

# **Founding and Development of the Towns of Batanes, Philippines (1783 - 1898)**

## **FOREWORD**

Three different times did the Dominicans attempt to start on their own the evangelization of the Batanes islands, and thrice did they fail. The first attempt was in 1686 when Fr. Mateo González could land in Basay island, where he and a companion of his met a natural death. The second trial was undertaken by Fr. Juan Bel who, however, together with two of his companions, religious like himself, soon died due to the hardships of place and clime. The third attempt, made in 1754-56 by another group of Dominicans, ended too with the premature demise of two of them. Three successive failures at the cost of many lives did not dishearten but rather emboldened other Dominicans who tried again for the fourth time, under the protective wing of the Castilian flag in 1783, and were crowned with such a rousing success that by 1800 the whole population of Basay and adjacent islands had virtually embraced our faith — about fifteen thousand of them.

There through the years those self-sacrificing missionaries, headed by Frs. Baltasar F. Calderón and Bartolomé Artíguez, founded the following towns out of a multitude of ranches they found in the islands: Basco (1784), Ivana (1784), Mahatao (1796)

Sabtang (1845) and Santa María de Mayan (1855). Here we shall recount their origins and vicissitudes, as described by the missionaries themselves.

## BASCO<sup>1</sup>

### *Description and founding (1784).*

Basco — named after the Governor-General Don José de Basco y Vargas who worked so hard and disinterestedly in the annexation of the tiny Batanes archipelago to the crown of Castile and in the conversion of its inhabitants to the Catholic Church — is situated at the foot of Mount Iraya which towers majestically at the northernmost portion of the island of Basay.

From the very outset it was the *de facto* capital and seat of the civil authorities and of the provincial government, and since 1820 the *de jure* capital of the whole Batanes group.

It lies on a fairly level ground, about 25 *varas* (yards) above sea level, and is flanked by Mt. Iraya on the north and by Mt. Matarem on the south. In 1830 its streets, according to a report by the Visitor, Don José María Peñaranda, were, although somewhat narrow, straight (*tiradas a cordel*, i.e., marked off with ropes), and lined with trees which added grace to the yards of the houses. They were, however, unkept and dirty since domestic animals could roam freely about.<sup>2</sup>

It was accepted as one of its ministries by the Province of Our Lady of the Rosary in the Provincial Chapter of 1785, and placed under the advocacy and patronage of St. Dominic of Guzmán, and was granted the rights and privileges so far enjoyed by the nominal Vicariate of Santa Ursula in the island of Fuga, one of the main five islands of the Babuyanes group, a cluster of islands between the Batanes and Luzon.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> BRUGUES, JOSE, O.P., "Descripción de Batanes y Babuyanes," MS in APSR (Archives of the Province of Our Lady of the Rosary), Section "Batanes," Vol. I, Doc. 18, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> PEÑARANDA, JOSE MARIA, "A Description of the Batanes Islands in 1930" in *Philippiniana Sacra*, Vol. XI, No. 32, May-August, 1976, pp. 307.

<sup>3</sup> *Acta Capitulum Provinciale, Provinciae Sanctissimi Rosarii Philippinarum*, Manila, typis Collegii Sancti Thomae, 1877, Vol. II, pp. 528, 582.

*The first "Vicars"*

The first "Vicar" of Basco was Fr. Baltasar F. Calderón, assisted at the start by Fr. Bartolomé Artíguez. Their first task upon arrival in Basay in 1783 was to study the dialect, which they learned well enough in the space of about five months as to be able to begin the evangelical work, and then to "reduce" or consolidate into bigger centers of population the numerous hamlets spread over the hills, for the purpose of converting them and keeping watch over them more easily in their faith.<sup>4</sup> Barely two years after their arrival in Batanes they had baptized already one thousand two hundred children and had catechized many adults. However, they decided not to pour the baptismal waters too quickly on the latter, but to wait until they could have given clear signs of their purity of intention.<sup>5</sup>

Fr. Calderón left for Pangasinán in 1789 due to a broken health and was succeeded as Vicar of Basco and Vicar Provincial by Fr. Artíguez, but for only one year, because the latter himself had to leave the mission field for a less demanding ministry. Both of them and other missionaries who succeeded them had worked so tirelessly in this vineyard of the Lord that within the first ten years sixteen thousand baptisms had already been administered.<sup>6</sup> We have to ascribe, next to the grace of God, such a tremendous success to the dedication of the missionaries, to the eagerness of most Ivatans to embrace the faith and to the simple but efficient method of teaching the catechism, which consisted in having those already versed in the truths of our religion teach them to others, who once they learned them well in turn taught them to others, and thus successively in a chain reaction. This simple method sufficiently explains the quick conversion of the inhabitants of Batanes in less than seventeen years, that is, at the rate of approximately one thousand per year.

At the same time the first Vicars worked hard and effectively in uprooting the vices of drunkenness, lust and superstitions that

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<sup>4</sup> GOMEZ, MARIANO, O.P., "Misión de Santo Domingo de Basco, Batanes," MS in APSR, Section "Batanes," Vol. 3, Fol. 153v.

<sup>5</sup> *Acta Capitulorum*, III, 527.

<sup>6</sup> OCIO, HILARIO MARIA, O.P., *Monumento Dominicano*, MS in APSR, Section "Ministerios," Vol. I, p. 150.

were so ingrained into a people which for many centuries had walked in darkness and in the shadow of spiritual death.<sup>7</sup>

Fr. Francisco Fernández, their immediate successor, laboriously pursued the tedious but necessary task already begun by Frs. Calderón and Artíguez of transferring to Basco the dwellers of several hamlets scattered over the nearby hills.<sup>8</sup> He was Vicar of Basco for eight years.

Then Fr. Francisco de Paula Esteban, another zealous missionary, took over for a term of also eight years, not only as Vicar of Basco, but also as Provincial Vicar, that is, as the religious head of the Batanes mission, directly under the Provincial Superior at Manila.<sup>9</sup>

### *The builders of the church and convent*

The very first church of Basco, built of light materials in the early days of the establishment of the mission, eventually gave way in 1787 to a more durable structure. In this year Fr. Calderón began the building of a new church of stone with the aid of some artisans sent from Manila and with the enthusiastic support of the townspeople.<sup>10</sup> This church of stone was planned for a larger congregation of the faithful. Apparently it was too big for the town, and it was shortened later by eight or nine meters, probably by Fr. Nicolás Castaño, when he built its facade in the years 1812-1825.<sup>11</sup>

In order to provide the roof of the spacious church with a strong support, for it easily collapsed once and again under the impact of powerful typhoons that often lash the Batanes group, Fr. Remigio Tamayo (+1854) divided the church, by means of two orders of columns in the form of an arcade, into a central nave and its collateral aisles, the materials of all additional improvements of the church being of mortar and stone.<sup>12</sup> Besides, he embellished its facade with artistic decorations.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>7</sup> GOMEZ, *loc. cit.*, 155v.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 154v

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 161v

<sup>13</sup> OCIO, HILARIO MARÍA, O.P., *Compendio de la Reseña Biográfica de los Religiosos de la Provincia del Santísimo Rosario de Filipinas*, Manila. Establecimiento tipográfico del Real Colegio de Sto. Tomás, 1895, p. 719.

