating now so sa tingin ko po, it's important that as early as now we will get involve para maguide kami what to do in the future.

P1: siguro an gin sysymbol hini nga Old Leyte Provincial Capital is... siguro an...pagigin... kasi t stood the test of time, diba. War. It stood the test of time. The Second World War and the Super Typhoon Yolanda. Siguro an resilience naton nga mga leyteno. Gin kungbaga amot symbolism hit old leyte provincial capital and I hope And I hope that the future generation will appreciate that piece of history, heritage hito dida nga Old Leyte Provincial Capital because dako an significance niya since it was built during han panahon han Liberation. And well, it underwent damo mga changes during the term of the former Governor of Romualdez. And of course, an ini han mga Petillas an magkuan han Leyte. I hope na maappreciate and sana mapreserve and I hope it's one of the priority projects of the province to turn the Old Leyte Provincial Capital into a museum. And sana because dinhi ha Tacloban city, we lack mga museums so... para at least we know naman la a piece of history. Kulang eh, kulang, warai kita museum. I think, I can only think of the Duwa la ada ito nga old cafe, the Espacio, tapos ito dida nga Hotel Alejandro. Bagat amo la tak nakikita na mga kuan. But other than that, warai na. So, I hope nga mapreserve ito. Para gihap ha younger generations to come.

P3: Kulang pa po sa mga resources like books, o any tangible na makikita yung history ng local sites. May mga nagagawa naman po yung City in promoting these sites but when it comes to informing and nurturing young minds about these sites like sa details and historical significant and background nila, I hope mas mabigyan pansin.

The responses from P2, P1, and P3 reflect a strong desire for future generations to be actively involved in the preservation and appreciation of local historical sites. This can be connected to the Sustainable Development Theory of Brundtland (1987), which emphasizes meeting present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. By involving youth in historical preservation, communities ensure that these sites are maintained while fostering pride and identity.

P2's wish for youth involvement and P1's hope for the Old Leyte Provincial Capital to be preserved as a museum align with sustainable development by ensuring future generations can engage with and learn from historical sites. P3's concern about the lack of educational resources highlights the need for sustainable practices in cultural education, ensuring that heritage is passed down through accessible learning materials. Together, these responses support the idea that the preservation of historical sites should be coupled with education and community involvement, ensuring cultural sustainability for the future.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this study highlight the complex relationship between local communities and historical sites, particularly those linked to the American and Japanese occupations in Eastern Visayas. Participants emphasized the enduring cultural significance of these sites, which serve as symbols of local identity and collective memory. The responses indicate that while some individuals possess a deep understanding of these historical landmarks, others still lack awareness, pointing to the need for continued efforts to educate and engage the public, especially the youth, in heritage preservation. This reflects Liu's (2022) assertion that historical sites' meanings are shaped by individual and collective experiences, which can either enhance or diminish their value within the community.

Moreover, the study revealed varying levels of community involvement in preservation efforts. While some participants acknowledged the ongoing initiatives, such as government and cultural programs, others expressed a desire for more inclusive approaches to engage local youth councils and the broader community. P1's mention of turning the Old Leyte Provincial Capitol into a WWII museum exemplifies the potential for such sites to serve as educational tools, linking past and present while fostering a deeper appreciation for local history. However, the limited participation of some sectors in preservation efforts, as pointed out by P2 and P4, underscores the need for more active and grassroots involvement in safeguarding cultural heritage.

Lastly, the study underscores the importance of connecting past and future generations through historical sites. Responses from participants such as P2, P1, and P3 reflected a strong desire for youth involvement in preserving local heritage, which aligns with the Sustainable Development Theory of Brundtland (1987). These historical sites should not only be preserved for their cultural and educational value but also serve as active agents in shaping future identities and fostering community pride. The insights from this study emphasize the need for sustainable preservation practices that incorporate education, community engagement, and youth participation to ensure the longevity and relevance of local historical landmarks.

5.2 Recommendation

The study's conclusions highlight the important influence historical places have on local identity and communal memory, especially in the Eastern Visayas during the Japanese and American occupations. The following suggestions are put forth to improve knowledge and conservation of these sites:

1. Organizing events (e.g. Leyte Landing Anniversary celebration) that honour local history can significantly enhance community engagement with historical sites. Similar to Vigan's successful preservation efforts, which have generated economic benefits, this approach fosters a sense of pride and ownership among locals (Estonanto et al., 2019). These events can also attract tourists, boosting local businesses and promoting a greater understanding of the region's cultural value.
2. Providing resources, such as funding and materials for preservation projects, is essential. Government programs such as the "Adopt a Heritage Site" project serve as excellent examples of how to allocate resources and engage the community (Meniano, 2024). Encouraging community involvement alongside the construction of museums dedicated to local heritage can further strengthen these initiatives. This collaborative approach can effectively address the challenges noted by Centeno and Valerio (Estonanto et al., 2019), who emphasized the lack of support from local government units (LGUs) in cultural preservation.
3. Engaging youth in preservation initiatives is crucial for fostering future stewardship of cultural heritage. This aligns with Goral's (2017) findings, which stress the importance of community stakeholders and local government in shaping cultural policy and conserving resources. Sharing updates and stories about preservation initiatives on social media can spark interest and reach a wider audience, particularly among younger generations. Additionally, developing digital resources that provide information about nearby historical locations can enhance public awareness and participation. According to the Japanese Committee for International Cultural Heritage (2013), this approach addresses the need for improved documentation of cultural heritage.

The recommendations outlined here underscore the necessity of a comprehensive strategy for historical preservation that emphasizes inclusivity and community involvement. By fostering a greater understanding and appreciation of cultural heritage, communities can protect their historic sites from the impacts of

urbanization and modernity. Initiatives like "Adopt a Heritage Site" and the successful examples from Vigan demonstrate the potential benefits of integrating cultural preservation with economic growth. Prioritizing preservation will not only honor the past but also pave the way for a resilient and culturally rich future for Eastern Visayas.

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