

Footprints of War: Uncovering Camalig, Albay During Japanese Occupation, 1941-1945

GONZALES, MARICEL M. *

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Abstract

This study investigates the Japanese occupation of Camalig, Albay from 1941 to 1945, focusing on its military objectives, socio-economic and political consequences, and the surviving historical traces that inform local memory. The findings indicate that the occupation formed part of Japan's broader Pacific War strategy, exploiting Camalig's geography and resources with minimal resistance following the unopposed landing in Legazpi. Key sites such as rice fields, Quituinan Hill, and Hoyop-hoyopan Cave were repurposed for military operations, leaving physical, economic, and personal legacies preserved in community narratives.

The occupation disrupted Camalig's social structures, economic activities, and political administration. Families were displaced to the mountains, public gatherings were suppressed, and local governance was replaced by appointed officials under military authority. Agriculture and trade declined due to the destruction of farms, food shortages, and forced labor. Despite these conditions, residents sustained cultural practices in concealed locations, notably Hoyop-hoyopan Cave, which now contribute to the town's cultural identity and heritage tourism.

Tangible remnants, including caves, tunnels, and historic residences such as Moyo's House and Navera's House, serve as evidence of wartime experience. The study concludes that these sites embody both the hardships and resilience of Camaligueños. It recommends integrating these locations into the Araling Panlipunan and History curriculum, developing contextualized instructional materials, and fostering collaboration among local government, educators, historians, and community members to strengthen heritage preservation, intergenerational learning, and sustainable cultural tourism.

Keywords: Japanese Occupation; Camalig, Albay; World War II in the Philippines; Oral History; Cultural Heritage

1. Introduction

Albay is a province in southern Luzon, part of the Bicol Region. Legazpi City serves as its capital and largest city, located right at the southern foot of Mayon Volcano. UNESCO named Albay a Biosphere Reserve in 2016 because of its forests, coastlines, and many plant and animal species. People from Albay, or Albayanos, are known for food with sili and gata. Dishes like Bicol Express and Pinangat mix chili with coconut milk. The main local language is Albay Bicol, but Central Bikol, Tagalog, and English are also used in schools and markets. Farming is still the main job for most residents, though geothermal power plants and tourism around Mayon have grown a lot in the past decade.

This study responds to the urgent need to document these wartime footprints before they are lost to time. By recording oral histories and local memories, it contributes to a more inclusive and grounded understanding of World War II in the Bicol Region. The National Cultural Heritage Act of 2009 (Republic Act No. 10066) serves as the primary legal framework for the protection and preservation of Philippine cultural properties, historical sites, archives, and traditions. The law

* Corresponding author: GONZALES, MARICEL M

mandates the National Historical Commission of the Philippines and the National Archives of the Philippines to lead efforts in documenting and safeguarding heritage materials. During World War II, Japanese forces made their first landing in Albay on December 12, 1941, shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor. This operation was part of a broader strategic advance to secure southern Luzon.

After the Pearl Harbor attack, Japanese troops moved into southern Luzon to take control of the area. On Dec 12, 1941, Major General Naoki Kimura led the “Kimura Detachment” to Rawis Beach, Legazpi. The force had about 3,200 soldiers from the IJA 16th Division and the Kure 1st Special Naval Landing Force. They came on 12 transport ships with warship escorts. Their goal was to capture the airfield and railroad. Before landing, Type 97 bombers from the carrier *Ryujō* bombed Legazpi to support the troops (Morton, 1953). US and Filipino forces offered little resistance because most were sent to defend Bataan. Right after landing, Japanese soldiers seized Legazpi Airfield and the Manila Railroad end station. By Dec 13, 1941, their control spread to other Albay towns like Camalig, Polangui, and Ligao. For the Japanese, taking Legazpi mattered a lot. The airfield and port became bases for fighter planes going to central Luzon. Holding Legazpi also let them control San Bernardino Strait between Luzon and Samar. This made it harder for American reinforcements to come from the south (US Army Center of Military History, 1993). For Camalig residents, this rapid takeover meant there was no time to evacuate when the groups of Japanese soldiers arrived.

The area of Legazpi was in theory defended by Brigadier General George M. Parker’s South Luzon Force of two infantry divisions, Brigadier General Vicente Lim’s 41st Division in the west and the 51st Division in the east, together with the 2nd Provisional Artillery Group of two batteries of the US 86th Field Artillery (Philippine scouts). These two divisions had little training and mostly spoke Tagalog and the Bikol dialect. On the Japanese side, Lieutenant General Masaharu Homma of Japan’s 14th Army formed a 2,500-man group from the 16th Division. He called it the “Kimura Detachment” and put Major General Naoki Kimura in charge. The group landed in Legazpi on the morning of December 12, 1941. There was no resistance because the closest US and Filipino troops were over 150 miles or 240 km away (Morton, 1953).

After securing Legazpi, Kimura moved his men north along Highway 1. They captured Naga, capital of Camarines Sur, on December 18, 1941. The next day, December 19, Japanese troops reached Sipocot and Daet, the capital of Camarines Norte. Then on the early morning of December 22, 1941, one company from the Kimura Detachment fought a small US force. The Americans held a strong position and pushed the Japanese back about 6 miles or 10 km south.

When Allied forces came back to free the Philippines in 1945, Japanese troops in Camalig moved from the town center to defense spots. After Americans landed in Legazpi on April 1, 1945, around 5,000 Japanese soldiers pulled back from Camalig town center to Quituinan Hills, also called Kibwinan.

From 1941 to 1945, Japanese forces occupied Camalig. It became one of the hardest periods in the town’s history. The occupation led to property seizures, strict rules, and major disruption to daily life (US Army Center of Military History, 1993).

The Japanese occupation forced Camalig residents to lose farms and homes, follow strict rules, and watch daily life fall apart (US Army Center of Military History, 1993). Because of the violence, many people abandoned their land and escaped to the mountains to hide and fight back. The *Población* became empty after Japanese troops withdrew to *Quituinan* Hills, locally called *Kitwinan*. They turned the hills into their base, weapon storage, and headquarters. In 1945, the battle to liberate the Philippines damaged Camalig badly, especially *barrio* Taladong. That area turned into a main battleground and left much of the town in ruins by war’s end. Today, the Japanese tunnel network in *Quituinan* still exists. Based on my site visit, it measures over 200 meters and now attracts tourists. For *Camaligueños*, those years are remembered as a time of fear, hardship, and heavy loss.

As a history researcher and a true Camaligon, the need to conduct this study arises from the growing recognition that the Japanese historical sites and landmarks heritage of Camalig, is not only the reflection of the town’s rich history but also a vital part of its identity. Furthermore, generation should learn to appreciate the history of Camalig, thus this study is of historical significance.

2. Theoretical Framework

The study uses three connected theories that directly relate to the research.

Michael de Certeau (1980), **Everyday Life Theory**, distinguishes between strategies-the practices of the powerful to organize space – tactics – the ways the weak resist or navigate within the system. During the Japanese occupation, the Imperial Army employed strategies of control: reopening the Manila-Legazpi railway, issuing “Mickey Mouse money”,

conscripting forced labor for tunnels and roads, and promoting propaganda like “Asia for the Asiatic.” In response, Camaliguenos developed tactics of survival and micro-resistance: fleeing to upland barrios, substituting rice with camote and wild crops, bartering instead of using devalued currency, and maintaining cultural practices like courtship and religious activities despite restrictions. These everyday acts, though subtle, were forms of agency. This theory allows the study to move beyond battles and dates, focusing on how ordinary people negotiated power in their daily lives.

Using Caruth’s (1996) **Trauma Theory**, this study reads survivor silence and late narratives not as missing data, but as evidence of trauma’s structure. The 80-year latency before Camalig residents documented their experiences reflects trauma’s belated nature, while the emotional response to the songs *Sakura* illustrates how traumatic memory returns through sensory triggers rather than linear recall. The narratives gathered from Camalig survivors reveal not only happened during the Japanese occupation, but how trauma structures memory itself. Using Cathy Caruth’s (1996) Trauma Theory, the 80-year delay in documenting these experiences reflects what Caruth call “latency” – trauma is not fully experience at the moment of violence, but returns belatedly when it can finally be witnessed. Participants of this study, now in their late 80s and 90s, described daily survivals through camote diets and flights to upland barrios with relative clarity, yet the most violent episodes reman marked by silence. This aligns with Caruth’s notion of “unclaimed experience”: the event is known to have occurred but resist assimilation into narrative. One third-generation testimony from Bicol echoes this dynamic- *“When you see your mother and father being killed in front of your eyes, this is something they don’t tell you about”* suggesting that the deepest wounds are often the least spoken.