When Fr. Antonio Vicente was assigned to Basco by the Provincial Chapter of 1863, he was faced with the immediate challenging task of restoring the church and the convent or rectory, both destroyed by a fire three years earlier.<sup>14</sup>

According to a report dated June 5, 1895, prepared by Fr. Félix Serrano, a canonical Visitor, the Church then of Basco was in need of extensive improvements to render it appropriate and worthy of a provincial capital, despite the fact that by this time its roofing was no longer of *cogon* but of *zinc* (galvanized iron) due to the work of Fr. Mariano Gómez.<sup>15</sup>

The present convent or rectory was built between the years 1814 and 1818 by Fr. Nicolás Castaño. The original one which was located at some distance from the church was turned into a town hall first (*Casa de Gobierno*) and later into the courthouse (*Tribunal*) and so it remains to this day, although its physical plant has undergone some changes and improvements as required by the needs of the times.<sup>16</sup>

Fr. Mariano Gómez, who took over the Vicariate of Basco in 1889, finding the interior of the convent unevenly distributed and in great need of repairs, improved it notably and even increased the number of its rooms so as to provide the Fathers with fitting accommodations whenever they gathered in Basco for their meetings or spiritual retreats.<sup>17</sup>

#### *Other structures worthy of note*

At the turn of the century, in addition to the church and the rectory, there were other requisite buildings in Basco: the Governor's residence (*Casa Real*), the courthouse (*Tribunal*), two school buildings separately for boys and girls, the soldiers' headquarters (*Cuartel*) and the "Beaterio" for women members of the Third Order of St. Dominic — all these buildings being of "strong" materials.<sup>18</sup> The private houses, of stone and mortar too, num-

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 789

<sup>15</sup> Cfr. APSR, MSS. Section "Batanes," Vol. 13, pp. 560-561.

<sup>16</sup> GÓMEZ, *loc. cit.*, 161v.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 161

bered one hundred and ten. In the outskirts of the town there was a leprosarium of makeshift materials together with a chapel of stone and mortar where the lepers used to say their prayers.<sup>19</sup>

*The task of the "Reducciones" in Basco*

The Spanish term "Reducción," so often used in the colonial history of the Spanish dominions, undoubtedly means the act of "consolidating scattered groups of the population into well-organized towns." The Batanes islands were no exception to this civilizing and christianizing policy of Spain.

Here is how Fr. B. Artíguez describes the population centers of the island of Basay soon after his arrival, in a letter to his Provincial, dated June 20, 1783: "The said island has the following towns: first, Basay (Basco), of 1,000 taxpayers; the second, Ivana, of 500 or 600; then Yura of some 300 or more houses; then Saccug a Ydi of about 200 houses; then Ynagbu of about 100; Yebot of 200 approximately, and Busbusan of around 150. In between these towns there are about seven or eight 'rancherías,' which, all put together, would have as many as 300 taxpayers... I hold true the report of Fr. Bel regarding the number of people of this island as well as of the others..." (Fr. Bel and several others calculated that Basay and the nearby islands had some 30,000 inhabitants in all.)<sup>20</sup>

To facilitate or expedite the temporal and spiritual administration it was found imperative to consolidate so many ranches into few and regular towns, and so it was done. In the particular case of Basco, this policy was brought to a successful finish when Fr. R. Tamayo "reduced" the "ranchería" of Chanarian, which was about one-hour-walk distant from the town proper, thus fulfilling the dream of his predecessors of having all the people within earshot of the Church tower bell ("bajo campana").<sup>21</sup>

*Basco, a land of typhoons and epidemics*

The history of Basco is replete with reports regarding typhoons and epidemics which used to scourge mercilessly its inha-

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Cfr. APSR, MSS, Section "Batanes", Vol. 6, p. 427.

<sup>21</sup> GOMEZ, 157.

bitants in the past — and in the present, at least as far as the typhoons are concerned. Typhoons are so frequent during the rainy season, and rare is the year in which the Batanes islands are not lashed by two or three of them. Worthy of special mention is that of 1846 when powerful gales which lasted for three days and two nights dismantled almost all the buildings public and private alike, leaving in their wake uprooted trees, destroyed plantations and fields and countless dead animals. Ten years later many people met their untimely death due to an epidemic.<sup>22</sup>

### *A model missionary*

In the second half of the 19th century the Batanes missions were blessed by God with the fortune of having some holy and enterprising missionaries, among whom the best known were Fr. Antonio Vicente in Sabtang and Basco, and Fr. Fabián Martín in Ivana.

Fr. Vicente, a native of Almada, Zamora, Spain, was born in 1814, and donned the Dominican habit in the convent of San Esteban, of Salamanca. He was one of those hapless friars who in 1835 were compelled to leave the cloister by the persecutory policies of Mendizábal. In 1844 he sailed for the Philippines, and, assigned to Batanes soon after, he first administered the mission of Sabtang. A zealous missionary and a fervent religious, he spent forty years of his life in Batanes, twenty of them in Basco and sixteen as Vicar Provincial. In him we find fulfilled the praise which the eloquent Fr. Fonseca wrote about the first missionaries of those remote and out-of-the-way islands:

“Abnegation, and a sterling abnegation indeed, is needed to persevere for so many years in these wretched islands, which may be looked upon as a veritable exile on account of the infertility of their soil and the poverty and rudeness of their inhabitants, on account of the physical conditions of their climate and of the lack of communications with the rest of the archipelago, and of the almost complete isolation which the missionaries have to cope with.”<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 160

<sup>23</sup> FONSECA, JOAQUIN, O.P., *Historia de los PP. Dominicos, en Filipinas y en sus misiones del Japón, China, Tunking y Formosa* (6 vols.), Madrid, 1871, Vol. V, pp. 335-336.

Lively and cheerful in his conversation, well versed and even elegant in the Ivatan dialect, Fr. Vicente was besides such a moving preacher in correcting the vices discreetly from the pulpit and in explaining the mysteries of the Catholic faith that more than once he made his audience break into tears.

He founded in Basco the Third Order of St. Dominic which soon began to raise Christians of a high caliber; he also established the confraternities of the Holy Infant and of the most Holy Rosary; and, above all, he erected the *Beaterio* or house where some young women tertiaries, pursuing a life of perfection, excelled also in their assiduity in going to church and in their industriousness in their daily chores such as tilling their fields or doing needlework.

A fervent religious, he made his daily visit of the Blessed Sacrament. To honor the Blessed Virgin Mary he established the Perpetual Rosary or *Guardia de Honor*, and in order to encourage others through his personal example, he chose for himself the most uncomfortable hour of the night — midnight — to pray his hour of guard. In one word, he devoted himself without letup to his ministerial action, either by word or by example, until, having lost almost completely his sight and hearing, he had no other recourse but to withdraw in 1884 to Manila where he died in 1890.<sup>24</sup>

### *Statistics of population*

Paradoxically, while the population of the Philippines as a whole was rising by leaps and bounds through the 19th century, in Batanes it followed a downtrend, mainly due to lack of hygiene and medical facilities, to the frequent epidemics, to the famine and poverty at the wake of destructive typhoons, and, above all, due to migration especially to Manila by many young people, mostly male, where they found a way to make a living as house servants.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> GOMEZ, *loc. cit.*, 158-159; OCIO, *Op. cit.*, pp. 788-789.

