Religious Art in Batanes

Introduction

Early in the Spanish contact with the people of what is now known as the province of Batanes, it was noted that although they had some form of religion built around the concept of *añitu*,[1] they did not have idols.[2] "Religious art in Batanes" will, therefore, refer in this paper exclusively to the artifacts of Catholic religious life in Batanes. The ideal time frame is the last two hundred years (1783-1983) within which time the Catholic Faith established there permanently in 1783 by two Dominican missionaries has uninterruptedly flourished. However, because of the insurmountable difficulty of dating the many extant but anonymous religious artifacts still in the Batanes churches and convents today, the two hundred years frame remains ideal. The approach of this paper, therefore, will be broadly chronological by referring certain styles of the artworks to generalized spans of time rather than to exact dates.

A study of this nature in today's Catholic Philippines has at least two significances: (1) to record those aspects of Filipino

[1] Juan Bel, "Reseña de la Islas Batanes en el Año 1720," (MSS of four leaves written back to back, and is incomplete. Available to this writer was the microfilm copy at the Ateneo de Manila University Microform Department, Cat. No. 1404b.) See also my "The World and the Ways of the Ivatan Añitu" in *Philippine Studies*, 28 (1980) : 21-58.

[2] Juan Bel, *op. cit.* He noted, ... no tienen ídolos, sino algunas vanas observancias." In connection with the "vanas observancias," they were reported as using "sharpened sticks" and such other paraphernalia connected with religious acts, but I am excluding such artifacts from the scope of the term "art" in this paper.

culture that reflect the background and current status of his religious life; and (2) to record and present to the interested public the highlights of artistic skills that Filipinos have reached at some point in their history, or artifacts of great beauty to which they have been exposed and may have touched or lifted their hearts and minds to heights more than the merely mundane. In effect, the record of the art produced or appreciated by a people is the record of the movements of their soul. If they produced the art, one may say it expresses their soul, as it were, projects it. If they did not produce it but procured it for their appreciation, their inspiration, their edification, then it reflects what their soul tried to reach out for — and may have reached. There may be a third significance, for the people of Batanes (Ivatans) who celebrate in 1983 the bicentennial of the permanent establishment of Christianity in their islands: (3) to provide an aggregated sort of picture of the reflections of their religious heritage to enable them to judge the quality of their past and the directions of their present by way of sensing the obvious as well as the subtle changes in their lives as a Christian people. For indeed there are changes, and the religious artifacts in Batanes reflect in essentially unintended ways the present, and may be the future, drift of Ivatan religious, may be even social, life. It is in this that a paper like this may be of interest to art historians, social scientists, Filipinists, and religious pastors.

The Beginnings of Catholic Religious Art in Batanes

The late 17th century to the middle of the 18th appears to have been a productive era for religious artists. Their trade, in fact, had reached a level of organization that guilds began to be formed, two of which were the *Gremio de Mestizos de Santa Cruz* and the *Gremo de Chinos in Binondo*[3]. It may be inferred from this that there was a significant market for religious art works, both official and private. Official market would be churches and other such religious public institutions; and private would be citizens who, as Pilar himself noted, had their own private altars. In effect, the 17th and 18th centuries saw a flourishing of religious

[3] Santiago A. Pilar, "Manila's Early Ateliers: Tracing the History of the Filipino Icon," in *Archipelago*, Feb. 1979, p. 12.

art. It was in this period when the Dominicans were struggling to establish a missionary foothold in Batanes and finally succeeding in 1783. It was to be expected, therefore, that influence of the religious artistic spirit of the era would reach Batanes through the missionaries, as it did in fact.

