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Dataset in Focus

# Sites of Remembrance in Legazpi City, Philippines: Conservation through Cultural Heritage Tourism

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## Abstract

Countries commemorate disasters to link stories of the past with the present. This linking creates shared national narratives that temporally reinforce identities across the geography of the nation and among diverse citizenry (Drozdowski, 2019). This paper presents the mapping of the sites of remembrance in Legazpi City through Mayon Volcano Natural Park (MVNP) cultural mapping in the bid for MVNP to be included in the UNESCO's World Heritage List. The study employed the qualitative research method and purposive sampling technique utilizing the standard method and survey form from the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA). The mapping of the sites was presented through georeferencing using ArcGIS Arcmap 10.5 to visualize their exact locations. The researcher gathered the background information of the sites, stories associated with the sites, significance, and conservation. Findings revealed that the sites of remembrance were built in memory of the victims of the Mayon volcano eruption. Although the local barangay authorities perceived the potentiality of the sites for cultural heritage tourism, they were unable to present a clear conservation plan to protect these cultural assets from environmental and social degradation. The study gives light to the role of tourism in cultural heritage preservation and conservation. Future researchers may conduct a study on the memorial sites of the municipalities near the foot of Mayon that have recorded casualties in past disasters.

**Keywords** – cultural mapping, disaster, Mayon volcano, spiritual tourism, religious tourism

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## BACKGROUND OF DATASET

The Hall of Remembrance at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem is a Holocaust memorial monument that contains the names of the concentration and extermination camps, an eternal flame, and a symbolic grave with the ashes of Holocaust victims. The site successfully reflects the connection between Israel and Europe, between the years of devastation and the years in which the institution was established, and between suffering and redemption (Bar, 2020). Boret (2018) examined the roles of disaster memorials during the five years that followed the Great East Japan Earthquake (GEJE). It reflects on the significance of both their tangible (the monument and its surroundings) and intangible dimensions (grief, social bonds, memories). In the Philippines, the Pacific War Memorial on Corregidor Island was erected by the United States government to commemorate Filipino and American soldiers who had lost their lives during the Second World War. Weir (2020) explores the tensions between colonial and decolonized remembrance and the extent to which the Pacific War Memorial serves as a historical marker for the United States' achievements in the Philippines.

Cultural mapping sets one's sight on the preservation and conservation of anything that denotes the heritage of a certain group of people. (Rashid, 2015) defined cultural mapping as a systematic approach to identifying, recording, classifying, and analyzing a community's cultural resources or assets that traced the historical, economic, social, geographical significance of a site. Abante (2020) explored the influence of the Mayon volcano on the cultural identity of the residents of Guinobatan, Albay, and attempted to connect its Cultural Heritage Assets, with topophilia (love of the place), and the sense of place. While Arao (2020) performed a study on the cultural heritage and the relevance of Mayon volcano to the locals of Sto. Domingo, Albay. In the study of Alfane (2020), her paper views the importance of heritage use, how it can help local communities preserve the heritage places with distinctive characteristics that matter to people surrounding the place.

The author employed the purposive sampling technique and qualitative research method in the mapping of significant tangible immovable heritage for monuments and markers. The standard method and survey forms on cultural mapping provided by the NCCA were utilized. The data gathering was conducted in barangays, Buyuan, Matanag, and Padang in Legazpi City where the memorial shrines with significance and clear connection to Mayon volcano can be found. The heritage sites were documented through interviews with the barangay officials and sites visits. Their background information, description, stories associated with the sites, significance, and conservation measures are the highlights of the study.

The research project was initiated by the Albay Provincial Tourism, and Culture and Arts Office with the assistance of the NCCA in connection with the bid for Mayon Volcano to be listed in the UNESCO World Heritage Sites. This research undertaking paved the way

to derive information on the cultural heritage conservation status of the memorial sites situated in the three barangays of Legazpi City, Albay.

The dataset may be requested from the author. It is recommended for further analysis in terms of the classification of the memorial sites as cultural heritage assets.

