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## LIGAO HISTO-CULTURAL SITES: ANCHORS OF HERITAGE IN A CHANGING CITY

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### ABSTRACT

Historic buildings, monuments, and cultural landmarks are more than just physical structures because they reflect the history, identity, and traditions of a community. This study aimed to identify and examine the histo-cultural sites of Ligao City and understand their importance in a changing society. Specifically, the study focused on the historical sites found in the city, their significance to the community, and the instructional materials that could be developed from the findings. The research used a qualitative-descriptive method through interviews, documentary analysis, and observation of selected sites involving local residents and cultural informants. The findings revealed that Ligao City is home to several important histo-cultural sites, including St. Stephen Protomartyr Parish, the old Presidencia or Municipal Hall, the Monument of the Fallen Sons, Poblacion Elementary School, St. Mary's Academy of Ligao, Inc., ancestral houses such as the Jaucian and Pigon ancestral houses, the Ligao City Heritage and Museum, and Kawa-Kawa Hill. The study showed that these sites help preserve the culture and history of Ligao City while also strengthening the community's sense of pride, identity, and belonging. It also highlighted that preserving these landmarks allows younger generations to appreciate the city's heritage despite continuous modernization and

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development. Based on the findings, the study recommended the creation of informational and instructional materials to further promote awareness, appreciation, and preservation of the histo-cultural heritage of Ligao City.

**Keywords:** *histo-cultural sites, heritage preservation, cultural identity*

## INTRODUCTION

Historical and cultural heritage plays an important role in preserving the identity, traditions, and collective memory of a community. Historical landmarks, monuments, ancestral houses, and cultural sites help people understand their roots while strengthening cultural pride and social unity. According to Renato Constantino in *The Philippines: A Past Revisited*, “a people without a sense of history is like a person without memory,” emphasizing the importance of preserving heritage to maintain historical awareness and national identity. In the Philippines, Republic Act No. 10066 or the National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009 supports the protection and promotion of historical and cultural resources.

In the local context, Ligao City is known for its rich history, cultural landmarks, and natural attractions such as St. Stephen Protomartyr Parish, the old Presidencia, ancestral houses, the Ligao City Heritage Library and Museum, and Kawa-Kawa Hill. Despite the presence of these important sites, many residents, especially younger generations, have limited awareness and appreciation of their local heritage due to modernization and changing lifestyles. Previous studies mainly focused on heritage preservation, tourism, and cultural mapping in places such as Banaue, Pampanga, and Naga City, while limited studies explored

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how histo-cultural sites serve as anchors of identity and heritage in a changing society, particularly in Ligao City. Existing studies also gave less attention to the lived experiences and cultural attachment of residents toward these historical landmarks.

Therefore, this study entitled *Ligao Histo-Cultural Sites: Anchors of Heritage in a Changing Society* aimed to identify and examine the histo-cultural sites of Ligao City and determine their significance in preserving cultural heritage and community identity. Using a qualitative-descriptive research design, the study gathered information from older residents, vendors of Kawa-Kawa Hill, church personnel, tourism staff, museum staff, and owners of ancestral houses. The study also aimed to develop a magazine-type instructional material to help promote awareness and appreciation of Ligao City's rich cultural heritage.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study used the historical-descriptive method of research to examine the histo-cultural sites of Ligao City and their importance in a changing society. Historical research helped the researcher gather and understand information about past events, traditions, and heritage, while descriptive research was used to describe the existing historical and cultural landmarks found in the city. Oral history was also applied in the study to collect personal stories and experiences from individuals who had knowledge about the heritage sites.

### Research Design

This study used the historical and descriptive method of research. Historical methodology was the approach historians used to gather evidence and construct narratives

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about the past. This process involved collecting and interpreting data on historical events or ideas to understand their impact on the present. By examining the reasons behind specific events, historical research elucidated their influence on subsequent developments.