After José Huelva y Melgarejo received his appointment as the first politico-military governor of Batanes, he wrote to then Governor General José Basco y Vargas from Nueva Segovia (Tuguegarao) on October 20, 1782 to ask for, among other things, materials "para fábrica de iglesias, convento, etc.," and "veinte y cinco Pampango artistas con todas sus herramientas..." and "imágenes" of the patron saints, bells and other ornaments.[4] Just over a month later on November 28, Gov. José Basco y Vargas ordered the preparation of "ornamentos para el Santo Sacrificio de la Misa y para dos iglesias" with a reference to a list of "ornamentos."[5] As a result of the order, on January 30, 1783, the "oficiales reales" in Manila released money to the Dominican procurator general for "ornamentos, altares, cálices, campanas, etc." Among the materials to be prepared for the Batanes conquest were

> una cruz grande bien labrada de molave, u otra madera... para que se fije como distintivo e insignia de esta nueva empresa delante del primer templo que se edifique... y así mismo deverá hacer su pedestal o peana de tres o cuatro gradas de buena piedra que podrá ir preparada y labrada en piezas...[6]

On March 4, 1784, Fr. Baltazar Calderón wrote to the Procurator General of his order requesting for an "imagen de N.P. Sto. Domingo."[7] And on April 9, 1784, he wrote again to the Procurator General Fr. Vicente Texada speaking of "crucecillas de plata" which he seems to have ordered earlier, and "dos crucifijos de mano de madera," and a "cuadro que figure el infierno,

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[4] *Documentos de Batanes*, vol. 1, p. 60. (This compilation of typescript documents prepared by Fr. Malumbres from originals now in the Archives of the University of Santo Tomás has a three-volume set at the Dominican House in Basco. It is to this source that I refer, and henceforth to be called DDB.)

[5] DDB, vol. 1, p. 69.

[6] DDB, vol. 1, p. 76.

[7] DDB, vol. 3, p. 66.

los diablos y los condenados."[8] It seems that these orders did not come promptly so that by October 6 of the same year, the same Fr. Calderón wrote again to remind Fr. Texada about his order for "Sto. Christos y estampas de pintura..."[9] And meanwhile, they had in Batanes more reason to require "imágenes" as Gov. José de Huelva had foreseen. In a letter of October 7, 1784, it is indicated that Patron Saints had been designated for all villages that already had a significant number of Christians:[10]

Basco	Sto. Domingo
Ivana	San José
Itbud	San Antonino de Florencia
Mananioy	San Vicente Ferrer
Racujaidi	San Raimundo de Peñafort
Itayan	Sta. Catalina de Sena
Iyan	San Juan Bautista
Mahatao	San Bartolomé
Manalolsol	San Juan Nepomuceno
Chanalan	Los Tres Reyes
Imnajbu	Sta. Rosa de Lima

Unfortunately, there have not been too many indications available to me indicating that all the ordered religious artifacts were actually being sent to and received in Batanes. The first indication of the arrival of an image is found in a list of things received by Fr. Calderón on June 18, 1786: "Imagen de Nuestra Señora del Rosario con su media caña."[11] But it is a matter of supposition that there were many religious artifacts being sent to the missions as no efforts were being spared to facilitate attraction of the natives to the Church. One of the public manifestations which dramatized the new Christian presence were processions, and for Spanish Philippines, this meant images, and sometimes plenty of them. The same Fr. Calderón who had been ordering images wrote on June 20, 1786:[12]

> "... celebramos ya aquí los Oficios Divinos con la misma solemnidad que se suele por los pueblos de esas pro-

[8] Ibid., p. 64.
[9] DDB, vol. 2, p. 41.
[10] DDB, vol. 2, pp. 47; 56; 67.
[11] DDB, vol. 2, p. 17.
[12] DDB, vol. 2, p. 24.

> vincias; en la semana santa celebramos las tenieblas e hicimos nuestras procesiones con gran solemnidad y asistencia puntual de nuestros neófitos, rodeados de multitud de infieles..."

The remains of the first church of Sto. Domingo de Basco dating to the end of the last decade of the 18th century (probably after 1795) has grand niches back of the high altar suggesting that once upon a time, imposing statuary of the Saints may have occupied them. In fact, a large image of the Immaculate Conception made of very hard wood may have once stood in one of those niches. The Immaculate Conception, at the beginning of the Christianization of Batanes, was the provincial patroness, and Batanes was called *la provincia de la Concepción.* This statue now stands, with partially damaged pedestal, at the sacristy of the Basco cathedral. (See Plate 1.) In fact, religious artifacts may have been everywhere, for in the inventory of José María Peñaranda in 1830, the Baluarte de San Vicente at Basco had "1 estampa con cuadro de madera de la Virgen del Rosario."[13] And this seems to have been in the artillery room. And at the "Cuartel de la tropa," another "cuadro de la Virgen del Rosario."[14] At the Casa Real, quite naturally, was "1 retrato de caña de Carlos III." This is being pointed out if only to show that the use of pictures in the Batanes was not strictly religious only, but rather a part of a larger phenomenon of culture change being effected by the process of christianization as well as hispanization; and that this spirit of the time was utterly favorable to the acquisition and popular use of works of art that may be both religious as well as esthetic.