Historical Preservation Theory is a research framework focused on the safeguarding of historical sites and artifacts. This framework can effectively inform initiatives for the conservation and promotion of the Japanese Tunnel and other historical vestiges in Camalig. Beyond the theoretical framework, effective community engagement plays a crucial role in preservation. Local stakeholders should be involved in decision-making to ensure that efforts align with community values and needs. Educational initiatives can also enhance appreciation for local history, fostering a sense of identity and ownership among residents. Integrating technology, such as virtual tours and interactive displays, can attract broader audiences and highlight the significance of sites like the Japanese Tunnel. Collaboration with academic institutions further strengthens preservation activities by providing research support and expertise. Sustainable tourism practices should be encouraged to balance economic benefits with the protection of site integrity.

By applying these theoretical frameworks and perspectives, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Japanese historical traces in Camalig, Albay, and their significance within the town’s historical narrative.

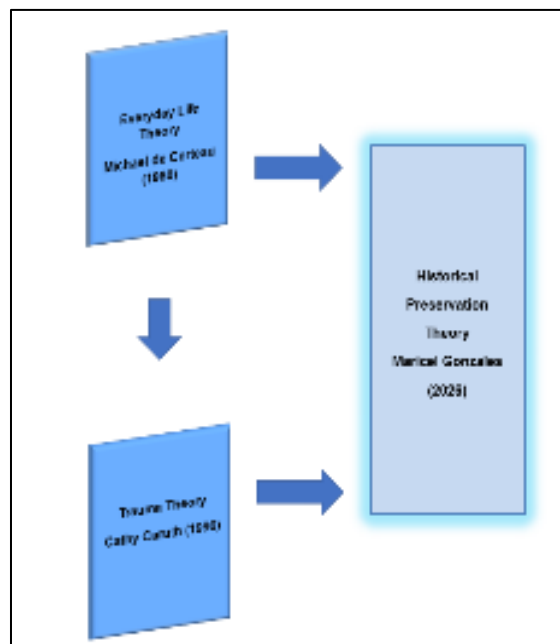


Figure 1 Theoretical Paradigm

2.1. Conceptual Framework

This study employs an Input-Process-Output (IPO) conceptual paradigm to examine the Japanese occupation of Camalig, Albay from 1941 to 1945. The Input phase identifies the core research focus, which includes the historical events leading to the occupation, its socio-cultural, economic, and political impacts on the community, the surviving wartime footprints within the locality, and the available documentary sources. These elements establish the scope and basis for data collection.

The Process phase outlines the methodological procedures of the study. It begins with pre-fieldwork and ethical preparation, such as obtaining necessary approvals and selecting participants. Data gathering follows through oral history interviews, documentary analysis, field observations, and site mapping. To ensure credibility and completeness, the data are subjected to triangulation and systematic analysis before the preparation of the final output.

The Output of the study is the development of an informational material entitled "*Lagdos kan Gera sa Camalig, Albay kan Ikaduwang Gera Mundial*". This output consolidates the findings from both oral and documentary sources to preserve local historical memory and provide an accessible reference on the wartime experience in Camalig. The IPO framework thus illustrates the logical progression from problem identification to empirical investigation and finally to the creation of a preservation-oriented output.

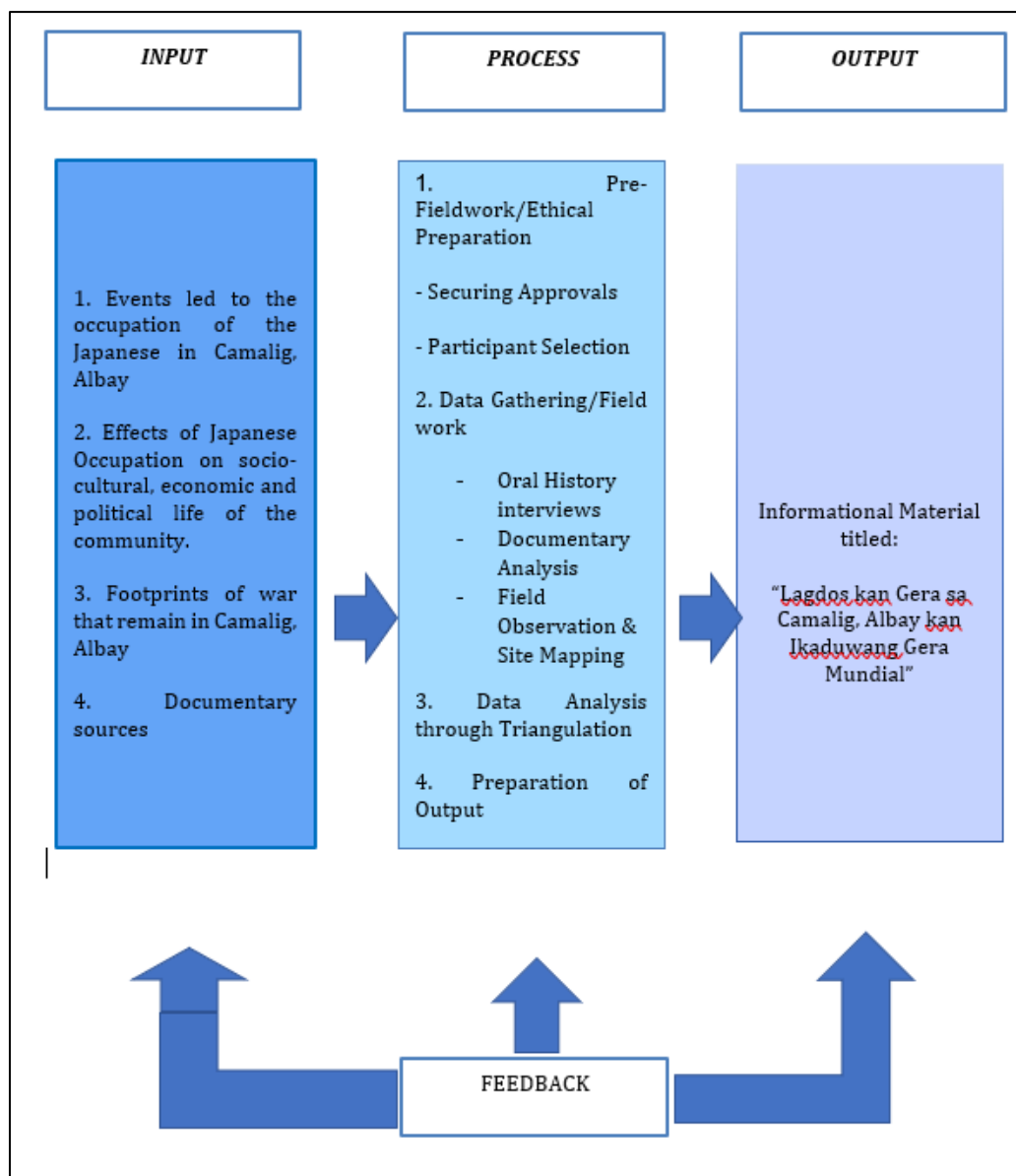


Figure 2 Conceptual Paradigm

2.1.1. *Statement of the Problem*

This study seeks to address the gap in historical documentation by systematically recovering and analyzing the historical traces of the Japanese Period in Camalig, Albay.

- What events led to the occupation of the Japanese in Camalig, Albay?
- How did the Japanese occupation affect socio-cultural, economic and political life of the community?
- What are the footprints of the war that remain in Camalig, Albay?
- What informational material can be developed based on the finding of the study?

2.1.2. *Assumptions*

The studies on Footprints of War: Uncovering Camalig, Albay during the Japanese Occupation, 1941-1945, likely assume that:

- There is a significant reason why there is an event led to the occupation of Camalig, Albay by the Japanese troops.
- Historical significance wherein the Japanese occupation had a notable impact on Camalig's socio-cultural, economic, and political life of the community.
- There are also footprints of the war that remain in Camalig, Albay with the untold stories of the survivors. These events are not merely memories but are an integral part of the area's history. Also, the historical implication from various people narrating their experience of the Japanese occupation.
- Through this research, a contextualized base book in teaching local history can be made.

These assumptions guide research on the topic, focusing on gathering oral histories, preserving artifacts, and documenting recovered information that will help strengthen communities' awareness on historical heritage.

2.2. **Scope and Delimitation**

This study is limited to documenting and analyzing the oral histories of the Japanese occupation in Camalig, Albay from 1941 to 1945, with the purpose of producing an informational material titled "*Lagdus kan Gyera sa Camalig, Albay kan Ikaduwang Gera Mundial*". The geographic scope covers the municipality of Camalig, Albay, focusing on the experiences, memories, and historical traces related to the occupation period. The study involves 10 informants selected based on age, capability to recall past events, integrity, and health condition. These include five (5) Filipino guerrilla survivors of WWII, three (3) secondary narrators who are sons of deceased guerrillas, and two (2) personnel from the Municipal Tourism Office of Camalig, Albay. The study is delimited to oral testimonies, field observations, and available documentary sources related to the 1941-1945 period, and does not cover other municipalities or events outside this timeframe to ensure depth, authenticity, and alignment with the research objective.