## RESULTS OF DATA ANALYSIS

In Legazpi City, some religious sites and markers have become part of the lives of the communities. These are called "sites of remembrance" that were built to commemorate the victims of the two disasters that happened in 1992 and 2006. The devastation had created potential cultural values, beliefs, and traditions in the communities around Mayon which made them adapt to the constant activity of the volcano. The researcher was able to map three tangible immovable heritage as sites of remembrance. Table 1 presents the background information of the mapped sites and Table 2 describes the sites, their significance, conservation, and the stories associated with them. Figures 1, 4, and 7 are the locations of Padang Memorial Shrine, Matanag Cross, and Camp Site 1 that were presented in ArcGIS Arcmap 10.5. While Figures 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, and 9 are the images of the three memorial sites, markers' inscriptions, and religious objects found within the sites.

Table 1. Background Information of the Profiled Sites of Remembrance in Legazpi City

Site	Barangay	Coordinates	Ownership/ Jurisdiction
Padang Memorial Shrine	Padang	123°43'14.28"E, 13° 12'24.61"N	Barangay Local Government
Matanag Cross	Matanag	123°43'38.86"E, 13° 11'56.95"N	Barangay Local Government
Camp Site1	Buyuan	123°44'9.80"E, 13° 12'19.99"N	Barangay Local Government



Figure 1. Location of Padang Memorial Shrine in ArcGIS Arcmap 10.5

Table 2. Padang Memorial Shrine

Sites	Description	Stories associated with the land formation	Significance	Conservation Measures
Padang Memorial Shrine	The Padang Memorial Shrine can be found along the national road in barangay Padang, Legazpi City. It serves as a shrine to the nearly 1,000 people who perished during the super typhoon Reming in 2006. A message of hope to the survivors and prayers for those who perished were written on the inscription. The memorial shrine features a three-dimensional cross.	When the super typhoon Reming hit Legazpi City in 2006, it caused massive loss of lives when the mudflows from the Mayon volcano buried many villages. The heavy rainfall with 1.5 m (5 ft) of floodwaters resulted in a widespread lahar across the province of Albay causing a dyke and bridges to break. According to Padangeños who survived the disaster, they heard the cries of the people when their homes were being buried by the boulders and lahars.	The shrine has historical, aesthetic, social, socioeconomic, and spiritual significance. The shrine is not just a memory of their loved ones but a stronghold of hope and resiliency against adversities.	The barangay local government unit of Padang preserves the memorial shrine. They hold a yearly mass to commemorate the disaster.
Matanag Cross	Matanag Cross is located in a barren land in barangay Matanag, Legazpi City with a background view of Mayon on the west, and a large quarrying facility on the east. It serves as a marker to the 77 farmers who died during the February 2, 1993-Mayon volcano eruption. The marker has an inscription of the names of the farmers who died during the eruption.	It was a fine day on February 2, 1993, when the farmers of Matanag took advantage of the good weather to plant. Suddenly at noontime, there was a loud thunder-like sound that was heard by the barangay folks. It was the sudden eruption of the Mayon volcano. 77 farmers died and only a few farmers survived. Those who survived have lived in painful and long treatment of burns.	The Matanag Cross manifests social, spiritual, and environmental significance not only to the people in the barangay but to the entire province of Albay.	The barangay local government unit of Padang has preservation measures on the shrine. They maintain the site and they hold an annual eucharistic celebration within the shrine to commemorate the victims of the disaster.
Camp Site 1	Camp Site 1 is a 2,500 ft above sea level breathtaking tourist destination located in barangay Buyuan, Legazpi City. It is a memorial place of the 77 farmers who died during the February 2, 1992-Mayon volcano eruption. The memorial shrine made of volcanic materials was used in building the site of remembrance. Some religious items can be found on the site. Families of the victims visit the place once a year to offer mass for their loved ones.	Buyuan is one of the barangays located on the slopes of the Mayon volcano. According to the villagers, there was a thunder-like sound that they heard in the noontime of February 2, 1992. The farmers working in their farms were astonished when they see a mushroom-like cloud spewed by Mayon. It was too late for them to evacuate. The lava had rolled down their bodies. The 77 farmers died from sixth-degree burns. The local barangay council named the place "Camp Site 1" where most of the farmers' dead bodies were found.	Camp Site 1 has social, spiritual, and environmental significance not only to the people of Buyuan but to the entire province of Albay.	There is no intervention ever reported on the conservation and protection of the site by the local or national government. The inaccessibility of the site which is 2,000 ft above sea level or a six-hour trail is a constraint according to the local barangay officials.