The beginnings of Catholic religious art in Batanes, therefore, was the coming of the Dominican missionaries to establish permanently, it turned out, the Catholic Church in the Batanes islands. The religious art they brought, it is clear, at that point in time, was an import rather than a native outgrowth of the new Faith.

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[13] DDB, vol. 3, p. 405.

[14] DDB, vol. 3, p. 406.

Doctrinal Basis and Pedagogical Uses of Religious Art

It is impossible to imagine how the great cities of Europe would look today had Iconoclasm prevailed instead of the Second Council of Nicaea (787 A.D.) that declared that "he who worships an image worships the reality of him who is painted on it." How would the great cathedrals and churches, the basilicas, look with neither paintings nor statues?

There has been, however, a deeper reason for the profusion of Christian art depicting personages and narratives from the Scriptures and from the lives of Christian heroes and Saints. The reason was defined with the stamp of infallibility by the General Council of Trent (1563), particularly the twenty-fifth session which dealt with the invocation, veneration, and relics of Saints and on sacred images.

The veneration of Saints. At the heart of the question of whether the images of Saints may be venerated is the question of whether Saints may be venerated. Thus the Council of Trent had to deal with this key question. And its answer was:[15]

> The Holy Council commands all bishops and others who hold the office of teaching and have charge of the cure of souls that, in accordance with the usage of the Catholic and Apostolic Church received from the primitive times of the Christian religion, and with the unanimous teaching of the holy Fathers and the decrees of sacred Councils, they above all instruct the faithful diligently in matters relating to *intercession and invocation of the Saints*, the veneration of relics, and the legitimate use of images, teaching them that the saints who reign together with Christ offer up their prayers to God for men, that it is good and beneficial suppliantly to invoke them and to have recourse to their prayers, assistance and support in order to obtain favours from God through his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who alone is our Redeemer and saviour; and that they think impiously who deny that the saints

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[15] See Denzinger's *Enchiridion Symbolorum Definitionum et Declarationum de Rebus Fidei et Morum*, 33rd Edition (Herder), No. 1821. This will be *Enchiridion* henceforth. The English text quoted here, as henceforth, is from Karl Rahner, S.J., ed. *The Teaching of the Catholic Church as Contained in Her Documents*, (Staten Island, New York: Alba House, 1967), No. 400.

> who enjoy eternal happiness in heaven are to be invoked, or who assert that they do not pray for men, or that our invocation of them to pray for each of us individually is idolatry, or that it is opposed to the word of God and inconsistent with the honour of the "one mediator of God and men, Jesus Christ" (I Tim. 2:5), or that it is foolish to pray vocally or mentally to those who reign in heaven.

This doctrine was both consoling and profitable for the apostolate. The achievements of Theology and Philosophy were nearly impossible to translate to the unlettered catechumen even as late as the 18th century (not to speak of today). If the Saints' intercession was consoling, the narrative of their exemplary lives provided the concrete, so to speak, the incarnation of the Gospel in individual Christian lives. Since the Saints were formed by the Word of God from Whom alone they received their extraordinary heroism and holiness, to imitate them was to be formed in the likeness of God's Incarnate Word. This doctrine on the special relation that the Saints have with God and the salutariness of praying to them so that they in turn pray for the earthly Church resulted in a vast amount of literature, ritual, and art in Catholic Christendom.