<sup>25</sup> GOMEZ, *loc. cit.*, 160.



The following population statistics speak for themselves in the particular case of Basco:

|                                  |                                     |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1786 .....                       | 1,076 Christians                    |
| 1787 .....                       | 1,183 Christians                    |
| 1791 (Basco and Chanarian) ..... | 3,623 Christians and pagans         |
| 1796 (Basco only) .....          | 5,362 Christians only               |
| 1804 .....                       | 5,901 Christians only               |
| 1811 .....                       | 3,357 Christians only <sup>26</sup> |
| 1828 .....                       | 2,961 Christians only               |
| 1848 .....                       | 2,834 All Christians <sup>27</sup>  |
| 1875 .....                       | 2,707 <sup>28</sup>                 |
| 1900 .....                       | 2,563 <sup>29</sup>                 |

Here are some detailed statistics of the population of the towns and "rancherías" of Basay, Batanes, as of December of 1801:<sup>30</sup>

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| Persons from outside but with domicile in Batanes ..... | 22    |
| Santo Domingo de Basco .....                            | 4,545 |
| Santa María de Nieva de Chanarian .....                 | 351   |
| San Carlos de Mahatao .....                             | 2,638 |
| San José de Ivana .....                                 | 2,367 |
| San Antonino de Uyugan .....                            | 1,436 |
| San Vicente Ferrer .....                                | 1,156 |
| San Félix de Naviec .....                               | 499   |
| Pagans of both sexes still in the Island .....          | 44    |

(The people of Ibugos and Siminanga — Sabtang — has been transferred to Basay. The inhabitants of Itbayat and Yami are not herein included.)

<sup>26</sup> These statistics are taken from: APSR, MSS, Section "Batanes," Vol. 5, in their respective years.

<sup>27</sup> "Estado General de la Provincia del Santísimo Rosario," in *Revista Católica*, No. XCI — Enero de 1850, Barcelona, 1950, p. 468.

<sup>28</sup> "Estado General . . .", 1875, Manila, 1 de Mayo, 1876.

<sup>29</sup> OCIO, *Monumento*, 150.

<sup>30</sup> "Lista General del número de almas que hoy día de la fecha (Enero 1, 1802) existen en estas Islas Batanes, con distinción de los pueblos y sus visitas, como también el residuo de infieles, que en ellas permanecen," MS in APSR, Section "Batanes," Vol. 5, No. 14." To the above statistics we must add the inhabitants of Itbayat — 542 in all.

*An interlude during the Revolution*

Fr. Mariano Gómez, the successor to Fr. Vicente, was destined to witness the arrival of the Katipunan liberation forces which landed in Batanes on September 18, 1898, and interned him together with all other missionaries of the Batanes archipelago in a town in Cagayan. Liberated he and his companions in the closing days of 1899 by the victorious Americans, the townspeople of Basco insistently requested for his return. And so he returned to Basco in April of 1900 to resume his pastoral work there.<sup>31</sup>

## IVANA (1784)

*Location and founding*

Some nine kilometers south of Mahatao, going over rugged roads, the traveller reaches the town of Ivana, located towards the south of the island of Basay on its western coast and about 25 meters from the seashore. Ivana has no other agricultural lands than a small valley amidst the neighboring hills. It is bounded on the south-east by its "visita" of San Antonino de Uyugan.

This is the first town founded in Batanes and also its official capital until 1820. The Dominican Province of Our Lady of the Rosary added it to the already long list of its ministries in the Philippines in the year 1785 with the occasion of the holding of its Provincial Chapter in April of that year.<sup>32</sup> Ivana was placed under the advocacy or patronage of St. Joseph.

*The first Vicars of Ivana.*

Fr. Calderón signed the first Baptismal Record or Book of Baptisms of Ivana from July to December of 1784, and thenceforth until 1788 Fr. Artíguez signed the baptismal entries as Vicar of Ivana. According to a tradition that was still alive in 1889, this venerable Father could prodigiously multiply himself, and

<sup>31</sup> FERNANDEZ, FLORENTINO, O.P., *Conquista de Cagayán por los revolucionarios tagalos y padecimientos de los religiosos prisioneros*, MS in AUST, Section "Folletos", Vol. 88, pp. 243-267.

<sup>32</sup> *Acta Capitulorum Provincialium*, Vol. III, p. 528.

this sufficiently accounts for the rapid conversion of Ivana to the Christian faith, and the beginnings of the evangelization of Sabtang and Ivuho.<sup>33</sup>

He was succeeded by Fr. Francisco de Paula Esteban, who erected one small chapel of light materials in each of the barrios of Said, Cadpidan and Radiwan.

Fr. Tomás Sánchez, who shepherded the people of Ivana from 1796 to 1802, worked hard as did his predecessors in relocating the scattered dwellers in distant ranches, and in instructing the old in the mysteries of our faith.<sup>34</sup>

Then Fr. Nicolás Castaño, another first rate missionary, took from him the reins of the spiritual government of Ivana. It was during his time when heathenism was wiped out altogether from Ivana, and thus no names of adults were entered into the baptismal records, but only of children.<sup>35</sup> About him Fr. Félix Serrano reported many years later: "He was also the guardian angel of all these islands. He helped a lot in building courthouses in this province, and left a name of imperishable memory in these islands."<sup>36</sup>

### *A giant among giants*

Such deservedly was Fr. Fabián Martín, an exceptional missionary of the second half of the 19th century who came to Ivana like dew fallen from heaven.

A native of Herrín de Campos, province of Palencia, Spain, where he was born on January 20, 1817, he embarked for the Philippines in 1844, not without leaving behind in the School of Latin of Paredes de Nava, in the conciliar seminary of Cuenca and in the Dominican convent of Ocaña indelible memories of his privileged mind and of the sweet fragrance of his virtuous life.

According to human standards, a friar of his caliber was called to occupy high posts in administration, but he was assigned to

<sup>33</sup> SERRANO, FELIX, O.P., "Islas Batanes, Pueblo de San José de Ibaná, 1888, en San José de Ibaná, 22 de noviembre de 1888" (MS in APSR, Section 'Batanes,' Vol. 3, Fol. 138.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 139v.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 140v.

the remote and lowly town of Ivana, due to dearth of personnel, becoming its Vicar in 1844, where he was to spend himself in a fruitful apostolate until his death in 1878.

A stickler for silence, he imitated our Father St. Dominic who spoke only either with God or about God. Every afternoon he used to spend one hour in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

He had a perfect command of the local dialect, was extremely zealous in the salvation of souls, tireless in teaching catechism, assiduous in preaching the truths of salvation and in explaining the Gospel which such solid reasons and with such vivacity of imagination that he seemed to mesmerize his listeners to the point of making them break into tears.

