

Daet's heritage sites: A reflection of history and culture

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Abstract

This study explored Daet's heritage sites as reflections of history and culture. It focused on the existing heritage sites in Daet, their historical and cultural significance in shaping the identity of Daeteños, the ways by which these heritage sites may be preserved and promoted, and the output produced based on the findings. The study used a qualitative research design. Data were gathered through interviews, observation, and documentary analysis, with ten purposively selected informants composed of local history and heritage stakeholders, government representatives, religious leaders, educators, and community representatives. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, content analysis, and descriptive analysis. Findings showed that the First Jose Rizal Monument, Cathedral of the Most Holy Trinity, St. John the Baptist Church of Daet, Camarines Norte Provincial Capitol, and Daet Heritage Center and Museum collectively reflect nationalism, faith, governance, historical consciousness, community pride, and cultural continuity. The study also found that preservation and promotion require documentation, legal protection, institutional coordination, community stewardship, education, responsible tourism, and sustainable conservation. Based on the findings, a thematic magazine was produced to support heritage preservation, public awareness, education, and cultural promotion.

Keywords: Camarines Norte; Cultural heritage; Daet heritage sites; Historical identity; Preservation; Promotion

1. Introduction

Heritage sites stand as enduring reflections of the rich history and vibrant culture of a place. They embody traditions, collective memory, identity, and the continuing values of the people. Heritage may be understood not only as material structures but also as inherited meanings, practices, and memories that communities maintain, reinterpret, and pass on to future generations [4].

Daet, the capital of Camarines Norte in the Bicol Region of the Philippines, is a place where the past and present converge. Its heritage sites serve as tangible links to the town's historical development, cultural depth, religious formation, political identity, and nationalist memory. These sites are not merely physical structures; they are living testaments to the experiences, beliefs, traditions, and struggles of the people who have called Daet home [4].

The legal bases for protecting Daet's heritage sites include the 1987 Philippine Constitution, Republic Act No. 10066 or the National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009, and Republic Act No. 11961 or the Heritage Law Amendments of 2023. These legal instruments affirm the need to recognize, conserve, and protect cultural properties and historical landmarks as part of national and local identity [1-3].

This study aimed to determine Daet's heritage sites as reflections of history and culture. Specifically, it sought to identify the existing heritage sites in Daet, determine their historical and cultural significance in shaping the identity of Daeteños, explain how these heritage sites may be preserved and promoted, and produce an output based on the findings.

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2. Materials and Methods

The study employed a qualitative descriptive-evaluative research design. This design was appropriate because the study required the description, interpretation, and evaluation of the historical and cultural value of selected heritage sites in Daet, Camarines Norte. It allowed the researcher to describe the physical characteristics, historical background, cultural meaning, preservation practices, and promotion strategies connected to the selected sites [5].

The informants were selected through purposive sampling, a sampling approach suitable for qualitative studies that require information-rich participants with direct knowledge or experience of the phenomenon under study [6]. They included individuals with direct knowledge, experience, or institutional involvement in Daet's heritage sites. The manuscript identified the following informants and stakeholders: Mr. Abel C. Icatlo, Museum Curator I/OIC LSD/PCDO-Designee; Mayor Rosanno C. Valencia, Mayor of Daet; Miss Jocelyn Cruz Sarical of the Municipal Tourism Office; Brgy. Captain Jose Juan Crisostomo Carranceja, Punong Barangay of Barangay III; Bishop Rex Andrew C. Alarcon, religious leader of the Cathedral of the Most Holy Trinity and St. John the Baptist Church; Amor T. Bauca, Francisco D. Torrero, Arnulfo Ocan, and Aiko T. Oblina, school educators; and Veverly C. Clemente, student community leader.

Data were gathered through a structured interview, observation guide, and documentary analysis guide. The interview guide elicited information on the history, significance, preservation, and promotion of the heritage sites. The observation guide was used to document the physical characteristics, architectural features, current condition, and surroundings of the five selected heritage sites. Documentary analysis was used to examine records, historical documents, photographs, church archives, government resolutions, and related materials.