Related to the veneration and invocation of Saints was the doctrine of the "resurrection of the body" on the last Day. This meant that it was not only a proper and salutary way of expressing the veneration of the Saints to honor their earthly remains, their relics, which had, in their earthly life served as the temples of the Holy Spirit, but also an occasion for the profession of the belief in the doctrine of the Resurrection of the body at the end of time. Thus the same Council of Trent declared:[56]

> Also that the *holy bodies of the holy martyrs* and of others living with Christ, which were the living members of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit, to be awakened by him to eternal life and to be glorified, are to be venerated by the faithful, through which many benefits are bestowed by God on men, so that those who maintain that veneration and honour are not due to the relics of the saints or that these and other memorials are honoured by the faithful without profit, and that the places dedicated to the memory of the saints for the pur-

[16] *Enchiridion*, No. 1822; Rahner, *op. cit.*, No. 401.

> pose of obtaining their aid are visited in vain, are to be utterly condemned, as the Church has long since condemned and now again condemns them.

In Christian Europe especially, but not exclusively, this doctrine provided the orthodox basis for not only the continuance but also the creation of many traditions that, by consequence, produced a great mass of religious art. Reliquaries in precious metals such as gold and silver, adorned with precious stones were created to contain the relics of the saints. Churches and altars, statues and monuments proliferated to memorialize the saints. Even literature received a great mass of lore and pious legend as well as authentic history tracing the origin of relics, memorials, and other artifacts deemed connected with Christian heroes. In the Philippines, following the European via the Spanish tradition, churches through the Spanish colonial period (as it is even so today) designated patron saints for churches by naming them after the titular Saint and placing in it prominently an appropriate image of the Saint. This influenced significantly both architectural designing of churches and the interior decoration and religious adornment of both exterior and interior of religious buildings. In the Church of San Vicente Ferrer at Sabtang, for example, a stone tower was constructed beside the *espadaña* church facade atop which was placed the statue of the patron saint — and it stands there to this day. Inside, the backdrop of the high altar as it was designed in the middle of the 19th century placed the image of San Vicente centrally.

The high value placed on the use of the images of Saints was also not merely an offshoot of the veneration of relics (although there are images that were designed not only to be representations of the saints but also to be containers of the relics of the saint himself or herself). It was based on orthodox Catholic doctrine. Trent said:[17]

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[17] *Enchiridion*, No. 1823; Rahner, *op. cit.*, No. 402. Rahner also cites the provisions of Canon Law, especially C. 1276: "It is good and profitable to invoke the aid of the Servants of God who reign together with Christ and to venerate their relics and images. All the faithful should honor with childlike devotion the Blessed Virgin Mary above all others." And C. 1277, § 1: "Only those Servants of God are to be publicly venerated who by decree of the Church are ranked among the Saints or the Blessed." Nos. 403 and 404.

> Moreover, that the images of Christ, of the Virgin Mother of God, and of the other saints are to be placed and retained especially in the churches and that due honor and veneration is to be given to them; not, however, that any divinity or virtue is believed to be in them by reason of which they are to be venerated, or that something is to be asked of them, or that trust is to be placed in images, as was done of old by the Gentiles who placed their hope in idols; but because the honour which is shown them is referred to the prototypes which they represent, so that by means of images which we kiss and before which we uncover our heads and prostrate ourselves, we adore Christ and venerate the saints whose likeness they bear. That is what was defined by the decrees of the Councils, especially the Second Council of Nicaea, against the opponents of images . . .

It is doubtful whether any number of Catholic faithful in Spanish time Philippines, or in Batanes in particular, could have read these Church pronouncements, but it is certain that the missionaries in the Philippines, as elsewhere, took these with great enthusiasm. The thinking appears to have been this: that if the *invocation of Saints, the veneration of their relics and memorials* to them, and *veneration of their images* (whether in the form of pictures or statues) are "good and beneficial" and that through them "many benefits are bestowed by God on men," therefore it is the obligation of the "cure of souls" (the Dominican missionaries in the case of Batanes) to provide the opportunity for the faithful to invoke the Saints and venerate their relics and images. This was an obligation thoroughly and enthusiastically fulfilled despite the great difficulty of transporting the early images for the pioneer Ivatan Christians.