Figure 2. The Padang Memorial Shrine in Padang, Legazpi City

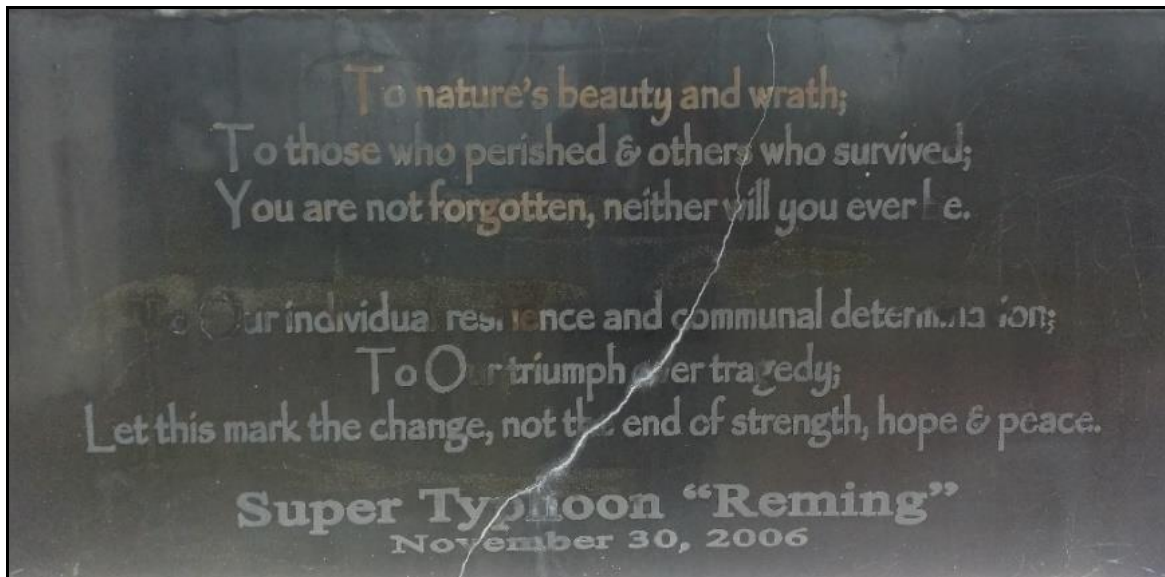


Figure 3. The Padang Memorial Shrine Marker's Inscription

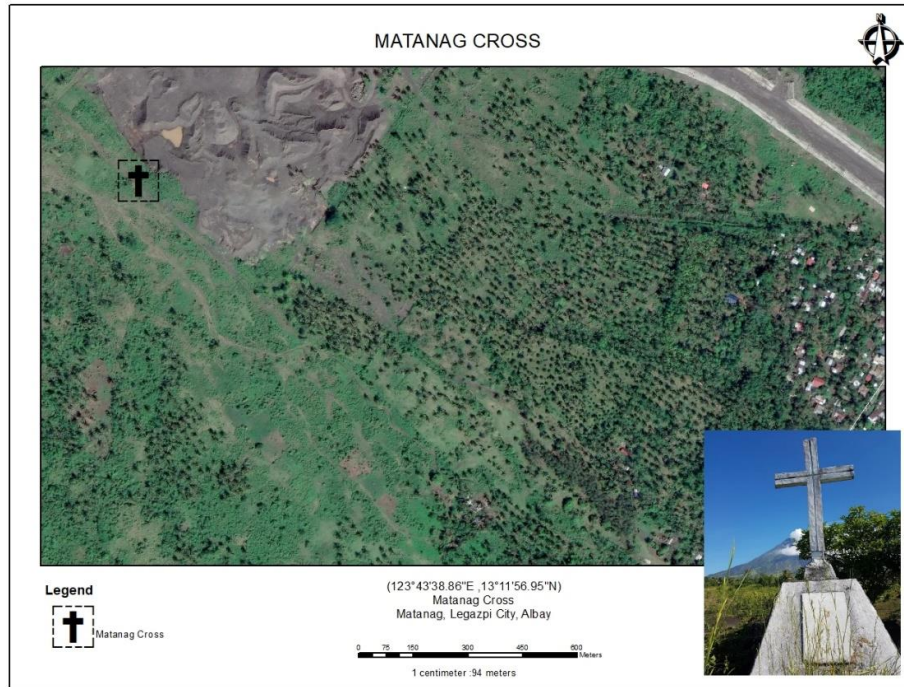


Figure 4. Location of Matanag Cross in ArcGIS Arcmap 10.5



Figure 5. The Matanag Cross in Barangay Matanag, Legazpi City





Figure 6. The Matanag Cross Marker with Inscription of the Victims' Names

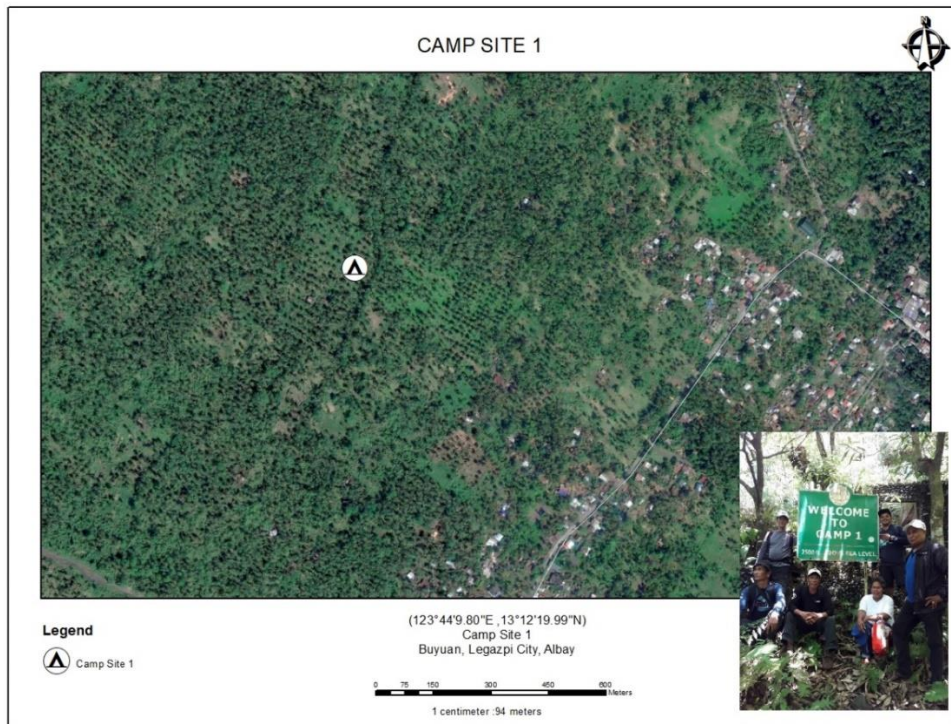


Figure 7. Location of Camp Site1 in ArcGIS Arcmap 10.5





Figure 8. The Camp Site1 in Barangay Buyuan, Legazpi City



Figure 9. Religious Items Found in Camp Site1

The sites of remembrance can change the perspective of the people in every disaster and calamity. They become part of every person's life living in the landscape where heritage sites sit. Cultural significance means the importance and value of any tangible

and intangible heritage that reflects the past, is practiced in the present, and surpass the future. Cultural significance is embodied in the place itself, its fabric, setting, use, associations, meanings, records, related places, and related objects (Mercado, 2014).

New memorials continue to evoke several responses to disaster. People expressed a sense of sadness for the lost lives because of tragedies. Sites of remembrance or memorial shrines evoke traditions, beliefs, attitudes, and culture in the people. For some, it is a reminder that behind the beauty of Mayon is an impending disaster. To others, it brings hope and longing for a stronger connection to our Creator. While it gives the communities a sense of awareness, vigilance, and resilience; it can lead others to strengthen their faith to be delivered from the destruction of nature. Remembrance of disaster reveals the intricate interweaving of cultural memory and identity.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Legazpi City is a home of the three sites of remembrance that were built in memory of the persons who perished during the Mayon volcano eruption and disaster. The researcher was able to map the Padang Memorial Shrine, Matanag Cross, and Camp Site 1's background information, description, stories associated with the sites, significance, and conservation following the method on cultural mapping of the NCCA. The sites of remembrance profiled posited environmental threats due to the activity of the Mayon volcano and large quarry operations surrounding the sites. There is an absence of conservation and preservation plans that may consequently lead to environmental, economic, and social degradation. The unfavorable conservation status of the sites would mean a waste of significant cultural heritage assets. These could have been sources of livelihood for the communities and income for the barangay local government units for it will spur economic development when conserved and developed as potential tourism destinations.