2.3. **Significance of the Study**

The following would profit from the study:

- **Camalignon.** The study holds the potential to provide the people of Camalig, Albay with a better understanding of how the Japanese occupations has influence the present state of their society. This will also serve as a reminder for present generations who make have unintentionally overlooked or forgotten this historical events amidst the numerous environmental changes that have taken place over time.
- **Students.** Since the study aims to recovered traces of Japanese period in Camalig, Albay, students will enhance their knowledge and appreciation of the local history that has directly impacted their lives. They will have the opportunity to learn new aspects and gain fresh knowledge and insights into the past.
- **Teacher.** The study's finding could be used to supplement educational materials about the Japanese occupation of Camalig, Albay. Teaching materials will be used to teach local history that will assist them in creating a productive learning environment that will develop a sense of nationalism and patriotism.
- **Local Government Unit.** The outcome of the study will offer valuable documentary records of the Japanese occupation, specifically to LGU's and Barangay officials of Camalig, Albay. These records will serve as important historical documentation that can be utilized for various purposes such as educational resources, preservation of local heritage and informing decision-making process.

- **Tourism Department.** The informational material can provide authentic content for tour guides and marketing. It also creates new heritage tourism product from forgotten sites to tourist attractions.
- **Researcher.** The researcher itself gets to create primary sources. His/her will develop research skills and empathy through listening deeply, building trust and interpreting carefully. These skills make her a better historian, teacher, or writer than just crunching numbers. This kind of study isn't just data collection. Its *pakikipagkapwa* – shared humanity. You preserve a town's soul, honor elders, and prove that history isn't only about generals and dates. It's about how Camalig farmer kept his family alive on *camote* while tunnels were dug over his head.

2.4. Definition of Terms

For clarification and better understanding of the study, significant terms were operationally defined as used in the study:

- **Camalig, Albay.** Is a historic municipality in the province of Albay, Philippines, located at the southern foot of Mayon Volcano. Known as the "Heritage Town of Albay," it offers a blend of natural attractions, cultural landmarks, and delicious local cuisine.
- **Footprints.** The lasting marks, traces, and impacts that war leaves behind on a place and its people.
- **Historical Significance.** The importance or impact of an event, person, or development in shaping history. Rather than being a fixed or permanent quality, it is an assessment that can change over time depending on perspective and context. Historians and societies determine historical significance by evaluating how elements from the past contribute to our understanding of societies, influence future events, and reflect the values of a given time period.
- **Historical Traces/Footprints.** Refer to the remaining physical and cultural evidence of the Japanese occupation in Camalig, Albay. This includes structures like the Japanese Tunnel, artifacts, landmarks, and sites identified through field observation, site mapping, and informant identification during the data gathering phase.
- **Informant.** An individual with specialized, first-hand knowledge about a topic, a community, or a culture being studied. Informants provide valuable, in-depth insight from an insider's perspective, which researchers use to inform and enrich their findings. This term is most frequently used in qualitative research, especially in disciplines like anthropology and applied health research.

2.5. Review of Related Literature and Studies

This literature survey provides the present work the needed perception and meaningful background on the nature of the problem which, then serve as guides in the conduct and discussion of the result of study. Likewise, the number of studies and theories were reviewed and contributed to great extent in conceptualizing this study. Further, the varied topics serve as instrumental to the researcher's formulation of the theoretical framework, questionnaires and useful reference in the analysis and interpretation section of the study.

2.5.1. Japanese Occupation

A 2015 thesis from the University of Saint Anthony documented how the liberation period and WWII aftermath shaped life in Ligao, Albay. Using descriptive-qualitative methods and interviews with eyewitnesses, the study reconstructed events between 1944-1945 across political, social, economic, cultural, and educational dimensions. The research centered on residents' firsthand accounts to capture how the town experienced the shift from Japanese occupation to American liberation.

Key findings showed that Ligao was pulled into the wider Pacific War when Allied landings in Legazpi forced Japanese troops to withdraw to Mt. Kitwinan in Camalig. In the immediate postwar period, Ligaoños focused on economic survival amid food scarcity and inflation, while still engaging in limited social activities. Japanese cultural programs had minimal impact due to the brief occupation and harsh enforcement, though some local customs and religious practices continued with tolerance. Schools operated despite poor attendance, and residents actively resisted subjugation while rebuilding.

For application, the study proposed including Ligao's wartime history in the K-12 Araling Panlipunan curriculum and distributing the developed reference guide to local schools. It also called for follow-up studies on prominent local figures, comparative analysis of colonial rule in Ligao, and the town's legendary origins. *Keywords: Ligao, Albay, WWII*

liberation, local history, oral testimonies, postwar recovery, Japanese occupation, Araling Panlipunan. Mendoza, D.V. (2015).

Studies on the Japanese occupation in Bicol provide useful frameworks for local history research. Forcadilla (2024) examined the historical events in Catabangan Proper, Ragay, Camarines Sur from 1942 to 1945, focusing on the background, memoirs, and implications of the occupation to create instructional material for teaching local history. The study employed a descriptive-qualitative method and relied on informants with direct knowledge of the events. Similarly, Lem (2023) analyzed the economic impact of the Japanese occupation on the Philippines, noting that it derailed national development and altered trade and production patterns during World War II. Both works serve as references for formulating the theoretical framework, questionnaires, and analysis of this study on Camalig, Albay.

Research on heritage conservation in Camalig, Albay provides relevant insights for studies on cultural preservation. (Catura (2023) study on ancestral houses in Camalig, Albay investigated structural preservation and cultural heritage retention, emphasizing their role as repositories of historical and cultural value. Using a qualitative-descriptive design, the study gathered data through literature reviews, ocular visits, and expert interviews. Findings showed that while some houses remain well-maintained and open to tourists, others face structural deterioration and have been converted for commercial use. Preservation strategies identified included adaptive reuse and maintaining original architectural features, though challenges such as limited funding and the need for sustainable practices persist. The study concluded that effective conservation requires a collaborative approach among government agencies, local communities, and heritage organizations, and recommended comprehensive guidelines, legislative support, and increased public awareness to safeguard Camalig's architectural heritage for future generations.

Local studies on the Japanese occupation highlight the importance of documenting undocumented wartime experiences. The period of Japanese occupation from 1941 to 1945 is often described as the shortest but most remembered colonial era in Philippine history. Despite this, many elderly Filipinos in Albay hold untold accounts of survival and daily life that remain unrecorded due to limited opportunities for documentation. A study of De Leon (2014) on Daraga, Albay addressed this gap by recording the oral histories of 18 surviving residents who lived through the occupation. The research focused on everyday life aspects such as shelter, food, clothing, education, transportation, communication, work, courtship, marriage, religious activities, and relations with fellow Filipinos, guerrillas, and Japanese forces. Using a descriptive-analytical method supplemented by oral history, the study emphasized how preserving these personal wartime narratives contributes to the enrichment and preservation of local history. This approach is relevant to the current study on Camalig, Albay, as it demonstrates the value of oral testimony in reconstructing localized wartime experiences.

Governance and organizational structure are key factors in local development planning. In the context of Camalig, Albay, an operational framework was proposed to guide how the municipal government manages its divisions and decision-making processes. This framework functions as both a philosophy and a decision-making model, designed to set clear expectations, guide operations, and align efforts toward municipal goals. The main objective is to ensure that local government actions consistently support the pursuit of municipal effectiveness and efficiency. Such a framework is relevant to this study as it underscores the role of structured governance in sustaining cultural and historical preservation initiatives within the municipality. Magloff (2018).

Research on cultural heritage in Albay extends beyond wartime narratives to include the preservation and documentation of historical landmarks. A 2015 study on Legazpi City focused on identifying, mapping, and narrating local historical sites to support history instruction at the elementary level. Using secondary sources, the study documented eight existing monuments that symbolize key events and figures in Legazpi's history, such as the Battle of Legazpi Pylon, Jose Ignacio Paua Monument, and the Legazpi-Albay Gulf Landing. These landmarks serve as tangible reminders of the city's historical roots and colonial resistance, helping residents understand their cultural identity and heritage. The research also developed a session plan for integrating these narratives into Grade 3 history lessons, showing how local history can be made accessible to younger learners. This approach is relevant to the current study on Camalig, Albay, as it highlights the importance of documenting physical and cultural heritage to strengthen local historical consciousness. Ayo (2015).

Studies on Japanese migration to the Philippines offer context for pre-war local history. A 2010 study applied an intergenerational approach to the Japanese immigrant community in Baguio and La Trinidad, Benguet, covering the period from the American colonial era to the outbreak of the Pacific War. It analyzed migration not only as a demographic phenomenon but within broader national and global socioeconomic and political processes. The findings show how local communities were shaped by international forces. Keywords: Japanese migration, Baguio, Benguet, intergenerational history, migration studies. Penas (2010).