For the "invocation of the Saints," the early missionaries began almost as soon as they arrived on Batanes soil to learn the native language. The fruits of such learning were catechisms of Catholic doctrine and prayer books among which were books of pious meditations and novenas. Sometimes all these were in one volume.[18] Relics are by their nature limited; and for Batanes

[18] The first book ever printed in the Ivatan language was the *Catecismo de la Doctrina Christiana* written in Ivatan by Fr. Nicolás Castaño, O.P., printed at the press of Don José María Dayot, in 1834. A thick volume called *Mapia Amigo* (good friend) which probably went through several printings is a compendium of prayers, meditations, instructions on good Christian living, and so on. Many copies of this are still in use today.

little else other than the canonically required relics of Saints placed on altar stones may have been brought there.[19] But the images for veneration through time accumulated and populated church altars and walls. They eventually overflowed from sacristies into convents and beaterios for safekeeping, especially those images that were used only at certain times of the Church year.

And as Christianity took deeper roots in Ivatan culture, images both as pictures and as statues began to be procured for use in the homes where, as a result, little altars or just plain reserved space on a table or on the wall was dedicated for the holy image or images. Up to the present, these may still be seen in many Ivatan homes. And as both wealth and opportunity, and piety inspired it, Ivatans have acquired statues and other forms of religious art directly from Manila. All these for the realization of orthodox Catholic belief and attitude regarding Saints and images — a doctrine that has inspired some of the sublimest works of art in Christendom.

A discussion on the uses of religious art will not be sufficient without mentioning the pedagogical use of images. In the Batanes missions of the 1783 missionaries, one gets an inkling of the use of religious pictures from the letter of Fr. Calderon asking for a *"cuadro que figure el infierno, los diablos y los condenados."* This picture was used to give the catechumen and the new Christians some visual aid to help them imagine what damnation and eternal punishment entailed both in terms of horror and ugliness associated with sin. This, of course, is not a "holy image," but its use suggests what else the holy images were used for. In the time of Governor Joaquín del Castillo (1789-1794), the man who abolished by decree the wearing of *abalorios* by the natives and ordered them to wear "decent clothing," (by which he meant clothing that covered most of the body), the well-clothed images of the Saints served as visual models of modesty, as indeed the lay tertiaries of the Dominican Order, the women especially, until today imitate not only the modesty but also the black and white colors of the habit of the patroness and model of the

[19] Although recently, many religious articles carrying particles of "tierra catacomba" or pieces of wood from olives in Gethsemane have been circulated, only reliquaries "Agnus Dei" appear to be of older vintage.

hermanas, the Dominican St. Catherine of Sienna (plates 2 and 3) whose image is in all the parish churches.

Types of Religious Art in Batanes Today

Religious art refers, in this paper, to an assortment of (1) statues, (2) paintings, (3) religious articles associated with liturgy and prayer, and (4) ornaments associated with acts of religion. Churches as works of the art of architecture are undoubtedly religious art of a grand scale. But this type of religious art deserves separate treatment. They are, therefore, arbitrarily excluded from this study.

Statues of Saints. The single biggest group of religious works of art are the statues of saints and Christ. For the purpose of classification, one can take the chronological approach so that it may be shown how, through time, artistic as well as religious trends develop. The problem with this in the case of the Batanes religious images is that hardly any of the extant ones can be assigned a specific date of make or arrival in Batanes. It is known, for example, that in 1786, a statue of Our Lady of the Rosary arrived. Question is, there are many such statues in Batanes today. Which of these came some two hundred years ago? The only approximation of time that has been available to me is oral tradition and occasional stray references in the reports of missionaries such, for example, as the report in 1888 that Fr. Rafael Cano, O.P. decorated the backwall behind the high altar, and made the altar of Our Lady of the Rosary in Sabtang. Fr. Cano was there between 1869 and 1876. One may assume that the statues so well suited to the design of the niches above the high altar, and the statue of the Lady of the Rosary on the side altar were there as reason for both the decoration and the construction (unless, of course, one assumes that Fr. Cano was decorating empty niches and constructing altars for statues still absent at the time). If this is acceptable, then it may be assumed that the statue of San Vicente Ferrer (plate 4), and of Our Lady of the Rosary (Plate 5) were already in Batanes sometime between 1869 and 1876. This approach, however, cannot be done to most of the religious statues in Batanes today.