He established the Third Order of St. Dominic on June 29, 1853,<sup>37</sup> as well as the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary, the Living Rosary, and used to celebrate the feasts of Dominican Saints with a solemn high mass. He also uprooted a host of superstitions deeply imbedded in the Ivatan soul and traditionally abetted by some tricky old women with grave harm to the souls and to the pockets as well of the gullible islanders. He also promoted modest attire among men and women. When he arrived in Ivana, the women barely covered their bodies with a *tapis* hanging from the waist to the knees, with even the upper right leg almost bare. He resolved from the outset and left no stone unturned to introduce a more modest fashion by continuous exhortation and even by giving alms for buying clothes to the deserving poor. He taught them to dress like the rest of their sex in Luzon. He also induced the men to give up the bahaque (G-string) in favor of trousers and shirt as their regular wear, for at the beginning they used such only when going to church.<sup>38</sup>

Another achievement of his tireless zeal was also the transfer to the town of Ivana of the folk dwelling in the hamlet of Humhuren who were thus more easily catechized and could readily receive the sacraments and attend at Mass.

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<sup>37</sup> The Third Order of St. Dominic took such deep roots in Batanes, especially in Ivana, that the prominent men in this town at the close of the century and almost all school teachers were Dominican tertiaries.

<sup>38</sup> SERRANO, 147v.

He was so charitable towards his flock to the extent that scarcely there was anyone in Ivana who did not receive aid of one form or another from him, as Fr. Félix Serrano, his successor, testifies.<sup>39</sup>

When the news of his death on July 20, 1878, was announced, it spread like wildfire and the entire townspeople of Ivana flocked in throngs and paid their last respects to their beloved Father and Pastor, and during the funeral services the church was so filled that some even climbed up the confessionals or the pulpit to get a last glimpse of the mortal remains of their beloved Fr. Fabián, about whom the following eulogy was left us by the often quoted Fr. Serrano: "The very Reverend Father Fabián Martín returned his body to the earth, but the fame of his name and virtues is still present and lingers in the odor of sanctity, passing from generation to generation for the honor and glory of God and luster of our Order."<sup>40</sup>

#### *Church and convent*

The first church of Ivana was built probably in the years 1784-1785 in a site of the barrio of San Vicente, of makeshift materials, and so it did not last long. However, later the main bulk of the population was transferred to its present location, where a more durable church was raised by the combined effort of the first missionaries towards the year 1800, which came out to be, according to Fr. Brugués, the largest and best constructed in Batanes. In 1850 it was found necessary to shorten it in the area of the sanctuary, and the suppressed portion remained roofless for more than half a century, but its walls were still in good condition when Fr. Brugués wrote in 1900 his report on the towns of Batanes.<sup>41</sup>

Fr. Fabián Martín ameliorated it by raising its walls, by building a new facade, by adding to the whole structure a choir loft, by changing its original wooden beams and by raising its roof, and by adding to it from the very foundations a sacristy. Moreover,

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 140

<sup>41</sup> BRUGUES, 19.

he reinforced its walls — which were starting to weaken — in the year 1878.<sup>42</sup>

It is the only church in Batanes which has a belfry, and it seems to have been completed by Fr. José Onofre before 1830. Then in 1884 a new baptistry was added by Fr. Félix Serrano.<sup>43</sup> By the end of the 19th century the structure of the church was apparently in good condition, although the woodwork was clearly in need of extensive repairs.<sup>44</sup>

To Fr. Francisco de Paula is the town of Ivana beholden for the start of the building of what is the present convent or rectory. It was not an easy task indeed, but the good Father found a very efficacious way of achieving it, for, as he was a great lover of children who surely reciprocated his love, he easily won the cooperation of their parents with their free labor, while the Father provided them and their children with food during the construction.<sup>45</sup>

However, some thirty years later Fr. Alejandro Ubide took over the ministry of Ivana, and found the convent in such a deteriorated state that he began almost at once to make the necessary repairs.<sup>46</sup> In the meantime he had to stay quite uncomfortably in the courthouse (*Tribunal*).

It was reserved for Fr. Fabián Martín to give this convent a more imposing look by adding to its facade an upper corridor, supported by a six-arch arcade, which was topped by a stone balustrade. He further built for the boy servants a room facing the backyard of the convent.<sup>47</sup>

Fr. Serrano straightened in 1884 the walls, which due either to a previous defective construction or to the wear and tear of time, had fallen out of level in some spots. These improvements, including an additional room to make the convent more comfortable, wider and better ventilated and even cooler, seemed to have been finished in 1894.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>43</sup> SERRANO, 150.

<sup>44</sup> Cfr. APSR, MSS, Section "Batanes," Vol. 13, p. 567.

<sup>45</sup> SERRANO, 138v.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 144v; OCIO, *Compendio*, pp. 868-869.

<sup>48</sup> Cfr. APSR, MSS, Section "Batanes," Vol. 13, p. 567.

*Schools*

During his assignment in Ivana (1796-1802) Fr. Sánchez put a special emphasis on the religious and academic training of children, employing for the purpose "intelligent" and dedicated tutors, since there were no formally trained teachers in Ivana at that time. Classes were held in private homes for lack of better accommodations.

Later, in 1846-1849, Fr. Fabián erected two school buildings for both sexes separately, with a concrete flooring, wooden posts and partitions, and a roof of thickly bundled grass called *cogon* in most dialects of the Philippines and *carrizo* in Spanish.<sup>49</sup> He also provided with schools the "visitas" of San Vicente and San Antonino.

This priest was so particularly concerned about the intellectual education of children, whom, being generally poor, he also provided with books, pens, ink and stationery, and even clothes so that they could attend classes decently clad.<sup>49</sup> He also instructed the school children to plant *ubi*, *camote*, corn and wheat, and their produce was shared by the children themselves and the school.<sup>50</sup>

*A Beaterio for dedicated women*

We do not know certainly who was the founder of the *Beaterios* attached to the Dominican order in Batanes. All we know is that they constitute a unique institution in the Philippines.

The saintly Fr. Vicente del Riesgo (+1724) had previously laid the groundwork for a Beaterio in Fuga, Babuyanes, which flourished only as long as he lived and directed it. Perhaps later the missionaries of Batanes adopted or imitated his idea.

If we do not know with certainty who founded the Beaterios of Batanes, we can venture that they probably came into being under the impulse and guidance of either of the two great missionaries of mid-nineteenth-century Batanes: Frs. Fabián Martín and Antonio Vicente.

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 147v.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

The Beaterio of Ivana was in all likelihood founded by Fr. Fabián Martín. There he gathered together some women, mostly orphans of both parents, who chose to give themselves more completely to God, away from the cares of the world and the solitudes of family life.