Localized research on wartime collaboration reveals how economic interests influenced social relations during the Japanese occupation. A 2023 study on Sagay, Negros Occidental examined the role of rural landed elites who collaborated with Japanese forces to protect sugar interests. It also analyzed postwar treason trials, which disproportionately acquitted wealthy collaborators while convicting poorer peasants. The study concluded that wartime collaboration deepened existing social divisions in the region. Keywords: wartime collaboration, rural elites, Negros Occidental, postwar trials, social inequality. Ara (2023).

Abogado, E. A. (2020). Oral history studies on World War II in Albay highlight the role of personal narratives in preserving collective memory. A 2020 study documented the experiences of Daragueneños aged 85-95 during the occupation. Key themes included flights to barrios to avoid patrols, replacement of rice with camote and banana cores, forced singing of Sakura in schools, and changes in courtship practices. The research noted that trauma persisted through sensory memory, where songs and places continued to trigger fear decades later. It recommended urgent documentation since the last generation with direct experience is rapidly disappearing. Keywords: Daraga Albay, oral history, World War II, wartime memory, trauma, sensory memory, Japanese occupation.

Regional studies on the Japanese occupation in Bicol emphasize the role of geography in shaping resistance and control. A 1996 book chapter examined the Japanese landing in Legazpi on December 12, 1941, and the subsequent occupation of the region. Drawing from military records, newspapers, and elite memoirs, the study described patterns of collaboration, resistance, and propaganda efforts such as the "Asia for the Asiatic" campaign. The analysis highlighted that Bicol's terrain, with Mount Mayon as a refuge and Legazpi as a port, made the area strategically important but hard to control. This resulted in prolonged guerrilla warfare and significant civilian hardship. Keywords: Bicol, Legazpi, Japanese occupation, guerrilla warfare, collaboration, resistance, propaganda, regional history. Realubit (1996).

Research on war heritage in Albay explores how Japanese-built fortifications function as sites of memory and trauma. A 2021 study surveyed Japanese-constructed tunnels and defensive lines in the province, framing them as lieux de mémoire or sites of memory. Through site visits and archival research, the study documented six tunnels, including the Quituinan tunnel in Camalig, which was built using forced Filipino labor. These locations were analyzed as "dark heritage", where violence and memory intersect. The study noted that recent tourism developments, such as the 2024 opening of the Quituinan tunnel, reflect a shift from suppression toward confronting historical trauma. It cautioned that commercialization should not occur without consultation with survivors and their communities. Keywords: Albay, Quituinan tunnel, dark heritage, Japanese occupation, war tourism, lieux de mémoire, trauma, Camalig Dychanco (2021).

Oral history research on WWII in the Philippines highlights gaps in how survivor testimony is collected and interpreted. A 2021 essay identified three main issues: the mismatch between the "memory boom" and the silence of many victims, competing American, Japanese, and Filipino narratives, and an overreliance on military-centered accounts. Using Caruth's trauma theory, the study argued that fragmented and delayed recall in testimonies should be treated as meaningful data, not as missing information. It recommended starting community-based oral history projects before 2030 to capture the remaining firsthand accounts. Keywords: WWII oral history, trauma theory, survivor testimony, memory studies, Philippines, methodology. Jose (2021).

Studies on cultural policy during the Japanese occupation show how media was used to promote the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. A 2017 analysis examined films, radio programs, and songs such as "Sakura," along with slogans like "Philippines for the Filipinos," as tools for cultural assimilation. The research found that Filipinos often practiced "mimicry"—appearing to comply while subtly resisting the intended message. The study concluded that these policies produced hybrid cultural forms where Japanese symbols became linked to both fear and quiet defiance. Keywords: Japanese propaganda, Philippines, cultural assimilation, Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, mimicry, cultural resistance McCoy (2017).

Gender-focused research on WWII in Bicol recovers women's experiences that are often left out of military histories. A 2019 dissertation used life-history interviews with 30 survivors to document how women managed food shortages, child protection, kinship networks, and negotiations with Japanese and guerrilla forces. Drawing on de Certeau's idea of "making do," the study framed these daily actions as forms of everyday resistance. It also found that women's trauma was often tied to witnessing violence against family members, which contributed to intergenerational silence. Keywords: Bicol, women's history, WWII, oral history, trauma, gender studies, everyday resistance. Reyes (2019).

Comparative memory studies explain why WWII remains less visible in Philippine public memory compared to other regions. A 2016 article applied Caruth and Nora's theories to argue that the delayed and fragmented nature of trauma,

along with postwar nation-building, led to selective forgetting. Filipino narratives emphasized survival and victimhood over heroism. Using oral accounts from Bataan and Bicol, the study showed how sensory cues—sounds, smells, songs—triggered involuntary recall. It concluded that local memorials play a bigger role in working through trauma than state-level monuments. Keywords: collective memory, WWII Philippines, trauma studies, selective forgetting, sensory memory, local

Santiago, L.P.R. (2017). Research on education under the Japanese occupation explores how schools were used for cultural control and how students responded. A 2017 article investigated policies aimed at “Nipponization”, including Nihongo instruction, the banning of English, teaching of Sakura, and a shift toward vocational training. Drawing on teacher memoirs and student interviews, the study found that schools became hybrid spaces—used for propaganda but also for the covert preservation of Filipino identity. It concluded that forced cultural practices left lasting trauma, with songs like Sakura becoming triggers of fear for surviving students. Keywords: Japanese occupation, education, Nipponization, cultural assimilation, trauma, Philippines, oral history, WWII.

Geospatial research on civilian displacement during WWII examines how populations responded to occupation pressures. A 2018 GIS-based study mapped evacuation routes from lowland towns to upland areas in Southern Luzon between 1942-1945. Using military records and 40 interviews, the study identified key push factors: Japanese patrols, food requisition, and active combat. It found that upland barrios functioned as tactical spaces where kinship networks provided food and shelter. The analysis quantified that 60-80% of towns experienced evacuation, framing “flight to the barrios” as a rational survival strategy rather than panic-driven movement. Keywords: WWII evacuation, Southern Luzon, GIS mapping, civilian displacement, survival strategies, kinship networks, Japanese occupation (Tan, 2018).

Zialcita, F.N. (2022). Studies on dark tourism and memory explore how wartime sites are reinterpreted for heritage and economic purposes. A 2022 study applied Bhabha’s Third Space theory to analyze WWII tunnels in Corregidor, Baguio, and Albay. Fieldwork showed that sites built with forced labor are being rebranded as heritage attractions. The research argued that tourism generates hybrid meanings, where tunnels serve simultaneously as memorials, economic assets, and contested spaces of memory. It cautioned that without survivor input, such tourism risks the banalization of trauma, though ethical management can support historical processing.

Keywords: dark tourism, WWII tunnels, Albay, Corregidor, Bhabha’s Third Space, contested memory, heritage tourism, trauma’

Casal, G.S. (2019). Archaeological research on conflict landscapes in Bicol documents physical evidence of Japanese military presence. A 2019 report recorded 14 defensive positions, including tunnels, pillboxes, and trenches. Through GPS mapping and excavation at Quitunan Hill, the study confirmed construction using forced labor, supported by tool marks and oral testimony. The work framed these sites as “conflict landscapes”, where material remains provide evidence not found in written records, contributing to a more grounded understanding of wartime occupation. Keywords: conflict archaeology, Quitunan Hill, Bicol, Japanese occupation, forced labor, defensive positions, material evidence, WWII.

Research on intergenerational memory in Bicol examines how WWII experiences are transmitted across families. A 2023 study used 3-generation family interviews to trace the passage of war memory from survivors to grandchildren. It found that direct trauma narratives are uncommon. Instead, memory was passed through sensory cues like Sakura, place-based stories tied to tunnels and mountains, and silences or warnings such as “Never forget.” Drawing on Halbwachs and Caruth, the study argued that post-memory in Bicol is fragmented, embodied, and spatial. This supports the need to document lieux de mémoire before the remaining survivors pass away. Keywords: post-memory, Bicol, intergenerational trauma, WWII, lieux de mémoire, oral history, collective memory, sensory memory. Torres (2023).

Dela Cruz, R. (2025). Military geography studies of WWII in the Philippines analyze how terrain was used for defensive strategy. A 2025 study of Bamban’s Rock Mountain tunnels found that Japanese forces used upland terrain for surveillance and concealment to counter Allied firepower. The high slopes of Rotary Hills, Bamban were built into volcanic rock to create defensive positions overlooking Clark Field and major highways. The research showed how Japanese forces weaponized elevation and concealment to control lowland corridors and slow Allied advances. This pattern mirrors the use of Quitunan Hill in Camalig, where the peak was converted into a network of 28 tunnels. Keywords: Bamban, Rotary Hills, Quitunan Hill, Camalig, military geography, WWII tunnels, defensive strategy, Japanese occupation, Luzon.

2.6. Synthesis of the State-of-the-Art

All the foregoing literature, articles and studies review, local and foreign, were of the great help in amplifying and pointing out salient findings in terms of acquisition of additional knowledge which were found worthwhile and valuable to the present study. This information of insights gathered from the previous writings and studies made a noteworthy difference.