A second approach may be to classify them according to authorship or source. Again this is not possible since the said statues have no record of their origins nor of their makers.

A third would be to inventory them by location or types, which serves no important purpose in this paper.

A functionalist approach will be more profitable here. This can help explain some of the whats and whys of the statues, and at the same time provide helpful occasion to elaborate on certain features and traditions related to them. From this point of view, the Batanes statues may be roughly classified as (a) the stationary ones, and (b) the portable ones.

The stationary statues appear to have been meant for permanent location on a fixed part of a church. This is generally the case with statues on niches on the wall that used to be (in pre-Vatican II altar arrangement which was such that the priest at Mass had his back to the congregation) the backdrop of the high altar. Statues of this nature are usually made of solid material, wood normally, and heavy. Their pedestals often do not have allowance for attachment to processional carriages or the portable *andas*. Example is that of San Vicente Ferrer in the church of Sabtang (see plate 4). Even when Church seasonal celebrations, such as the feast of the Lady of the Rosary in October or of Christmas, required the installing of a festive *arco* to contain the required images (like that of the Lady of the Rosary, or that of the manger group at Christmas), the stationary images need not be removed. They are merely hidden behind a large curtain and the *arco* constructed on the outer space which is between the back of the altar and the back wall on which the niches are.[20]

Because of their position on the general layout of the church, and because they are seen only from a distance by the people, these images are usually of large dimensions. The statue of the Lady of the Immaculate Conception is 153 cm. from head to pedestal, 132 cm. from head to foot (minus a halo that is now lost).

[20] In Basco and Mahatao today, the central image is taken down and the image of the Saint being honored is temporarily placed there.

The portable statues are generally of three kinds: (a) the small ones which are by their lightness easily transferable from one location to another as convenience or custom required; (b) the large ones which have no permanent location in the church, but because of seasonal need to bring them out during the duration of novena prayers, they are normally kept in the storeroom or sacristy and brought out only as occasion called for them; and (c) the large processional statues whose basic construction is designed to be light as well as fitted mechanically to a detachable base with shafts for carrying (*andas*). These statues usually have detachable parts: heads, hands, and feet. They are invariably fitted with textile garments and detachable ornaments such as aureoles, halos, crowns, rosaries, and other such iconographic and hagiographic emblems or symbols.[20a]

The detachability has advantages for storage and variability. Sometimes it is necessary to keep in safe places certain very precious components such as gold crowns, aureoles, haloes, necklaces, or in modern times, the ivory parts (usually the head and the hands, and occasionally the feet). For variability, two or more different saints' head or hands can fit a single set of flexible trunk and limbs. In Sabtang, for example, there used to be a wooden trunk-and-limbs structure that could be used for both Saints Dominic and Vincent Ferrer. When the image of St. Dominic was needed, the flexible arms were fitted with a right hand that held a cross staff on which hang a pennant with the Dominican symbols; a left hand holding a book and rosary, and a head with a bearded face. When used for St. Vincent, a beardless head was used; the right arm was fitted with a hand whose forefinger pointed heavenwards, a left hand with a book; on its head a halo with an attached scroll announcing "fear God"; and wings. The same Dominican habit of black and white was used for both.

Another example of variability is that of the Lady of the Rosary of Sabtang (Plate 5) or of Mahatao (Plate 7A and 7B).

[20a] By iconographic emblems or symbols I am referring to conventional indicators that identify certain images like, for example, the three rays of light projecting from the head (Plate 6) point to the image as that of Christ, or a halo of stars, that of the Blessed Virgin Mary; or wings on a Dominican indicating that the statue is that of St. Vincent Ferrer who, by tradition, is said to have referred to himself as the "angel del apocalypsis," etc.

These two are ordinarily statues of the Lady of the Rosary carrying on their left arm the Holy Child (See Plate 7A), but when they are dressed for the Easter Sunday procession of the meeting of the Blessed Mother and the Risen Christ (See Plate 8), the Holy Child is removed. A less successful adaptation is one that I saw in the Church of Ivana where, for lack of a statue of the risen Christ, the staff with the standard of the Resurrection is attached to the right hand of a statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus which is permanently in the posture of blessing rather than of triumphant emergence from the grave.