The *beatas*, as these women were called, made a living by sewing, embroidering, and tilling a small garden plot. They were and continue to be good living examples of virtue and industriousness to their fellow Ivatans, and followed a schedule of devotional exercises. Some of them learned Spanish and even taught in the local schools whenever the regular teachers were absent.<sup>51</sup>

Fr. Fabián Martín provided the *beatas* of Ivana with a loom imported from Ilocos, which for a time proved useful to them. In the end, however, it broke down, and nobody was found in the Islands of Batanes who could repair it.<sup>52</sup>

### *Roads and Bridges*

In Batanes the overland communication between the towns, and between these and their barrios, was always difficult due to the hilly contour of their terrain and their craggy coastland. Moreover, the creeks, although almost dry during the hot months, often became flooded and impassable during rainy weather, and so the missionaries spared no efforts in providing the towns entrusted to their pastoral care with means of communication within their limited resources and capabilities. Hence, they became builders of roads and bridges.

We have no documentary evidence of any roads opened by the Dominican missionaries in Ivana. But historical records attest to several bridges built by them, as for example: Fr. Nicolás Castaño (1802-1810) spanned a creek that cuts through the town with a bridge, and many years later two additional bridges were constructed in Ivana by Fr. Fabián Martín, one six and the other eight meters high over water level, and both of mortar and stone.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 147v.

<sup>53</sup> BRUGUES, 20



Ivana had two dependencies: San Vicente towards the north and San Antonino de Uyugan towards the south-east. To make communications easy for all, Fr. Julián Rodríguez built a bridge needed in the road leading to the latter. Fr. Fabián Martín did the same, because, having observed how the children of San Vicente were often absent from school during the rainy season due to a swelling brook, he solved the problem by constructing there another bridge in the years 1858-1860.<sup>54</sup>

Some of these bridges remain to this day as a visible proof of the expertise and resourcefulness of the missionaries and of the willing cooperation of their flocks.

#### *Writers*

Ivana had not only builders among its missionaries, but writers as well, although little has been published of what they wrote.

Fr. Francisco de Paula Esteban, one of the earliest missionaries, started a *Diccionario Batán-Español*, and some years later Fr. Castaño also contributed his share in this direction, all for the benefit and use of forthcoming apostles of Batanes. To the same end Fr. Antonio Criville authored a *Grammar*. But despite his mastery of the idioms and peculiar phraseology of the Ivatan, his *Grammar* did not meet *with general* acceptance through the years, and this might be one of the reasons why it was not printed.

Father Castaño also wrote a *Catechism*, which came to be the only literary production of any missionary in Batanes to be published in the 19th century.

However, the one who truly excelled as a prolific writer and translator into Ivatan was Fr. Fabián Martín. Upon reaching Ivana, he soon acquired a good command of the dialect, and with the passing of time he was to prove himself to be not only a fluent but also an elegant writer in it, as is shown by the following titles — and some others perhaps — which he either authored, translated, edited or summarized for the benefit of the pious: *Pláticas Doctrinales*, an explanation of the *Creed*, *Our Father* and *Beati-*

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<sup>54</sup> SERRANO, 145v-146.

*tudes* (these prayers were recited by the people chorally in church, especially by the children); *Bible History*; *Visits to the Blessed Sacrament*; *Examples from the Glories of Mary*, of St. Alphonsus; *Meditations* of Venerable Luis de Granada; the *Moral Maxims and Sermons*, translated from the *Arte Pastoral* of Father Planas from the beginning of Advent till the fifth Sunday after Easter.<sup>55</sup>

*San Antonino de Uyugan a dependency of Ivana*

Among the old dependencies of Ivana, San Antonino de Uyugan is deserving of special mention, because it could have become a town if circumstances had been more favorable.

It is located south-east of Ivana at a distance of four kilometers, and formerly it comprised four "cabecerías" that in all were equivalent to about two hundred families. An integral part of Uyugan were some barrios (clusters of huts) where its inhabitants had their fields. One of them — Imnajbu — has the distinction of being the place where the first baptism was administered and the first Mass celebrated in Batanes.<sup>56</sup>

The old church of Uyugan which was spacious enough to hold one thousand people was later restored by Fr. Fabián Martín, who, in order to spare the children the 4-kilometer trek to the school in Ivana, built right there in Uyugan two schools separately for both sexes. Besides he constructed a bridge near the church to enable the people to pass from one barrio to another during the rainy season.<sup>57</sup>

*Ivana in 1900*

Fr. José Brugués gives us this brief description of the town of Ivana during 1900: "The public buildings in 1900 were the courthouse, the schools for both sexes, built by Fr. Fabián Martín; and seventy private houses — twenty of which are quite big — and the Beaterio of women tertiaries. All the buildings, public and private, are of masonry. The houses are enclosed within a stone wall and planted around with trees; and this, in addition

<sup>55</sup> VELASCO, MARIANO, O.P., *Ensayo de Bio-bibliografía de los religiosos de la Provincia del Santísimo Rosario*, MS in APSR, Section "Bibliografías," Vol. IV., pp. 23-25, 282-287.

<sup>56</sup> BRUGUES. 20

<sup>57</sup> SERRANO, 145v-146.

to the streets being well laid out and clean, gives the town a scenic look."<sup>58</sup>

*Statistics of Ivana*

The following statistics ("Estado de Almas") of Ivana also show a downtrend in its population:

|   |                     |                          |
|---|---------------------|--------------------------|
| 1786 — Ivana .....  | 527                 | Christians               |
| Itbud (its "visita") .....                                  | 191                 | Christians <sup>59</sup> |
| 1794 — Ivana .....  | 2,669               | Christians               |
| San Vicente (its "visita") .....                            | 467                 | Christians               |
| San Antonino (its "visita") ....                            | 887                 | Christians               |
| San Félix (its "visita") .....                              | 305                 | Christians               |
| Total number of Christians<br>in the four said places ..... | 4,328               |                          |
| Total number of pagans in<br>the said places .....          | 1,847               |                          |
| Total number of souls in<br>the four said places .....      | 6,175 <sup>60</sup> |                          |
| 1828 — Ivana .....  | 1,554 <sup>61</sup> |                          |
| 1848 — Ivana .....  | 1,383               | souls                    |
| Uyugan .....  | 805                 | souls <sup>62</sup>      |
| 1897 — Ivana and San Antonino de<br>Uyugan .....            | 1,817               | souls <sup>63</sup>      |

MAHATAO

*Location and founding*

The third town of Batanes in the chronological order of its foundation is Mahatao, which is located on the western coast of the island of Basay, at a distance of five kilometers from Basco in

<sup>58</sup> BRUGUES, 19-20.

<sup>59</sup> Cfr. APSR, MSS, Section "Batanes", Vol. V, Doc. 4, fol. 243.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, Doc. 11, fol. 250.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, Doc. 25, fol. 5.

<sup>62</sup> *Revista Católica*, loc. cit.

<sup>63</sup> *Estado General*, etc., 1897. In 1796 there were 12,626 Christians in the island of Basay, and 1,444 pagans (Cfr. APSR, MSS, Section "Batanes," Vol. V, Doc. 14, fol. 121).

the north and nine from Ivana in the south. It occupies a small area of flat ground and lies by the sea, in whose craggy shore there is a natural gap or opening of about five "brazas" (a "braza" is roughly a fathom or about six feet), forming a little bay with a good harbor where light vessels may lie at anchor safely and snugly. It has no like in Basco, Ivana or the other neighboring towns.<sup>64</sup>

At the back of Mahatao there stands a mountain range encircling it as the walls of an amphitheater, and a creek from those heights cuts the town into two sections.