The study focused on the First Jose Rizal Monument, St. John the Baptist Church, Daet Heritage Center and Museum, Cathedral of the Most Holy Trinity, and Camarines Norte Provincial Capitol Complex. These sites were selected because they are prominent landmarks in the municipality and collectively represent the political, religious, educational, nationalistic, and cultural dimensions of Daet's community life.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, content analysis, and descriptive analysis. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns and themes from interview responses and observations [7]. Content analysis was used to examine documents, inscriptions, and written records. Descriptive analysis organized the findings into narrative discussion and tables. Ethical safeguards were observed through informed consent, confidentiality, respect for human dignity, objectivity, respect for cultural heritage and property, and beneficence and non-maleficence.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Existing heritage sites and historical context

The findings identified five major heritage sites in Daet: the First Jose Rizal Monument, the Cathedral of the Most Holy Trinity, St. John the Baptist Church of Daet, the Camarines Norte Provincial Capitol, and the Daet Heritage Center and Museum. These sites present a connected heritage landscape that reflects Daet's nationalist, religious, political, educational, and cultural development.

The First Jose Rizal Monument reflects the immediate veneration of Rizal, revolutionary initiative, nationalist symbolism, and the role of Daet in Philippine historical memory. The Cathedral of the Most Holy Trinity reflects ecclesiastical maturation and the development of the Diocese of Daet. St. John the Baptist Church reflects evangelization, Spanish colonial administration, and community resilience. The Camarines Norte Provincial Capitol reflects the political formation of the province and the administrative role of Daet as capital. The Daet Heritage Center and Museum reflects institutionalized heritage preservation, local identity, and educational advocacy.

Table 1 Historical context of the five heritage sites of Daet

No.	Heritage Sites	Historical Context
1.	First Jose Rizal Monument	Timing: A testament to immediate veneration. Initiators: Revolutionary zeal and local initiative Symbolism: A fusion of Masonic and nationalist ideals. Locations and materials: Echoes of sacrifice.

		Official recognition: Enduring legacy.
2.	Cathedral of the Most Holy Trinity	The context of ecclesiastical maturation: From parish to diocese. The context of post-colonial church development: Filipino leadership and localization. The context of social and spiritual services: A hub for diocesan program.
3.	St. John the Baptist Church of Daet	The context of evangelization and town foundation. The context of Spanish colonial administration and ecclesiastical power. The context of community resilience and adaptation.
4.	Camarines Norte Provincial Capitol	Context of political identity: The birth of a province. Context of administrative history: Center of power and governance. Context of cultural and heritage integration: From governance to repository history.
5.	Daet Heritage Center and Museum	Context of institutionalized heritage: From oral history to formal preservation. Context of identity and nomenclature: "Bulawan" and the gold heritage. Context of physical location: continuity within the seat of power. Context of educational and cultural advocacy: Making history accessible.

The table shows that Daet's heritage sites are interconnected historical markers. Their value does not rest only on age or physical appearance but also on the historical processes, social meanings, and cultural practices attached to them.

3.2. Reflection of history

The five heritage sites reflect the history of Daet through major themes such as nationalism, ecclesiastical development, evangelization, political autonomy, governance, and institutionalized memory. The sites show that Daet's history is not represented by a single structure alone. Rather, it is reflected through a network of sites that together narrate the town's development from early settlement and colonial influence to revolutionary memory, religious continuity, provincial administration, and modern heritage consciousness.

