

# An Examination of the Historical and Cultural Significance of the Datu Gara Shrine in Carigara, Leyte, Philippines and Its Preservation Efforts

\*Rico June A. Monte, Lara Mae Aduna, Marianne Faye Arintoc, Eljay Diez, Ella Mae Labastida, Joyce Lagado, Marielle Neduelan

Eastern Visayas State University College of Arts and Sciences Tacloban City, Philippines

\*Corresponding author

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the preservation and story of the Datu Gara Shrine in Carigara, Leyte, Philippines. This study shows how the history and story of the Datu Gara Shrine have been preserved and the impact they have had on the people of the town. The researcher uses interviews with random participants who have knowledge of the history and how it has been preserved until today. In-depth interviews were conducted with people who are still alive and were witnesses to how the shrine was made. The findings show that the people of the town still honor and have never forgotten the famed leader of this town. They still celebrate and conduct a Mass at the shrine every year. The Datu Gara story has been passed down to every generation, and that is how the story remains alive today.

**Keywords:** Carigara, Datu Gara Shrine, Significance, Preservation, History

## INTRODUCTION

Long time ago, a Datu named Gara rose to prominence as the leader of a place in the northern tip of Leyte-later will be called Carigara. Datu Gara's influence in Carigara was so great that a shrine was built in his memory. The municipality of Carigara constructed the Datu Gara Shrine on June 29, 2003 located in Brgy. Canal. Each year, on January 25, residents of Carigara visit the shrine to commemorate and give thanks to him for founding the town. For the residents of Carigara, this founding anniversary is so significant that it has been turned into a local holiday.

Every year, the municipality assigns workers to paint and clean the shrine in order to maintain its color and cleanliness. People from many locations visit the Datu Gara Shrine, which has become a popular tourist destination in Carigara, merely to get a glimpse of or snap photos of the town's founder.

Datu Gara made a huge impact on what Carigara is now. The people of Carigara have great respect for the founder of the town, and even today, they visit the Datu Gara Shrine not because of Datu Gara's birthday or founding celebration but because of their deep respect and admiration for him. The Datu Gara Shrine is still standing with a strong and solid foundation because the people of the town take care of and clean the shrine.

The Datu Gara Shrine has witnessed many typhoons that hit Carigara, but even now, it is still standing, even 20 years after it was built. The shrine may be made of a rock-solid material, but that is not the reason it is still standing today. The reason is that the people of the town never forget his legacy, and even though they have faced many struggles, they still do not forget to thank Datu Gara for founding and creating an impact on Carigara.

The shrine itself was built to honor Datu Gara and commemorate his contributions to the community. It serves as a symbol of pride and identity for the people of Carigara, reminding them of their heritage and the struggles

their ancestors faced (Studocu 2023).

There is a sculpture that is called the Datu Gara Shrine. Datu Gara was known to be the leader of this town, and the name of the town was named after him. It was first named “Kangara”, then changed to “Carigara”, which is still used at present (Caneso, 2020).

According to Bodo (2023), *“there is a sculpture particularly called the Datu Gara Shrine which still exists in present times.”* Datu Gara is well-known as the leader of this town, and the town was named after him. It was first called Kangara, then changed to Carigara, which is still clearly used until now. Seeing this place and recognizing the wall painting of Datu Gara wearing the style of his clothing during those days and holding a weapon expressly called a ‘sundang,’ which he used in battle, will surely make you feel warmth and sentimental yearning for the past.

According to Nierves (2022), *“I have seen this sculpture personally, and I love how detailed it was—from the features of his face to the style of his clothing and up to the weapon that he used in battle, which is called ‘sundang’ in our Waray-Waray dialect.”* The ‘sundang’ is a weapon that is still being used and manufactured in my hometown. It has a sharp blade and is used in various ways, such as in farming, cutting ‘buko’ in half, or basically anything—and sometimes for defense. I believe that Datu Gara had a great influence on this because he owned a ‘sundang’ as his weapon.

According to VanWormer (2021), whether it is a monument, shrine, plaque, or mural, the values and ideologies memorialized on public land reflect the reality a country chooses to remember. The United States’ political and racial history has led to the creation of controversial memorials, including those that honor the Confederacy and its leaders, influencing moral concepts based on racism, violence, and oppression. The continued veneration of these symbols on public land sends the message to the Black community that their oppressors are honored as heroes and that the society they live in still allows for their abuse. Annette Gordon-Reed, a Harvard historian, claims that public memorials could be used to celebrate the Black Americans who built the United States, and Confederate monuments could be better placed in locations of remembrance.