Mahatao's erection as a civil town may go back as far as the year 1785 or thereabouts when its missionaries, having already consolidated into towns the many ranches previously scattered over the hills or mountain slopes, saw fit that a *Gobernadorcillo* was elected by the townspeople of every town to lead and head them in civil matters.

As an ecclesiastical mission it was founded in 1783 as a dependency of Basco, and placed under the advocacy of St. Bartholomew, who for some reason unknown to us was superseded by St. Charles Borromeo who became its patron Saint and protector.<sup>65</sup>

Not until 1789 was Mahatao given a Vicar of its own. Earlier it had been a "visita" off and on visited by the Vicars of Basco and Ivana for the administration of the Sacraments.<sup>66</sup>

In the Acts of the Provincial Chapter of 1789 Fr. Tomás Sánchez already appears as the Vicar of Mahatao. On the other hand, this ministry was not yet then officially accepted, a fact at variance with the usual practice of officially accepting it as a ministry as soon as a permanent missionary was assigned to a certain place even for the first time. This happened in the case of Mahatao, perhaps because of the unwillingness of the Government to disburse an additional stipend, on the basis of the scanty number of its inhabitants and its proximity to the towns of Basco and Ivana, oblivious the government officials concerned that, except for the dry season when communication by sea was the

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<sup>64</sup> BLASCO, MANUEL, O.P., "Pueblo de S. Carlos de Mahatao," a MS in APSR, Section "Batanés," Vol. III, fol. 168.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

only easy and safe one, on the whole year round transportation by land was almost impossible due to the roughness of the terrain.<sup>67</sup>

### *The Vicars of Mahatao*

The first Vicar of Mahatao was Fr. Tomás Sánchez, followed by Frs. Román Naranjo and Joaquín Ferrer. Then Fr. Nicolás González took over. He stayed in Mahatao for almost forty years and proved himself to be a loving Father of his flock, although he did little in material accomplishments.<sup>68</sup>

Fr. Crescencio Polo, a dedicated and enterprising missionary, succeeded him. He worked hard as a faithful and zealous minister of the small vineyard entrusted to his spiritual care, although the fruit was not always commensurate with his labors.

Then, after the brief stint of Fr. Enrique Platero, who stayed in Mahatao for barely a year, and after the longer term of Fr. Manuel Blasco, the spiritual administration of the inhabitants of San Carlos de Mahatao fell on the shoulders of Fr. Joaquín Camblor, its last Vicar during the Spanish times.<sup>69</sup>

### *Church and convent*

The first church of stone in Mahatao was already finished when Fr. Tomás Sánchez was assigned there in 1798. In 1872, due to a strong typhoon, the roof was blown off, and the supporting walls were partially damaged. Thus Fr. Polo, its Vicar then, was compelled to rebuild an almost new, all-around stronger and more artistic structure. Besides, he covered it with a roof of cogon, a tall, coarse grass used for thatching houses, churches and convents before the introduction of galvanized iron sheets.

The convent, which was also of stone and mortar, had been built too by the first missionaries, and later remodelled by Fr. Polo.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> OCIO, *Monumento*, p. 151.

<sup>68</sup> BLASCO, 170v.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>70</sup> Fr. Blasco states that the first church of Mahatao must have been built under the supervision of either Fr. Francisco de Paula or Fr. Nicolás Castaño at the time when Mahatao was still a "visita" of Basco, but it seems certain, as he himself heard from the old folks, that the foundations of the convent were laid down by Fr. Tomás Sánchez, (169v). About Mahatao Fr. Jesús Fernández Solís wrote in 1916 that "it had the most beautiful church in Batanes" (Cfr. AUST, "Folletos", Vol. 169, No. 5).

*Other structures*

Even the fifty houses of the townspeople of Mahatao were also of stone at the time when Fr. Brugués wrote his Report in 1900 about Babuyanes and Batanes, the *Beaterio* or residence of the women tertiaries standing out as the best.<sup>71</sup>

In the outskirts of the town there was also in the late 1800's a leprosarium, composed of a chapel and several houses, all of light or cheap, makeshift materials.<sup>72</sup>

At the turn of the century there were in this town two bridges of stone: the old one in the town proper spanning the brook that cuts through it, and it was four meters high from water level; and another, constructed by Fr. Polo on a creek flowing in a deep ravine.<sup>73</sup>

*Statistics*

In Mahatao, as well as in the rest of Batanes, the population has followed a downtrend, as we have said earlier. Statistics about Mahatao follow:

|            |                                  |
|------------|----------------------------------|
| 1793 ..... | 816 Christians <sup>74</sup>     |
| 1796 ..... | 2,301 Christians <sup>75</sup>   |
| 1801 ..... | 2,638 Christians <sup>76</sup>   |
| 1828 ..... | 1,621 souls in all <sup>77</sup> |
| 1849 ..... | 1,060 souls <sup>78</sup>        |
| 1876 ..... | 1,036 souls <sup>79</sup>        |
| 1900 ..... | 1,161 souls <sup>80</sup>        |

## SABTANG

*Its location and founding*

The town of Sabtang occupies the fourth place among the towns of Batanes in chronological order. It is located at the foot

<sup>71</sup> Fr. Solís adds in his *Report*: "The houses of Mahatao, being white-washed, give the impression of being proper of other climates" (*Ibid.*)

<sup>72</sup> BRUGUES, 18.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> Cfr. APSR, MMSS, Section "Batanes," Vol. V, Doc. 9, fols. 376v-384.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, Doc. 13, fol. 120.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, Doc. 14, fol. 120.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, Doc. 25, fol. 5.

<sup>78</sup> *Revista Católica*, loc. cit.

<sup>79</sup> *Estado General*, etc., 1876.

<sup>80</sup> OCIO, *Monumento*, 151-152.

of a hill on the eastern coast of the island, opposite San José de Ivana. It was founded by Fr. Alejandro Ubide in 1844, and was raised to the status of an independent "Vicaría" by the Provincial Chapter of 1845, under the advocacy and spiritual patronage of St. Vincent Ferrer, although no priest was at once assigned to it.<sup>81</sup>

*Fr. Bel's impressions about the people of Sabtang*

Yet its initiation into the Catholic faith goes back to the early years of the annexation of Batanes to the crown of Castille. For it is a well established historical fact that, after the first unsuccessful attempt made by Fr. Mateo González in 1686-1688 to evangelize Batanes, Fr. Juan Bel, another pioneer priest, in 1719 visited Sabtang, or Siminanga, as the island was then called, after having first landed in Diwana, a coastal town of the bigger island of Basay or Batan.<sup>82</sup>

He was affectionately welcomed everywhere he went, and he could see in the people obvious signs of readiness and willingness to embrace our Catholic faith.<sup>83</sup> Here is how Fr. Bel describes their beliefs:

"They do not have idols, however, they believe in many superstitions. They believe in the immortality of the soul and maintain that the chiefs go to heaven where the Creator of all of us dwells. The commoners (*queilianes*), on the other hand, have to remain in the air since they are denied admission in heaven. They make the devil responsible for their deaths, and so, whenever someone falls sick, they place knives (*bolos*) and sharpened sticks behind the head of the sick one, making at the same time some sacrifices to the devil (*anito*) and saying a set of prayers so that the patient may get well."<sup>84</sup>

The reason why they were not yet Christians, they said, was the death of the early missionaries soon after they arrived, for,

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<sup>81</sup> BRUGUES, 19.