Table 2 Reflection on history of the five heritage sites of Daet

No.	Heritage Sites	Reflection on History
1.	First Jose Rizal Monument	Reflection of the rise of Filipino nationalism and identity. Reflection of revolutionary ideals and masonic influence. Reflection of resistance and triumph over colonial oppression. Reflection of the historical role of Daet and Camarines Norte.
2.	Cathedral of the Most Holy Trinity	Reflection of ecclesiastical history: From mission territory to independent diocese. Reflection of Philippine church history: Filipinization and post-vatican II era. Reflection of political and social history: Faith in the modern nation.
3.	St. John the Baptist Church of Daet	Reflection of the history of Spanish evangelization and colonization. Reflection of social history: Church, state, and community life. Reflection of political history: Transitions, wars, and resilience. Reflection of cultural history: Faith as identity and continuity.
4.	Camarines Norte Provincial Capitol	Reflection of political history: Birth of a province and local autonomy. Reflection of social and civic history: The heart of provincial life. Reflection of heritage consciousness: From governance to custodianship.
5.	Daet Heritage Center and Museum	Reflection of pre-colonial history: Reclaiming indigenous roots.

		Reflection of colonial history: Evangelization, governance, and society. Reflection of revolutionary and nationalist history: Heroism and patriotism. Reflection of historical consciousness: From memory to institution.
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The findings indicate that Daet's heritage sites function as historical texts. Their locations, symbols, uses, and associated narratives communicate the town's past and provide visible evidence of the social, religious, political, and cultural forces that shaped the community.

3.3. Historical and cultural significance in shaping Daeteño identity

The findings show that the five heritage sites contribute to the shaping of Daeteño identity. Informants associated the sites with pride, belonging, faith, memory, civic identity, and continuity. One informant expressed the pride of residents through the statement, "Taas noo, taga Daet ako." Bishop Rex Andrew C. Alarcon also explained that the Cathedral is the seat of the diocese and symbolizes leadership, doctrine, morals, and worship in the Roman Catholic Church.

The First Jose Rizal Monument strengthens Daet's identity as the "Home of Firsts" and reinforces values of patriotism and nationalism. The Cathedral and St. John the Baptist Church anchor religious and spiritual identity. The Provincial Capitol represents political identity, governance, and civic pride. The Daet Heritage Center and Museum preserves memory, traditions, arts, and educational access to local history.

Table 3 Historical and cultural significance of the five heritage sites

No.	Heritage Sites	Historical and Cultural Significance
1.	First Jose Rizal Monument	Significance in crafting distinct identity: "The home of firsts". Historical significance: Shaping identity of patriotism and nationalism. Cultural significance: Shaping values, traditions, and social character. Significance in moral and ethical identity: The Rizal standard.
2.	Cathedral of the Most Holy Trinity	Historical significance: Symbol of ecclesiastical maturation and autonomy. Historical significance: Reflection of provincial and social history. Cultural significance: Anchor of spiritual identity and faith. Cultural significance: Architectural and symbolic representation.
3.	St. John the Baptist Church of Daet	Historical significance: Witness to evangelization and colonial foundation. Historical significance: Reflection of social, economic, and political history. Cultural significance: Soul of Daetenos identity and faith. Cultural significance: Symbol of continuity and tradition amidst change.
4.	Camarines Norte Provincial Capitol	Historical significance: Symbol of political identity and autonomy. Historical significance: Repository of history and institutional memory. Cultural significance: Identity, pride, and civic symbolism. Cultural significance: The heart of civic life and community.
5.	Daet Heritage Center and Museum	Theme: Witness & repository of revolutionary history. Theme: chronicle of cultural identity & "Home of Firsts". Theme: Preserver of traditions, arts, and way of life. Theme: Bridge between past, present, and education. Theme: Symbol of community pride and continuity.

The findings suggest that identity formation is both symbolic and experiential. The sites symbolize heritage, faith, patriotism, governance, and memory, but they become meaningful because the community visits them, uses them, celebrates around them, tells stories about them, and teaches their importance to younger generations.

3.4. Preservation and promotion of Daet's heritage sites

The findings indicate that preservation and promotion must be treated as complementary responsibilities. Preservation protects the historical, cultural, physical, and spiritual value of the sites, while promotion makes these meanings known, appreciated, and sustained by the community and visitors. Across the five sites, the manuscript emphasized documentation, restoration, legal protection, community involvement, education, tourism promotion, digital outreach, and long-term stewardship.