According to Gahan (2002), Oral history was an approach in historiographic research which, having an interdisciplinary essence, developed during past decades within historians' societies. Oral history was an organized collection of living people's statements about their experiences. It was a present narrative, and the true researchers were the narrators who played a significant role in every event which they narrated with the help of interviewers.

Through this research method, the researcher conducted one-on-one interviews with the key informants to gather the necessary information related to the present study.

### **Key Informants of the Study**

The informants of this study included a group of older families or residents who lived in Ligao City. Other key informants were vendors in Kawa-Kawa Hill, staff of St. Stephen the Protomartyr Parish Church, and staff of the Ligao City Heritage Library and Museum, also included were the staff of the City Tourism Office of Ligao City and owners of ancestral houses who had access to documents, archives, or materials that provided the needed information. These groups of people were those who possessed knowledge, witnessed past events, and had an understanding of the existence of natural and cultural heritage in Ligao City.

### **Data Gathering Instruments**

The instruments or tools used by the researcher in the gathering of data were interview guides, oral history, and document analysis, supplemented by personal observations and

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experiences to gather primary and secondary sources of data for this study. According to Dr. S.M. Amunuzzaman, Interview was a very systematic method by which a person entered deeply into the life of even a stranger and could bring out needed information and data for research purposes.

According to Abrams (2016), "Oral history was a technique for generating and preserving original, historically interesting information primary source material from personal recollections through planned recorded interviews". This method collects memories and personal commentaries of historical significance through recorded interviews. The researcher used prepared questions for the interviewee and recorded it through audio formats.

### **Interview Guide Materials**

Preparation of the Questionnaire. The researcher checked some print and non-print materials related to the study when preparing the questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed using the following criteria: clarity of language (use of mother tongue or vernacular), specificity of content, freedom of assumption, freedom from suggestions, and time required to complete the questionnaire.

### **Administration Interview Guide Material.**

A formal request to conduct the study was obtained from the respective officials of the key informants associated with Ligao City. The researcher administered the interview guide material personally by reading the questions and writing down the responses. Following their responses to the questions, the key informants were asked to sign off on their presence. All

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collected data, personal information, and responses of the informants were treated with strict confidentiality.

### Validation of the Instrument.

To ensure the quality of the instruments, a validation phase was undertaken, involving a panel of five validators. This validation process aimed to assess and enhance the instruments by scrutinizing the language, technical aspects, and content validity, guaranteeing the effectiveness and reliability of the data collection tools.

### Data Analysis.

Is the process of inspecting, cleansing, transforming, and modeling data to discover useful information, draw conclusions, and support decision-making. It involves applying various techniques and tools to extract meaningful insights from raw data, helping in understanding patterns, trends, and relationships within a dataset.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings, analysis, and interpretation of data gathered through interviews, oral history, documentary analysis, and observations in identifying the histo-cultural sites of Ligao City. The findings revealed that these landmarks continue to serve as symbols of heritage, identity, resilience, and continuity despite the rapid modernization of the city.

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**Table 1**

**Identified Histo-Cultural Sites of Ligao City**

Sites	Theme	Description	Supporting Statement
St. Stephen Protomartyr Church	Religious Heritage	A centuries-old Catholic church that symbolizes the spiritual foundation and colonial heritage of Ligao City.	Church records and oral accounts revealed that construction began in 1676 and was completed in stages until 1882, making it one of the oldest religious structures in Ligao City.
Presidencia / Old City Hall	Political and Administrative Heritage	Former center of governance during the Spanish colonial period reflecting early municipal architecture.	Historical accounts from local informants and city archives stated that the building was constructed in 1881 and renovated in 1949 after wartime destruction.
Monument of the Fallen Sons	Cultural Memory and Nationalism	Monument commemorating the heroism and sacrifices of local leaders and heroes of Ligao.	Community narratives and historical accounts identified the monument as a symbol of courage, resilience, and collective memory.
Ligao West Central Elementary School (Poblacion)	Educational Heritage	One of the earliest public schools in Ligao that promoted formal education during the American period.	Historical information showed that the structure followed the Gabaldon architectural design commonly used in early public schools in the Philippines.
St. Mary's Academy of Ligao Inc.	Religious and Educational Heritage	Catholic educational institution promoting academic excellence and moral formation.	School records and interviews revealed that the institution was founded in 1948 as St. Stephen's Academy and later

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became St. Mary's Academy in 2001.