<sup>82</sup> PLATERO, ENRIQUE, O.P., "Pueblo de San Vicente de Sabtang, provincia de las Islas Batanes," 30 de diciembre de 1888," MS in APSR, Section "Batanes," Vol. III, Fols. 126v.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 127v.

had they been preached to by them, they all would by then have been converted to Christianity.<sup>85</sup>

*The "Sabteños," a restless people*

As we have earlier stated, in 1783 Frs. Calderón and Artíquez made a fourth attempt to establish the Batanes mission, and, unlike the three earlier attempts, it turned out to be a complete success. From Basay they soon extended their apostolic action to the nearby island of Sabtang.

The political annexation of Batanes to Spain carried out with extreme tact and prudence, was not altogether free from setbacks, due to the understandable nostalgia of some of its people for their former freedom. This proved especially true in Sabtang where some men led by Aman Dangat revolted against the Spaniards. However, their short-lived uprising was soon quelled with the firm hand, its leader executed, and the people ordered to transfer to Basay, where they set up the barrios of San Vicente de Batang and San Félix de Naviec, near Ivana. In spite of it all, they were allowed to cultivate their fields and tend their cattle in Sabtang, and for this reason this island was not totally deserted, and in time it was re-inhabited. This is why the Dominican order deemed proper to assign in 1944 a priest for their spiritual ministration.<sup>86</sup>

*The Vicars of Sabtang during the 19th century  
and their accomplishments*

Fr. Antonio Vicente, who was Vicar of Sabtang from 1844 to 1863, worked hard to instruct the common people in the rudiments of the Catholic faith, and for the élite, so to say, he founded the Confraternity of the Holy Rosary and the Third Order of St. Dominic.<sup>87</sup>

In a more down-to-earth plan he built the church and the convent of stone and mortar (*mampostería*), the courthouse (*tri-*

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<sup>85</sup> PLATERO, 127v.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 130

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*



*bunal*) and the Beaterio, where, as we have already seen in the island of Basay, there lived a small group of fully dedicated women who, besides tilling their fields, kept themselves busy in laundering, sewing, ironing and embroidering the holy vestments. For all this and their exemplary lives they were held in high esteem in the town.<sup>88</sup>

Fr. Antonio Vicente was succeeded in 1863 by Fr. Vicente Araujo who, although of a weak constitution, was a most observant Religious, who in turn was succeeded in 1869 by Fr. Rafael Cano.<sup>89</sup>

This Father must have been a lover of the arts and an enterprising missionary, as it is evident from the many improvements that he bequeathed to his successors and to the townspeople of Sabtang. Among them was a beautiful altar dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary on the epistle side of the church, the painting of the main altar and the visitors' room of the convent, a new school building for boys which called attention as a really well-done job, a cemetery and a dike along the seashore to check the inroads of the waves during typhoons.<sup>90</sup>

After a brief stint of Fr. Lorenzo Bernard who took over in 1876 and went to his eternal rest in the next year, Fr. Manuel Blasco took charge of the ministry in Sabtang. He was endowed with a big heart as evinced by his compassion towards his flock, helping them solve their family and social problems and troubles and succoring them with plentiful alms in their temporal needs.

In 1884 Fr. Blasco yielded his post to Fr. Enrique Platero who was destined to witness in that remote outpost called Sab-

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<sup>88</sup> In order to build the church it was found necessary to dig out extensively from a nearby hill that stood close to the sea. The reason for having chosen such a narrow place for the founding of the town of Sabtang was the following: When a missionary already took a permanent residence in the island, its inhabitants were spread in five *barrios*, namely, Sinakan, Saviduc, Chavayan, Sumnanga and Nakanmuan. The chief *principal* of the island had his house in the first of these *barrios*, and it was deemed convenient to go along with his wish that the town be founded in his place (BRUGUES, 22).

<sup>89</sup> PLATERO, 127.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.* Fr. Cano translated into the Ivatan dialect "The three lives of Jesus," a portion of the book entitled "Rosa Mística" written by the Dominican Fr. Ramón Martínez Vigil. The *beatas* made use of it for their daily meditations, together with the meditations of Fr. Luis de Granada, already rendered into Ivatan by Fr. Fabián Martín (*ibid.*, 131).

tang the transfer for sovereignty brought about in the Philippines by the 1898 Revolution.<sup>91</sup>

### *Population statistics*

The population of the island of Sabtang grew slowly in the 19th century as the following figures clearly show:

|            |                            |
|------------|----------------------------|
| 1848 ..... | 1,166 people <sup>92</sup> |
| 1875 ..... | 1,514 people <sup>93</sup> |
| 1897 ..... | 1,710 people <sup>94</sup> |

### ITBAYAT

The biggest island in the Batanes archipelago is without doubt the island of Itbayat. It is of difficult access due to the powerful undersea currents and due to the absence of suitable coves where a boat can take refuge during rough or heavy seas.<sup>95</sup> Its coast is all cliffs and the whole island looks like an irregular platform floating over the waves of the deep blue sea.<sup>96</sup>

The first missionary who reached Itbayat was Fr. Francisco de Paula Esteban in 1799. Then in 1833, when many of the islanders were already Catholic, the Dominican Fathers who regularly visited them grouped them into four towns: Santa Lucía de Caogasan, Santa María de Marrupi, San Rafael de Iyan and Santa Rosa de Calububan.<sup>97</sup>

However, due to the distances and to the humidity of the place — Itbayat was a densely forested island —, its spiritual administration often proved too tiring and demanding and hazardous for the health and safety of the missionary, and so the higher authorities, civil as well as ecclesiastical, decided to consolidate the four mentioned towns into one that was called Santa

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>92</sup> *Revista Católica*, loc. cit.

<sup>93</sup> *Estado General*..., 1875.

<sup>94</sup> *Estado General*..., 1897.

<sup>95</sup> MARTÍNEZ, DIEGO, O.P., "Itbayat," January 18, 1889, MS in APSR.

<sup>96</sup> Somebody has compared the island of Itbayat to a big chunk of cheese perforated underground not by worms but undersea currents.

<sup>97</sup> BRUGUES, 23.

María de Mayan, which was civilly and canonically constituted in 1855.<sup>98</sup>

Mayan is situated in the northern coast of the island on a somewhat rough ground, in which there are some springs of drinkable water, at a distance of 15 miles from Basay in a north-westerly direction.<sup>99</sup>

Because of the abundance of good lumber in the forests but lack of sand, the first buildings were made of wood. Luckily Fr. Manuel Blasco, one of its Vicars, found later some deposits of good sand that had been accumulated through the years in some spots of the coast by the underground sea currents.<sup>100</sup>

*A succession of Vicars and some interregnums*

The first Vicar of Itbayat was Fr. Vicente Araujo (1853-1858),<sup>101</sup> whose main task consisted in uprooting the evil practices which the islanders had inherited from their pagan ancestors. Then an interregnum of two years followed (1858-1860) during which the Itbayat mission was entrusted for lack of personnel to the Fathers of Batanes.