For the First Jose Rizal Monument, preservation focuses on protecting the story, authenticity, and nationalist meaning of the monument. For the Cathedral of the Most Holy Trinity and St. John the Baptist Church, preservation must respect both sacred function and heritage value. For the Camarines Norte Provincial Capitol, preservation must balance government use and historical value. For the Daet Heritage Center and Museum, preservation requires collection care, historical interpretation, education, and sustainable institutional development.

Table 4 Preservation and promotion of the five heritage sites

No.	Heritage Sites	Preservation and Promotion
1.	First Jose Rizal Monument	Historical & Narrative Preservation — Protecting the Story and Meaning Institutional & Governance Framework — Sustainable Stewardship Community Engagement & Cultural Promotion — Making It Alive and Relevant Sustainability — Balancing Protection and Public Enjoyment
2.	Cathedral of the Most Holy Trinity	Living Heritage – Preserving History, Honoring Faith Spiritual Heart – Promoting Faith, Community, and Devotion Cultural Landmark – Bridging Tradition and Modernity Legacy for the Future – Sustainable Stewardship
3.	St. John the Baptist Church of Daet	Faith & Origins – Preserving Sacred Roots, Honoring Devotion Colonial & Local History – Living Witness of Daet's Story Cultural Identity – Heart of Daet's Traditions & Arts Community Stewardship – Sustainable Future & Shared Ownership
4.	Camarines Norte Provincial Capitol	Governance & Legacy – Preserving the Seat of Provincial Authority History & Identity – Witness to Camarines Norte's Story Civic & Cultural Hub – Heart of Community Life & Progress Sustainable Stewardship – Securing the Treasure for Generations
5.	Daet Heritage Center and Museum	Guardian of Memory – Preserving Collections & Historical Truth Window to the Past – Educational & Interpretive Hub Cultural Soul – Celebrating Arts, Traditions & Identity Community Hub – Shared Ownership & Collective Pride Legacy for Tomorrow – Sustainable Stewardship & Growth

The table shows that effective heritage preservation requires shared responsibility. Local government offices, religious institutions, schools, heritage workers, community members, and youth groups all have roles in protecting the heritage sites and ensuring that they remain meaningful for future generations.

3.5. Output produced based on the findings

Based on the findings, the researcher produced a thematic magazine as a master document for the preservation, promotion, and development of Daet's five heritage sites. The output brings together the findings, plans, and proposed products for the First Jose Rizal Monument, Cathedral of the Most Holy Trinity, St. John the Baptist Church of Daet, Camarines Norte Provincial Capitol, and Daet Heritage Center and Museum. It may serve as an educational, promotional, and preservation-oriented material for the community.

4. Conclusion

The study concludes that Daet's five heritage sites are significant reflections of history and culture. They represent major dimensions of local identity, including nationalism, faith, governance, historical consciousness, community pride, and cultural continuity.

The First Jose Rizal Monument affirms Daet's role in nationalist memory and local pride. The Cathedral of the Most Holy Trinity and St. John the Baptist Church show the historical and cultural depth of Catholic faith in the community. The Camarines Norte Provincial Capitol reflects political autonomy, civic identity, and institutional continuity. The Daet Heritage Center and Museum serves as a repository of memory and a bridge between the past, present, and future.

The study further concludes that preservation and promotion require shared responsibility among the local government, religious institutions, heritage workers, educators, students, community members, and tourism stakeholders. Preservation must include structural care, documentation, interpretation, legal protection, funding, and education. Promotion must communicate the sites' meanings responsibly while strengthening community pride and visitor awareness.

The thematic magazine produced from the findings is an appropriate output because it translates the study's results into an accessible document that may guide preservation, promotion, education, and community engagement.

Compliance with ethical standards

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Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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