Related literature reveals extensive documentation of the Japanese occupation in Legazpi (Obias, 2016) and Daraga (Abogado, 2020), as well as regional guerilla operations (Mallari, 2018) and tunnel system (Fychanco, 2021; Casal, 2019). These studies employ oral history (Abogado, 2020; Reyes, 2019), economic analysis (Aguilar, 2020), and heritage frameworks (Zialcita, 2022) to explain survival tactics and memory. However, no study has specifically examined Camalig, Albay using the combined lenses of Certeau's Everyday Life Theory, and Caruth's Trauma Theory. These research addresses that gap by documenting the 'footprints of war' in Camalig through oral narratives, physical sites, and cultural artifacts.

The studies of foreign and local settings who focused on the effects of Japanese Colonization in their hometown were contributed by Forcadilla (2024), Lem Jasper (2023), Cantura (2023), De Leon (2014), Magloff (2018), Whilst (2015), Gonzales (2019), A Griggs (2020) and Ara (2023)

The aforementioned research works provided the investigator with sample data which would aid in the further analysis of the present data collected. They contributed largely in the Structuring of the present study because they generate qualitative data with significant bearings to the present study. However, they differed on the subjects, locale of the study, statistical tools, and on the main focus of the research work. Notably, all previous search showed that each was different from each other. Yet, there is no study yet conducted on the footprints of Japanese Period in Camalig, Albay.

2.7. Research Gap

The previous conducted studies bear semblance to the present study in the sense that they touch on some of the importance aspects that were considered in the present study. It could be noted that all the related studies were on Preservation of Natural and Cultural Heritage in Camalig, Albay. While the similarities and differences existed between the previous studies and the present, it was evident that no study yet has been made on recovering traces of Japanese Period in Camalig, Albay. Existing studies reveal that Camalig was the site of the Japanese Army last stand in Albay, a history that is now largely represented by the tourist facing tunnels in Qituinan Hill. This is the gap being addressed by the present study.

3. Research design and methodology

A robust and integrated methodology combining oral history, archival research, and archaeological investigation is necessary. This interdisciplinary approach, often used in local historical studies, will allow for a comprehensive understanding that goes beyond the limited existing narratives.

3.1. Research Design

This study employs a qualitative historical research design. This approach is appropriate for reconstructing local experiences of the occupation that are not fully captured in official records.

The design integrates three methods: oral history interviews, archival research, and material culture analysis. Together, these sources allow for the construction of a detailed, context-rich narrative of Camalig during 1941–1945. Unlike quantitative designs that measure frequency or scale, this qualitative approach prioritizes lived experience, meaning, and interpretation. The primary goal is to document “untold stories” — such as how civilians navigated survival, resistance, and displacement in the barrios — rather than to produce numerical data. Data gathered through oral history are inherently personal and subjective, reflecting individual memory and perspective. To address this, the study draws on the frameworks of oral history, phenomenology, and narrative inquiry. Oral history preserves firsthand accounts, phenomenology examines how participants experienced and made sense of the occupation, and narrative inquiry organizes these accounts into coherent historical accounts. This combination ensures that the study captures both factual events and the emotional, social dimensions of wartime life in Camalig.

3.2. Key Informants of the Study

The researcher selected **10 key informants** from different barangays of Camalig, Albay. The participants included five war survivors; three descendants of survivors and two officials from the Municipal Tourism and Cultural Heritage Office.

Criteria in the selection of informants are as follows: had direct experience, clear memory, and willingness to share their accounts, inherited family narratives and preserved oral histories, provided institutional knowledge on local heritage and historical sites and also in good health condition and with credibility.

Table 1 Key Informants

No.	NAME	AGE	CLASSIFICATION
1	Benites Moras Mallanta	89	Survivor
2	Isabelita M. Napay	87	Survivor
3	Eugenio Navales	85	Survivor
4	Puredeliza Natuel	90	Survivor
5	Clara Pacheco	96	Survivor
6	Salvador Nuylan	70	Descendant
7	John Paul Marbella	35	Tourism
8	Jed Villanueva	45	Tourism
9	Celso N. Moral	62	Descendant
10	Milliard Moyo	46	Descendant

3.3. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations included protecting identity of informants who participated in the interview. Participants informed of the nature and purpose of research by an information sheet attached to interview consent forms. The information sheet outlines the consent process, classified that participation was voluntary, and will includes the researcher contacts details. Within the principle of human dignity, the researcher upheld participant's autonomy by fully disclosing all relevant study details and the participants will inform of their right to decline or withdraw at any time without penalty. Beneficence referred to acting in such a way to benefit others white promoting their welfare and safety. The participants informed that they have the right to freedom from harm and discomfort and the rights to protection from exploitation. The researcher analyzed potential risk and benefits to research participants. This will appear in the written informed consent document that will be use in the study.

3.4. Data Gathering Tools

This study used three data-gathering methods to collect rich and diverse evidence. Oral history interviews captured and analyzed the personal recollections of individuals who experienced or were affected by the occupation. Archival research located, organized, and analyzed written and visual records related to the period. Archaeological investigation documented and systematically examined physical remains, particularly the tunnels of Quituinan Hill and Hoyop-hoyopan Cave. Data from these sources were cross-referenced to ensure validity and provide historical context.

3.4.1. Questionnaire

The questionnaire is designed for oral history interviews with elderly residents. It is structured to be open-ended, allowing for detailed narratives, while also targeting specific themes related to the war's impact on the local community. and effectiveness. Once finalized, the questionnaire is ready for use in the research.

- **Validation of the Questionnaire.** Validation of questionnaire is done by researcher's classmates in research subjects who are also history major and where 5 copies are produced subject to questionnaires' dry run. The questionnaire subjected to dry run using the following ratings: 5 - excellent, 4 - very good, 3 - good, 2 - fair and 1 - poor. This criterion which determined the time requirement to finish accomplishing the questionnaire has the following adjectival rating: too long, long, just enough, and short.
- **Administration and Retrieval of the Questionnaire.** Permit to conduct the study is obtained from the Local Government Unit of Camalig, Albay. The oral interview will be done personally by the researcher.

3.4.2. *Library Technique*

This technique is done during the review of related literature and studies. Related studies will cull from the different libraries in the Bicol Region.

3.4.3. *Interview*

The interview technique is view as the interaction between two individuals where one individual's goal is to acquire knowledgeable response to specific questions from a person with knowledge. Before the interview, the researcher does the research about the study, select informants, establish rapport, set expectations, obtain consent, prepare equipment and choose a comfortable space. Then, during the interview, the researcher started the introduction, simple question to an open-ended question, practice active listening, maintain rapport and be sensitive, avoid conversational affirmation, used visual prompts and manage time. After the interview, the researcher conducted a follow-up, secure the release form, back up the recording, not to forget the word thank you and offer to share the output.

4. **Footprints of war: uncovering camalig during japanese occupation, 1941-1945**

This chapter presents the findings obtained from the data collection and analysis described in the previous chapters. The results are systematically organized according to the research objectives and questions outlined earlier.

4.1. **Events that Led to the Occupation of the Japanese in Camalig, Albay**

The Japanese occupation of Camalig, Albay in December 1941 was linked to Japan's broader imperial expansion in Asia, which began well before World War II reached the Pacific. By the 1930s, Japan faced shortages of key resources like oil, rubber, and rice due to rapid industrialization and military buildup. This situation pushed Japan to adopt the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere policy, aiming to bring much of Asia under Japanese control.

4.2. **The Bombing of Pearl Harbor In 1941**

The Japanese occupation of Camalig, Albay in December 1941 cannot be separated from Japan's broader military campaign in the Pacific. Japan's push into Southeast Asia was driven by long-term goals of imperial expansion and resource security. By the 1930s, rapid industrialization and military buildup had created severe shortages of oil, rubber, and rice. To address this, Japan promoted the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, a policy aimed at placing much of Asia under Japanese political and economic control.



Figure 3 Bombing of Pearl Harbor in Hawaii

The attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 marked the start of open conflict between Japan and the United States in the Pacific. Early that morning, Japanese carrier-based aircraft launched a surprise strike on the U.S. naval base in Hawaii. Within 90 minutes, the assault killed over 2,400 Americans, sank or damaged 19 vessels, and destroyed nearly 200 aircraft. Japanese losses were significantly lower.

Japan viewed the U.S. Pacific Fleet as the main obstacle to its plans for expansion southward. The strike on Pearl Harbor was intended to neutralize American naval power long enough for Japanese forces to secure key resource areas in

Southeast Asia. Following the attack, Japan launched coordinated offensives across the Philippines, Malaya, Hong Kong, and other territories. Camalig, like many other towns in the Philippines, fell under Japanese control shortly after as part of this wider offensive.