Pigon Ancestral House	Residential and Architectural Heritage	Ancestral residence preserving traditional Filipino architecture and family history.	Family accounts stated that the house was built around the 1920s and remains largely preserved despite minor renovations.
Jaucian Ancestral House	Colonial Residential Heritage	One of the oldest ancestral houses in Ligao reflecting Spanish colonial architecture and elite family history.	Historical narratives identified the structure as a long-standing residence of the prominent Jaucian family since the Spanish colonial era.
Ligao City Library and Museum	Cultural Preservation and Learning	Institution dedicated to preserving local history, literacy, and cultural resources.	City records indicated that the library and museum were inaugurated in 2022 through the partnership of the local government and Ayala Foundation.
Kawa-Kawa Hill	Eco-Cultural and Faith Tourism Heritage	Religious and eco-tourism destination integrating natural beauty with spiritual devotion.	Interviews and tourism records described the site as a major pilgrimage and tourism destination especially during Holy Week and holidays.

The findings showed that the identified histo-cultural sites played an important role in preserving the identity, traditions, and collective memory of Ligaoeños. Informants described these sites as reminders of the city's history, faith, struggles, and resilience. According to one informant, "These places remind us of who we are and where we came from." Another

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informant shared that the preservation of these sites helped younger generations appreciate the sacrifices and experiences of their ancestors.

The study also revealed that histo-cultural sites contributed to cultural pride, tourism, education, and community unity. Similar to the ideas of Renato Constantino, the findings emphasized that preserving history strengthens identity and cultural awareness. Previous studies also supported that historical landmarks serve as “anchors” that connect communities to their past while adapting to modern development.

Despite their importance, the study found challenges in preserving these landmarks, including modernization, limited awareness among the youth, lack of funding, and environmental damage. However, the community continued to recognize the value of preserving these sites as living symbols of heritage and continuity.

As part of the educational implication of the study, a magazine-type instructional material entitled *LIGAO: Angkla kan Kagabsan* was developed. The material featured the identified histo-cultural sites of Ligao City, their history, significance, and cultural contribution. The magazine aimed to promote awareness, appreciation, and preservation of the city’s rich cultural heritage among students, residents, and future generations.

The findings imply that preserving histo-cultural sites is not only important for protecting physical landmarks but also for strengthening community identity and historical consciousness in a changing society. However, the study was limited to selected sites and key informants within Ligao City. Future researchers may conduct broader studies focusing on

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additional heritage sites, digital preservation, and the role of younger generations in heritage conservation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study and the conclusions drawn, the following are recommended.

The Local Government Unit of Ligao, City Tourism Office, and concerned cultural agencies may strengthen preservation programs, restoration projects, and public awareness campaigns to protect and promote the identified histo-cultural sites of Ligao City. Community participation, heritage festivals, and cultural activities may also be intensified to encourage greater appreciation of local heritage.

Schools, teachers, and educational institutions may integrate local history and histo-cultural heritage into classroom discussions and learning activities in Araling Panlipunan. Educational tours, heritage walks, storytelling sessions, and localized instructional materials may be utilized to strengthen students' appreciation of Ligao City's historical and cultural identity.

The magazine-type instructional material entitled *LIGAO: Angkla kan Kagabsan (Anchor of the Past)* may be utilized, enhanced, and reproduced for instructional purposes to further promote awareness and appreciation of the histo-cultural sites of Ligao City among learners and community members.

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Future researchers may conduct related studies focusing on additional histo-cultural sites, oral histories, cultural traditions, and heritage preservation practices in Ligao City and neighboring communities to further enrich local historical and cultural documentation.



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