## METHODOLOGY

This section will show the research method and procedures of the study in detail. Thus, this includes: Research Design, Research Locale, Sampling, Research Participants, Data Collection, and Data Analysis.

### Research Design

This research follows a qualitative type of research. Furthermore, the research utilizes the case study approach to explore the significance and story of the Datu Gara Shrine.

A case study has also been described as an intensive, systematic investigation of a single individual, group, community, or other unit in which the researcher examines in-depth data relating to several variables (Twycross & Heale, 2017).

### Research Locale

The research, consisting of data and analysis, was conducted among primary participants—locals of Carigara. Thus, the research was done in Carigara, Leyte, and the interviews took place in Barangay Canal, Carigara, Leyte.

### Sampling

The scope of the participants in this study is limited to those who have knowledge and awareness of the Datu Gara Shrine in Carigara, Leyte—particularly the residents of Barangay Canal, Carigara, Leyte.

According to Headache (2017), sampling from the population is often more practical and allows data to be

collected faster and at a lower cost than attempting to reach every member of the population.

### **Research Participants**

The research participants are limited to people who know and are knowledgeable about Datu Gara's history. The respondents comprised the elders of Barangay Canal, barangay officials, and the municipal librarian.

### **Data Collection**

The data collection procedure was done through interviews using prepared questions. Respondents were free to use any language they preferred.

The respondents were expected to answer the following questions in accordance with the significance and story of the preservation of the Datu Gara Shrine:

1. When was the shrine built?
2. What is the purpose of this shrine?
3. What is the significance of the Datu Gara Shrine here in Barangay Canal?
4. Who is the owner of this shrine?
5. What is the current condition of the shrine?
6. How do you take care of and maintain the shrine?
7. Is there any threat to the shrine?

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents the analysis of data gathered through interviews with participants who have significant knowledge about the study.

### **Commemoration**

According to the interviews, in order to preserve the significance of commemorating Datu Gara, every January 25 they celebrate his birthday by offering a Mass. There, they share how Datu Gara came alongside his siblings, who landed at the river now known as Barangay Canal, Carigara, Leyte, which was first named "Kan Gara", then "Kalgara", and now "Carigara".

### **Youth Involvement**

Based on the interviews, the elderly wanted their local youth to take interest in the history of Datu Gara and in how historic their place is for the municipality of Carigara. They also aim to pass on this knowledge to the younger generation and promote awareness not only to locals but also to people outside Carigara.

### **Role of Social Media**

As stated by the respondents, no technological machinery is used to preserve the Datu Gara Shrine. They only repaint it annually and maintain its cleanliness.

However, through technological advancements such as taking pictures or videos, they could help promote the shrine to a wider and even international audience by posting, sharing, and creating content on various platforms such as Facebook Reels, YouTube, and TikTok.

### **Problem Identified in the Preservation of the Material**

According to the interviews, the most visible problem is youth involvement in preserving and spreading the history of their place. Their interest is highly needed in today's time, especially for the promotion of this historic and memorable place. They want to encourage teenagers to be informed and familiar with the history of their community and the origin of their town's name (Carigara).

## Local and National Promotion

Based on the participants' interviews, they always welcome tourists who want to learn about Datu Gara and the history of Carigara. Every time someone asks for an interview—especially students from different schools for academic purposes, vloggers from other places, or even foreign visitors—they willingly share their knowledge and promote the culture for wider exposure.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

### Conclusion

1. The Datu Gara Shrine is historically significant, as it was built in memory of a prominent town leader. The name changed from “Kangara” to “Carigara” reflects Datu Gara’s influence and legacy in shaping the town’s identity.
2. The shrine is a significant part of Carigara’s cultural heritage. It symbolizes the town’s roots and commemorates the contributions of historical figures, preserving their memory and legacy.
3. The presence of the Datu Gara Shrine contributes to the community’s sense of dignity and pride. It reminds residents of the town’s rich history and the achievements of its leaders, fostering a sense of belonging.

### Recommendation

1. To ensure its longevity, the shrine should be properly preserved. Regular inspections, repairs, and conservation efforts must be undertaken to prevent deterioration.
2. Further research and documentation on the life and contributions of Datu Gara are recommended. This includes reviewing archives, historical documents, and other sources to create a comprehensive historical record.
3. Informing the local community and visitors about the importance of the shrine can be achieved through brochures, guided tours, and awareness programs.
4. The shrine and other cultural sites in Carigara should be promoted as tourist destinations in collaboration with local tourism offices and businesses.
5. Encouraging participation from the community through events, volunteer programs, and workshops can foster a sense of ownership and pride in the preservation of the shrine.

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