4.3. The Attack of Japanese in Legazpi City

The Japanese landing at Legazpi City occurred at 5:00 a.m. on December 12, 1941, as part of Japan's broader offensive following Pearl Harbor. The operation was carried out by the Kimura Detachment, a unit under Lt. Gen. Masaharu Homma's 16th Division. Legazpi was chosen for its deep harbor, rail connection to Manila, and position at the base of Mayon Volcano, which offered natural defensive advantages. Once in control, Japanese forces used Legazpi as a base to secure Albay's rice supply and push operations north toward Camalig and other nearby towns.



Figure 4 The Arrival of Japanese Soldier in Legazpi (December 12, 1941)

4.4. Occupation of the Japanese in Camalig, Albay

After Japanese troops landed unopposed in Legazpi City on December 12, 1941, units from the 16th Division advanced inland to take control of Albay's key resources and strategic terrain. Camalig was occupied by mid-December without resistance because USAFFE forces had already withdrawn to Bataan under War Plan Orange-3, leaving the Bicol region exposed. The occupation served three military purposes for the Japanese. First, Camalig's rice fields were vital to the supply network, and the army requisitioned local harvests to feed garrisons across southern Luzon.



Figure 5 Japanese Soldier in Camalig Albay

Second, Japanese engineers fortified Quituinan Hill and used forced labor to excavate tunnels for ammunition storage and anti-aircraft positions intended to protect the Legazpi airfield from Allied bombers. Third, Hoyop-Hoyopan Cave was used as both a supply depot and natural stronghold, and it also became a hiding place for Camalig families escaping forced labor, sexual violence, and executions. Overall, the occupation was a calculated operation to exploit Camalig's agricultural output and geography, leaving physical, cultural, and personal impacts that persist in the community today.

4.5. Effects of the Japanese Occupation

The occupation of the Philippines by the Japanese forces in WWII have a permanent effect on the Filipino life when the Japanese entered Luzon and established control over the areas in Albay, altering the socio-cultural, economic and political conditions of the town.

This section examines the socio-cultural, economic and political effects of the Japanese occupation in Camalig, Albay. It drawn on historical records and oral accounts to explore the life during the war and how this legacy influences the towns today.

Socio-cultural. During Japanese occupation in Camalig, Albay on 1941-1945 affects the daily life and community practices in Camaligueneous wherein social structures were disrupted as families fled their homes to the mountains and hide from the Japanese soldiers, when men are captured, they are force to labor, and public gatherings like birthday parties and fiestas were banned under martial law. One of the informants recalled fleeing to the mountains and surviving on camote alone to escape the threat of violence. The Japanese occupation also changed cultural life of Albayanos. Japanese language and customs were taught in schools and promoted in public spaces, while traditional festivals and religious events were either halted or carried out discreetly to avoid suspicion. Mr. Nuylan, one of the informants also added that the Hoyop-hoyopan cave serves as the hideouts of the Bicolano guerillas wherein some cultural activities like dancing and reunions are gathered inside the cave. This implies that even in difficult situations, they find ways to celebrate. Other informants also added, *"Nu sadtong panawn dakul ang nang aragi agi nin mga Hapon didi sa Camalig. Kung daraga ka, pag Nakita ka ninda na magayun, iyan na su babastuson ka tas gigigbuhan ka pa nin maraot. Pag di ka nagpayag, parurusahan ka pa ninda kaiba kan simong pamilya. Kaya su iba man na mga Pilipino sadto gusto ng lumaban, palihim sindang nagataragpo sa lungib para mgplano kung pawno Sinda makabalos sa mga Hapon."* She said, (There are many Japanese guerillas roaming around in Camalig and if you are a woman, you need not to go outside because they will violate your womanhood. If you don't agree, they will punish you with your whole family. That's the reason why many Filipinos wants to fight back to Japanese, they secretly conducted meetings in that cave like Hoyop-hoyopan cave to make plan to avenged for Japanese brutality.)

Today, the wartime sites in Camalig play a key role in the town's identity and sense of pride. According to Camalig Tourism Officer Jed Villanueva, these experienced and untold stories of Camaligueneños serves as the living legacies of the past. Preserving and promoting the sites where the Japanese and Filipino guerillas has also supported local tourism, created income opportunities, and increased awareness about heritage conservation.

Economic. The Japanese occupation severely disrupted Camalig's local economy. Production was redirected to meet military and basic survival needs, and residents live under constant fear and uncertainty. As one of the informants recalled, after the bombing at Quituinan hill, many abaca plants in the foot of the mountain are destroyed and the family's lives their had fled to the mountain for survival. This led to widespread food shortages and rising inflation for local families.

Political Life of the Community. During the Japanese occupation of Camalig, 1941–1945, political authority was exercised by the military. The existing local government was dissolved, and municipal functions were placed under officials appointed by the occupation forces. This ended local self-governance and required residents to comply with occupation policies. The breakdown of civilian administration contributed to the widespread destruction and the loss of life and property throughout the town.

4.6. Footprints of War that Remains in Camalig, Albay

At the foot of **Mt. Kitwinan**, located the barangays of Tinago, Gapo, Sumlang, Ilawod, Mina, and Ligban. It holds historical significance due to its strategic role during World War II. About 81 years ago, a great battle took place in the mountain, marking a critical site in the region's wartime history. The mountain itself is characterized by a pentacle protruding over its adjoining rolling hills, offering an expansive view in all direction, which made it an ideal location for military observation. During the Japanese occupation in the Philippines, Japanese forces chose Mt. Kitwinan as an observation point due to its elevated position and the clear vantage it provided over the surroundings plains.



Figure 6 Qituinan Hill (Mount Kitwinan)

In the study of Dela Cruz, R. (2025) found that Japanese WWII tunnels on the high slopes of Rotary Hill, Bamban, were strategically built into volcanic rock to serve as defensive positions overlooking Clark Field and nearby highways. His field recon shows the tunnels, 40-60 feet deep, still had burnt petrol residue and embedded bullets, providing intense tunnel warfare between Japanese defenders and the U.S. 40th Division. The study reveals how the Japanese weaponized upland terrain and concealment to dominate lowland corridors and delayed Allied advances, a pattern consistent with Qituinan Hills use in Camalig. One key informant, named Isabelita Morales Napay (87 years old) “*Didi sa bulod na yadi nagdiretso su mga Hapon ta usad yadi sa mga nakita ninrang magayon na lugar para makaposisyon sinda laban sa mga pilipinong girilya.*” *Nakita mismo kung pawnu pahirapan nu mga Hapones su mga trabador ninda na nadakop. Pag my pinabuhat na mabugat na bagay, pagnagreklamo na di kaya, lalo daw babawasan nin usad ta ang pagtubod nu mga Hapones, naga asa kaya ngaya su iba kaya di Nakaya. Su mga taw sadto nagtarago sa mga bulod ta takot madakop nu mga Hapon*”. She said that the Japanese arrived Quitwinan hill because they saw that this mountain is a great tactical landmark against Filipino guerillas. Her parents witnessed the brutality of Japanese soldiers. If they capture a Filipino guerilla, they force it to labor like lifting heavy objects that will be use in digging the tunnels, if they complaint, the Japanese soldier removed one of them because they believed that they depend on others so the objects are not lifted. Most people flew to the mountain to hide from Japanese soldier, she added.

The utilization of Mt. Kitwinan in Camalig, Albay by Japanese forces during their occupation underscores the strategic importance of the site. By establishing it as an observation point and constructing an extensive system of underground tunnels, the Japanese capitalized on the mountain’s elevation and natural concealment. One informant name Puredeliza Guiriba Natuel, 92 years old, said, “*Yading bukid yadi tanaw kan bilog na legazpi pasiring pasorsogon, kaya napili nu mga Hapones na targetun.*” She said that this mountain views the entire Legazpi to Sorsogon so the Japanese choose this place as a target. This reveals not only military foresight employed during wartime but also highlights how the natural landscapes were adapted for tactical advantage. Other informants named Celso Natuel Moral, a niece of a local resident recalled, “*Dati kadakol didi tanum na abaka, nu pagbomba nu mga Hapones, nadeostroso sana su mga pananum.*” He said that there used to be a lot of abaca plats there before. When the Japanese bombed, all those plants were destroyed. Dela Cruz’s (2025) reveals that Japanese forces deliberately exploited upland terrain to create fortified tunnel system that dominated highways and plains, using elevation for surveillance and concealment to offset Allied firepower. Similarly, the Qituinan Hill case show that Japanese transformed Camalig’s highest peak into a network of 28 tunnels to control the Camalig-Legazpi corridor, embedding their defensive strategy directly into the landscape and leaving enduring physical footprints of occupation. Together, these studies demonstrate a consistent Japanese wartime doctrine in the Philippines. Today, these wartime structures serve as a silent witness to a turbulent chapter in local and national history. Preserving and studying such sites is essential, as they provide valuable insights into the region’s wartime experiences and contribute to a deeper understanding of the broader historical narrative.