The study recommends the creation of committees at the barangay level that will 1) protect and preserve the cultural heritage assets and 2) develop and manage the cultural heritage tourism sites. It is important to recognize the significance of cultural and heritage resources (tangible or intangible) to implement sustainable development which is to balance the efforts on conservation and tourism development. Shrines and monuments represent honorable respect for a person or a significant scenario that affects the cultural and heritage value of a community or a nation. These are also considered as potential tourism resources of a community that could be used as a unique attraction for impending tourists (Mercado, 2014). Places of cultural significance enrich people's lives, often providing a deep and inspirational sense of connection to community and landscape, to the past, and lived experiences.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## Appendices

Appendices A, B, and C are the three-page Form 02E which were used in the mapping of Significant Tangible Immovable Heritage under the category: Monuments and Markers. They are the standard method and survey form of the NCCA Sub Commission on Cultural Heritage Cultural Mapping Program.

### Appendix A. Form 02E (first page)

  
Form 02 series January 2020

**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR CULTURE AND THE ARTS**  
SUBCOMMISSION ON CULTURAL HERITAGE  
CULTURAL MAPPING PROGRAM

**Mapping of Significant Tangible Immovable Heritage**  
Category: Monuments and Markers

**NAME OF IMMOVABLE HERITAGE:**

**PHOTO:**

**I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

---

**A. TYPE:**       STATUE                       BANDSTAND                       FOUNTAIN  
                   WELCOME MARKER             SHRINE                             OTHER  
                   WELL

**B. OWNERSHIP**     PUBLIC                             PRIVATE

**C. ADDRESS/LOCATION/COORDINATES** (*Longitude & Latitude*):

**D. AREA:**        1. Total Land Area:                      2. Structure:

**E. YEAR CONSTRUCTED/ESTIMATED AGE:**

**F. OWNERSHIP/JURISDICTION:**

**G. DECLARATION/LEGISLATION:**

**II. DESCRIPTION**

---

**A. Physical Description** (*Describe the physical features – exterior, interior, (if applicable, landscape surrounding the structure)*)

**B. History of the Structure** (*Write the history of construction, use/function of the building over the years, history of intervention*)

**III. STORIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE STRUCTURE**

---

Significant Tangible Immovable Heritage  
Municipality/City of \_\_\_\_\_  
Province of \_\_\_\_\_  
Region \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix B. Form 02E (second page)



Form 02E series January 2020

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR CULTURE AND THE ARTS  
SUBCOMMISSION ON CULTURAL HERITAGE  
CULTURAL MAPPING PROGRAM

### IV. SIGNIFICANCE

---

Indicate type of significance, e.g. historical, aesthetic, scientific, social, socioeconomic, socio-political, spiritual and then explain

### V. CONSERVATION

---

**A. STATUS/CONDITION OF STRUCTURE:** *(Describe the physical condition of the structure)*

- Excellent  
 Good  
 Fair  
 Deteriorated  
 Ruins

Remarks:

**B. INTEGRITY OF THE STRUCTURE:**

1.  altered  
 unaltered
2.  moved  
 original site

Remarks:

**C. CONSTRAINTS/THREATS/ISSUES:**

**D. CONSERVATION MEASURES:** *(Describe the conservation measures taken at the level of the community, provincial and/or national)*

**VI. LIST OF SIGNIFICANT TANGIBLE MOVABLE HERITAGE** *(within the premises of the built heritage, with the consent of the owner/caretaker):*

Name of Object	Photo	Year produced or estimated age

---

Significant Tangible Immovable Heritage  
Municipality/City of \_\_\_\_\_  
Province of \_\_\_\_\_  
Region \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C. Form 02E (third page)



Form 2E series January 2009

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR CULTURE AND THE ARTS  
SUBCOMMISSION ON CULTURAL HERITAGE  
CULTURAL MAPPING PROGRAM


### VII. REFERENCES

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KEY INFORMANT/S:  
REFERENCE/S:  
NAME OF MAPPER/S:  
DATE PROFILED:

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Significant Tangible Immovable Heritage  
Municipality/City of \_\_\_\_\_  
Province of \_\_\_\_\_  
Region \_\_\_\_\_