Fr. Juan Viladés, who took over in 1860, had much to suffer due to his personal temperament and character which often collided with the sinful and unsociable ways of the "Itbayates", as the inhabitants of the island were called, and he himself said so in a letter found in *Correo Sino-Anamita*. Later writers, however, describe the Itbayates as already turned into meek lambs.<sup>102</sup>

Then he was succeeded by Fr. Crescencio Polo (1867-1871), who was followed by Fr. Manuel Blasco (1871-1875). Due to lack of personnel from 1875 to 1884 the Fathers of Batanes were commissioned to take as an extra responsibility the spiritual care of the people of Itbayat.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>98</sup> MARTINEZ, 164v.

<sup>99</sup> BRUGUES, *loc. cit.*

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>101</sup> The Mission of Santa Maria de Mayan was accepted by the Provincial Chapter of 1855, and Fr. Araujo was named its first Vicar (Cfr. *Acta Capitulum Provincialium* . . . , Vol. III, pp. 255, 262.

<sup>102</sup> "Carta al M.R.P. Provincial Fr. Domingo Treserra," Itbayat, 20 de febrero de 1866, in *El Correo Sino-Anamita*, Manila, Imprenta del colegio de Santo Tomás, 1866, pp. 89-96.

<sup>103</sup> *Acta Capitulum Provincialium*, Vol. III, p. 470.

However, the Chapter of 1886 appointed a missionary for Itbayat who also would be in charge of the island of Calayan in the Babuyan group. This must have happened as a result of the Royal Order of February 2, 1885, complied with in Manila on April 25 of the same year, by which the old Calayan mission was restored. The missionary assigned then to Itbayat jointly with Calayan was the already famous Fr. Polo, one of the most outstanding missionaries of the archipelago in the second half of the 19th century. He died on November 29, 1887, while crossing from Basay to Itbayat after having had his spiritual retreat in Basco. He was at the time of his demise the Vicar Provincial.<sup>104</sup>

Fr. Polo was sincerely and deeply loved and mourned by his flock who received from him all kinds of help in their spiritual and temporal needs. Most particularly he assisted the needy with alms and the sick with medicines. The people of Itbayat were beholden to him for having constructed a ramp, comfortable and safe enough, to launch the small craft into the sea, inasmuch as the previous ramp often rendered the craft damaged and useless for further seafaring.<sup>105</sup>

The last Vicar in the 19th century was Fr. Manuel Blasco who at the end of September of 1898 had to leave the island as a captive on board the steamship *Compañía de Filipinas*, first for Basco and then for Aparri.

#### *Church and convent*

Fr. Araujo built in Itbayat a church and a convent which, although made of wood, were so solid and could withstand for many years the powerful gales that so often lash the Batanes group. Then Fr. Blanco laid down in 1872 the foundations of a more permanent church, raising its walls in the succeeding years to about one half of their regular height. The construction was carried on by his successor Fr. Polo. He was about to roof it when all of a sudden a typhoon struck so powerfully that the woodwork was blown away and the walls partly tumbled down.

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<sup>104</sup> MARTINEZ, 165v.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

Finally Fr. Blasco finished and blessed it in 1888. It measured 35 meters long by 7 meters wide.<sup>106</sup>

The Church was located on a high ground, and its front yard was an extensive square in the form of a plaza but at a lower level, and thus it was necessary to build a 16-step stairway connecting church and plaza.

The convent, built by Fr. Manuel Blasco, was a structure of wood, the posts being of ebony (*camagon*).<sup>107</sup>

#### *Other structures and improvements*

Also of wood, built by Fr. Blasco, were the courthouse and the school buildings for boys and girls. Outside the town on a high ground there stood a leprosarium of makeshift materials.<sup>108</sup>

Raele, 11 kilometers from Mayan, was its main barrio. It was located on a pleasant site, abounding in springs of drinkable water and planted to many fruit trees. Its soil was excellent for farming. In Mayan Fr. Blasco was planning to establish a populous barrio and to build a relatively safe harbor for accommodating the small craft that every now and then used to call at the island of Itbayat. But the advent of the 1898 Revolution thwarted his plan.<sup>109</sup>

#### *Itbayat in the Report of Fr. Serrano in 1895*

Here is how Fr. Félix Serrano reported to the Provincial about the state Itbayat from the ecclesiastical aspect: "Itbayat has a stone church roofed with *cogon*, of recent construction and in good condition, a courthouse headed by its *gobernadorcillo*, and schools for both sexes supported by the government... All its inhabitants are Catholic... The convent of Itbayat is of light materials and in need of repairs... In the time of our Fr. Payá,

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<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> BRUGUES, 24.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 25

Fr. Blasco asked the Provincial (i.e., the same Fr. Santiago Payá) for permission to build a small chapel in Itbayat, in the *sitio* of San José de Raelé. It is of light materials, as the convent... <sup>110</sup>

### *Statistics*

Here is how the Catholic population of Itbayat stood throughout the 19th century:

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| 1801 ..... | 51 Catholic boys and girls <sup>111</sup>  |
| 1802 ..... | 389 Catholic boys and girls <sup>112</sup> |
|            | 64 Catholic adults                         |
| 1805 ..... | 323 Catholic boys and girls <sup>113</sup> |
|            | 63 Catholic adults                         |
| 1807 ..... | 300 Catholic boys and girls <sup>114</sup> |
|            | 70 Catholic adults                         |
| 1811 ..... | 336 Catholic adults <sup>115</sup>         |
| 1817 ..... | 327 Catholics <sup>116</sup>               |
| 1828 ..... | 180 Catholics <sup>117</sup>               |
| 1832 ..... | 171 Catholics <sup>118</sup>               |
| 1948 ..... | 1,689 souls (all Catholic) <sup>119</sup>  |
| 1875 ..... | 1,060 souls (all Catholics) <sup>120</sup> |
| 1898 ..... | 1,027 souls (all Catholics) <sup>121</sup> |

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<sup>110</sup> Cfr. APSR, MSS, Section "Batanes," Vol. XIII, p. 566.

<sup>111</sup> "Lista General del número de almas que hoy, día de la fecha, existen en estas Islas Batanes, con distinción de los pueblos y sus visitas, como también el residuo de infieles que en ellas permanecen," MS in APSR, Section "Batanes," Vol. V, Doc. 14, fol. 106.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, fol. 110.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, Doc. 15, fol. 78.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, Doc. 17, fol. 71.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, Doc. 19, fol. 65v.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, Doc. 22, fol. 24v.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, Doc. 25, fol. 25.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, Doc. 28, fol. 49v.

<sup>119</sup> *Revista Católica*, loc. cit.

<sup>120</sup> *Estado General*..., 1875.

<sup>121</sup> *Estado General*..., 1897.