Figure 7 Japanese Tunnel, Camalig Albay

Japanese Tunnel. The accessible section is roughly 35 meters long, featuring rehabilitated pathways and historical displays was used as a stronghold by the Japanese Imperial Army when it occupied the Philippines in the 1940's. The Japanese army constructed interconnected bunkers during World War II to protect themselves from aerial bombardment. The sites are notable for its strategic importance and for being the location where the American forces overcame Japanese resistance, signaling a turning point in Albay and in the entire Bicol Region during the war. The Quitinian Hills were an ideal base site as they offered a clear view of the sea and the land. It is also high enough to keep adversaries at bay.

In the article of Bankoff, G. (2016). He argues that trauma's belated, fragmented nature combined with post-war nationalism led to selective forgetting. Filipino narratives focus on survival and victimhood, not heroism. Japanese tunnels and defensive lines in Albay as *lieux de memoire*. Through site visits and archival research, it documents 6 tunnels built by forced Filipino labor. The study frames these sites as "*dark heritage*" – places where violence and memory intersect. (Dychanco, J. B. (2021). Another informant named Eugenio Navales, 85 years old, resident of Sitio Sogong, foot of the Quitinian mountain told us, "*Ang lugar naman ay agihan ng mga armiya ng Hapon pataas sa Kitwinan, paadun sa Japanese Tunnel. May mga ibang Hapones din na mabubuo. Sa pangaluan ng mga armiya ng Hapones uding katakin ng daga naman na pagsadiri ni Nicomedes Monzon. Nu pigbomba ng Amerikano yan sa Kitwinan saka tunnel, su ama ko nag gibu ng taguan naman. Sa sunod sunod na pagbomba ng mga Kano, nagdesayd na kami na mag ebakweyt sa Cotmon. Pakatapos ng gya nagbalik kami at didto naman Nakita sumaga lawas ng Hapones sa Kitwinan. May upat na Hapones ang linubong sa daga na pagsadiri ni Monzon. Grabe man na truma kan namatyan ng mga Pilipino sa mga panawn na yadto ta dakul man su nabiktima ng mga ibang Hapones na suldaado.*" According to Eugenio Navales, their place was the regular passageway of the Japanese Army in going up to the Quitinian mountain and Japanese tunnel. He witnessed how some Japanese communicated to people in respectful manner. The lot adjacent to their house owned by Nicomedes Monzon was the resting area. When the American bombed Quitinian and the tunnels, his father built a hiding place for their family. During the consecutive bombing in Quitinian mountain, they decided to evacuate to Cotmon. They returned to their area after the war. He witnessed that many bodies of the Japanese Army were scattered in the mountain. He added that (four) 4 Japanese army were buried in the lot owned by Monzon and the Japanese army also had many Filipino victims that led to traumatic experiences of the civilians.



Figure 8 Hoyop-hoyopan Cave, Camalig Albay

Hoyop-Hoyopan Cave, located in Barangay Cotmon, is a significant archeogonial site in that region, about 15 kilometers away from Legazpi City, easily accessible by land. The name *Hoyop-Hoyopan* comes from the local dialect, meaning “*blow-blow*”, which describes the unique sound of the wind whistling through the cave’s main entrance. The cave is renowned for the artifacts that have been unearthed within its depths, including pottery, human bones, beadwork, and other ancient relics.



Figure 9 Archeological Finds in Hoyop-hoyopan Cave

Historically, many caves across the archipelago served as a hide out of the Filipino guerilla from the brutality of Japanese soldiers. These artifacts found in Hoyop-hoyopan cave serves evidence that during WWII, most of the Bicolano’s are hiding in this place and it describes their ways of living. A 2015 thesis of Mendoza, D. V (2015) documented how the liberation period and WWII aftermath shaped life in Ligao, Albay and how those survivors of WWII become a living legacy of oral history. One of the informants named Benita Moras Mallanta, 89 years old (elder survivors of WWII) whom experienced the brutality of Japanese in the town during her youthful days explained, “*Ang lungib na yadi nagging taguan man nu mga Pilipino gerilya kaiba su mga Amerikanomg suldados.* (She said that these caves

The *Hoyop-Hoyopan Cave* played a significant role in Camalig, Albay history during the WWII. It serves as a hideout and meeting spot for local guerrillas, and possibly a shelter for locals. The cave strategic location and natural defenses made it an ideal spot for resistance activities. Aside from being a hideout and shelter, it was likely to use for storing arms and ammunition, treating wound guerillas and providing a safe haven for locals seeking refuge.

In the study of Kerkvliet, B. J. (2015) He found out that in Central Luzon, peasants dug foxholes and used natural caves to hide rice, livestock, and teenage sons from Japanese conscription. Cave hiding was a tactic (de Cereau) to subvert rice quotas. Families lived in caves for months during: zoning” operations, surviving on camote and rainwater. Another informant named Salvador Nuylan, a tour guide and a knowledgeable about the history of Hoyop-hoyopan cave, son of Filipino guerillas during WWII namely Petronilo N. Nuylan and Sardonica N. Nuylan, “*Ang mga gurang ko ay usad sa mga*

girilyas sadtong panawn, kayba sya nin mga Americano at girilya sa lungib na yadi ta grabe ka mga bayolente nu mga HApon sadtong panawn. Grabeng pagtios ang namatian namun ta kaiba iba kami ninda mama at papa did isa lungib na yadi. Yading lungib man pig shootingan nin artista na si Ramon Revilla Sr. Su pamagat nu pelikula ay Lumaban Ka Satanas nu year 1983. Makita mo did isa pelikula su natural na itsura nu lungib. Nguana solar lights sana gamit namun pag naga tour guide para ma mintinar kan natural na itsura kan lungib. Tas bawal pagkaputan ang mga stalagnites. Pigagibu din yadi ibakwaran pag may maraot na panawn.” He said that his parents is one of the Filipino Guerillas who fought in World War II. The Guerillas together with the American forces stayed in the cave because the Japanese adopted more violent measures to stamp out their enemies, even by brutal method. The most dreaded among these were the surprised sakyadas and “zoning” raids. This cave also is a place where the movies are filmed titled “Lumaban ka Satanas” by Ramon Revilla Sr on 1983. In this movie, you will witness the natural looks of the caves. He also added that the cave today maintains his natural remnants, only solar lights is used to see the beautiful views and also tourist are not allowed to touch the stone inside the cave. According to him, nowadays, the cave became the evacuation center of the residents during typhon but they are not allowed to cooked foods inside the cave. Other survivor guerilla name Clara Pacheco, 93 years old said that, *“Imbes na bugas kan kaunon namun sadtong panawn, camote na sna baga ta kahirap san pamuhay muhay ta magaparatago ka sana ta natakot ka sa mga Hapones. Maski inumon di ka basta basta makasagob ta tibad baga masabat mo dyan su mga suldados, marape ka pa.”* She explained that instead of rice as their food during the time, it was just camote because life was so hard while they’re hiding and afraid of the Japanese. They couldn’t even just go get water because you might encounter the soldier there, and you’d get raped.

The experiences of Bicolanos who stayed in Hoyop-Hoyopan Cave during WWII reveal a complex interplay of *strategies of survival* (de Certeau, 1980/1984), and *traumatic memory formation* (Caruth, 1996). Located in Camalig, Albay, this natural cave system became a refuge for civilians fleeing Japanese patrols and forced labor conscription.

Moyo’s House 1 and 2, stands as a silent witness to the waves of history that swept through Camalig, Albay. Although the property dates back to earlier in 1900, it was fully constructed in 1932 under the ownership of Barbara Nieves Moyo, a member of one of the prominent Spanish-influenced families of the town. The house was later passed on to her son, Teodorero Moyo, continuing the family’s legacy. Following Teodors’s passing, his wife, Melva Grageda Moyo, became the caretaker, ensuring the preservation of this treasured home.



Figure 10 Moyo’s House, Camalig Albay

The house number 2 remains under the care of Jamie Moyo, one of Heron Moyo’s sons, who continues to preserve its historical significance. Throughout its existence, Moyo House 2 has survived many turbulent times, including the Japanese occupation during World War II. According to its current care taker, the house served an important role during the Japanese period, being used by high-ranking Japanese officials, including the infamous General Tomoyuki Yamashita, before the arrival of American forces.

Throughout its existence, Moyo House 1 and 2 served purposes beyond being a family residence. In the study of Catura (2023), investigates the structural preservation and cultural heritage retention of ancestral houses in Camalig, Albay, highlighting their significance as repositories of cultural and historical value. The research identifies preservation

strategies, assesses the current state of notable ancestral houses, and evaluates the efficacy of cultural heritage retention initiatives. Findings indicate that while some structures are well-maintained and accessible to tourists, others suffer from structural deterioration and have been repurposed for commercial use. Preservation efforts include adaptive reuse and the maintenance of original architectural features, yet face challenges such as limited funding and the need for sustainable practices. Catura (2023) investigates the structural preservation and cultural heritage retention of ancestral houses in Camalig, Albay, highlighting their significance as repositories of cultural and historical value. Milliard Moyo, a Municipal Councilor one of the key informants said, “Nu panawn nu mga Espanyol, naging istaran yading balay kina kwartel man nu mga Hapon na aralangkaw ang ranggo. Kaya piga preserv yadi namun sagkud wana” (During the Spanish period, it was used as a shelter, and during Japanese invasion of Camalig in World War II, it

5. Proposed informational materials

As part of the efforts raise awareness and appreciation of the Japanese historical sites and traces of World War II in Camalig, Albay, this thesis proposes the development of informational materials: a printed publication titled “Lagdos kan Gera sa Camalig, Albay kan Ikaduwang Gera Mundial.” These materials aim to highlight the historical and environmental assets of the town, ranging from its iconic caves, old houses and landscape to its deeply rooted experienced of the natives during Japanese period (1941-1945).

By documenting and presenting these elements in accessible formats, the proposed outputs seek to inform, educate, and inspire both residents and visitors, fostering a deeper understanding of Camalig’s unique experience during World War II. Through this initiative, the project also aspires to contribute to local heritage conservation efforts, and strengthen community pride and cultural continuity.

5.1. Lagdos kan Gera sa Camalig, Albay kan Ikaduwang Gera Mundial

As part of the efforts to raise awareness and appreciation of the rich Japanese historical sites of the municipality of Camalig, Albay, this thesis proposes the development of complementary material: a printed publication title “Lagdos kan Gera sa Camalig, Albay kan Ikaduwang Gera Mundial”. This material aims to highlight the historical environmental assets of town ranging from its iconic caves and landscape to its deeply rooted historical landmarks that have shaped local identity through times.

6. Summary, findings, conclusion, and recommendation

This chapter present the summary of the study, highlights the key findings based on the data gathered, draws conclusions derived from the analysis, and offers recommendation for future actions and initiatives related to the significance and impacts of Camalig’s natural and cultural heritage.

6.1. Summary

The study aims to explore and document the physical site, structure material remains from Japanese occupation that are still existing and recovered information that will strengthen community awareness of historical heritage, with the ultimate goal of using these findings as a foundation for developing instructional materials in History. It’s sought to uncover the historical effects that surround the town’s Japanese historical sites, offering a deeper understanding of its past identity. Through this exploration, the study also aimed to determine what types of informational materials could be developed based on the gathered data, ensuring that the Japanese historical sites can be meaningfully integrated into educational content for students and future generations. The study utilized a qualitative research design, particularly a historical approach, to explore and document the historical Japanese sites of the Municipality of Camalig, Albay.

Based on the gathered data from interview and through analysis of documents, the following are the findings of the study.

- The findings reveal that the Japanese occupation in Camalig was not incidental but a deliberate extension of Japan’s Pacific War strategy, shaped by resource scarcity and geographic advantage. The unopposed landing in Legazpi and occupation of Camalig from that War Plan-Orange-3 left Bicol strategically vulnerable, allowing Japanese forces to exploit Albay’s agricultural and topographic assets with minimal resistance. The three military reason for targeting Camalig – nice field acquisition, fortification of Quituinan Hill, and occupation of Hoyop-hoyopan Cave – demonstrate how imperial army weaponized local geography and food systems to sustain its southern Luzon garrisons. This supports the “physical footprints” framework; rice field an economic footprint, Quituinan and Hoyop-hoyopan represent geographic footprints, and force labor, sexual violence and

executions constitute personal footprints that remain in collective memory. This material and intangible remnants validate that wartime occupation in small town like Camalig had structural military logic, not just random brutality.

- The Japanese occupation of Camalig, Albay from 1941-1945 brought major changes to the town's social, economic, and political life. Social structures were disrupted as families fled to the mountains to escape Japanese soldiers, were public gatherings and traditional festivals are banned or held secretly under martial law. Japanese language and customs were introduced in schools and public spaces, yet residents maintained cultural practices in hiding places like Hoyop-hoyopan cave, where guerillas and locals held dances and reunions. This wartime sites now form part of the Camalig's identity and supports local tourism and heritage conservation, according to informants Camalig Tourism Officer Jed Villaneva. Economically, production was redirected to meet military and survival needs, leading to destruction of abaca farms, food shortages, inflation, and restricted trade and transport that weekend household livelihoods. Politically, local government was dissolved and replaced by officials appointed by the occupation's forces, ending self-governance and contributing to widespread destruction and loss of life and property.
- Physical sites, structure materials remain from Japanese Occupation that are still existing. The caves, such as Hoyop-hoyopan Cave with its ancient artifacts and traces of World War II (Japanese Occupation 1941-1945). Mt. Kitwinan stands as historical landmarks, with the mountain serving as a strategic site that holds historical significance due to its strategic role during World War II. The WWII Japanese Tunnel were the Japanese constructed as part of their defense and strategic operations during their rule in the country. Moyo's house 1 & 2 that stands as a silent witness and has survived many turbulent times including the Japanese occupation during World War II. Lastly, the Navera's House that became the unfortunate center of intense bombing, suffering significant damage amidst the chaos of war.
- An informational material is needed to promote the Japanese historical sites and traces of World War II in Camalig, Albay by integrating in the curriculum in history or Araling Panlipunan and other relevant disciplines and using the materials as contextualized instructional material.

7. Conclusions

Based on the findings presented, the following are concluded:

- The Japanese landing in Legazpi, Albay on December 12, 1941 was not just a local military event but it was a decisive move that shaped the entire Bicol region's war experience and left lasting "footprints" still visible today. The landing show Japan strategy of rapid encirclement by taking Legazpi in just 4 days after Pearl Harbor, they secured Southern Luzon's key port and rail terminus. The speed proved how unprepared the Philippines was because were undermanned and poorly equipped. Local resistance proved Filipino Resilience despite occupation. In other words, the landing in Albay was a strategic success for Japan that trigger more than three years of suffering, resistance and transformation in Bicol – leaving physical ruins, traumatic memories, and a legacy of resilience that defines the region's history and identity today.
- The Japanese occupation of Camalig, Albay left lasting impacts on the town's social, economic, and political landscape. While military control disrupted local governance, displaced families, and strained livelihoods, the community adapted by preserving cultural practices in secret and using wartime sites as refuge. These experiences remain part of Camalig's collective memory and now contribute to its cultural identity and heritage tourism. The events of 1941-1945 highlight both the hardships endured and the resilience of the people of Camalig during the war.
- The Japanese historical sites and structure material remain from the Japanese occupation in Camalig, Albay is a rich tapestry that reflects the town's deep connection to its past and its resilience through the ages. From the tangible landmarks such as caves, tunnel and old houses to its evolving identity and shared values. The town's history is marked by significant events, including resistance during colonial and wartime periods, and the contributions of notable figures have enriched its cultural and intellectual landscape. This heritage sites and practices not only preserve the town's historical narrative but also serve as vital tools for intergenerational learning, fostering a sense of pride, unity, and continuity among the community. Through heritage tourism and cultural education, Camalig's rich past continues to shape its present and future, ensuring that its legacy endures for generations to come.
- The development of an informational material that promotes the Japanese historical sites of Camalig, Albay is essential in enriching the educational experience of learners. By integrating these Japanese heritage elements into the curriculum particularly in History or Araling Panlipunan and other related disciplines so that students gain a deeper understanding of their identity, environment, and cultural roots. The use of contextualized

informational materials not only fosters appreciation and pride in local heritage but also supports meaningful and relevant learning that connects classroom content to real-life community values and experiences.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are formulated based on conclusions:

- Educational institution in Camalig, Albay and nearby areas are encouraged to incorporate the Japanese historical sites and landmarks of the town into Araling Panlipunan, History, and other relevant subject areas. Contextualizing lessons with local content will make learning more engaging and meaningful for students. Moreover, teachers should be provided with training and resources to effectively use the developed learning material and integrate them into their teaching strategies. Orientation on local history and heritage will enhance their capacity to deliver contextualized instruction.
- Schools and DepEd Divisions should support the development, validation, and distribution of locally produced materials, such as printed infographics that highlight Camalig's Japanese historical sites and landmarks assets. This material should be used as tools for both instruction and community awareness campaigns.
- LGU's, in collaboration with educational and cultural institution, may initiate heritage education programs such as fieldtrips, heritage walks, and storytelling sessions to further immerse students and community members in the history and culture of Camalig.
- Local Artist, historians, and elders who are recognized as part of our heritage and those who are still existing should be engage in the preservation and promotion of cultural practices and historical narratives. Their participation in learning material creation ensures authenticity and supports intergenerational knowledge transfer.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

Only one author

Statement of ethical approval

Participants informed of the nature and purpose of research by an information sheet attached to interview consent forms. They have the right to fair treatment and the right to privacy. All recordings from interviews are coded to protect identity of interviewees and only individuals who met the inclusion criteria will be intended to participate.

Statement of informed consent

The information sheet outlines the consent process, classified that participation was voluntary, and will includes the researcher contacts details. The participants informed that they have the right to freedom from harm and discomfort and the rights to protection from exploitation.

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