The statues with detachable parts have the distinct artistic advantage of having heads, hands, and sometimes feet, made of ivory and therefore more durable. They have also, as a class, shown remarkable superiority of craftsmanship, and with their fine realistic glass eyes come almost alive (See Plate 6 for example).

.... The textile garments of the portable statues have two advantages: lightness and variability. Up to the present, images carried in procession are not borne on wheeled carriages, but on the shoulders of devotees. In this case, lightness is an advantage. On the variability side, a single image can have a wardrobe consisting of various vestments to be worn on different occasions. For example, the Easter robes of the Blessed Virgin may be different from the October rosary robes (See Plate 7-A and 7-B).

The images related to the Passion and Death of Christ, as in other parts of Christian Philippines, have been traditionally the center of *Semana Santa* (Holy Week) rites. This area of religious art naturally received much attention. In the case of Batanes, as indicated by the above-cited letter of Fr. Calderón, solemn Holy Week processions and the *tenieblas* were already being done in 1786, barely three years after the inception of their missionary work. Judging by the extant images, and which are still being used, much artistic attention was devoted to depicting the Passion and Death of Christ. The most significant artifacts in this class are the (a) *Nazareno,* (b) *Dolorosa,* (c) crucifixes both large and small, (d) stations of the cross, (e) *Nuestro Señor de Santa Paciencia,* (f) *Nuestro Señor del Santo Entierro,* (g) *Nuestro*

Señor de la Resurrección, and probably others like Sta. Maria Magdalena and such other biblical characters associated with the passion but which are now lost, or possibly unidentified, like the polychrome wood in the choir loft at San Carlos Church which may well be a St. Mary Magdalen. (See Plate 17.)

The *Nazarenos,* as is generally the case in the Philippines, are in the posture of half-kneeling, as if fallen from the weight of the Cross which is poised on the right shoulder of each image. (See Plate Nos. 9, 10 and 11.) They are life-size in dimensions. In all cases, the head, hands, and legs can be detached and put away for safekeeping outside Holy Week. Like the other statues with detachable parts, the Nazarenos wear textile garments of violet or purple. And on the head they wear three rays which is the traditional identification of Christ.

The *Mater Dolorosa,* or simply Dolorosa as the people call her, is robed in black (Plates 12-A and 12-B), and wears upon her breast a heart pierced by seven daggers representing the traditional *siete dolores de la virgen* (seven sorrows of the Virgin Mary). The artistically superior sample of the Dolorosa is that of Sabtang (Plate 12-A) whose clasped hands and sad but tearless face conveys enough of sorrow. She wears a golden heart surmounted by flames symbolizing love, and an aureole around her face in the style of traditional Dolorosas of Spain and the rest of the Philippines.

By contrast, the Dolorosa at Basco has extravagant expression, complete with the sentimental tilt of the head, and with painted tears flowing down her cheeks.

The Dolorosas, like the Nazarenos, have detachable parts which are put aside for safekeeping most of the year. They are brought out only during the Holy Week.

The religious image that appears in the greatest variety of sizes, styles, and uses is the *crucifix.* While its subject and general form are invariable — Christ crucified — the sizes range from life-size to the miniature that serves as pendant in rosaries and necklaces. It is also probably the most varied in material, lead to gold, plaster to ivory, wood, and in recent times, plastic.

The life-size crucifixes are in churches (Plates 13-A and 13-B). For some reason, the sculptors did not deem it convenient to sculpt the hair of these images. Instead, wigs fashioned from human hair have been used, and in each case a crown of thorns presses the hair down. In one case, that of Sabtang, there is sculpted hair, but the crown of thorns must have been added as a detachable piece, and it is now lost. It is also significantly smaller than those of Basco and Mahatao.

The smaller ones which, in the general range from table or altar crucifixes to the life-size, have been called medium-size crucifixes, like those in Plates Nos. 14-A and 14-D, may have been used for the liturgy of the Adoration of the Cross on Good Friday since these were both portable and visible enough to the congregation when the officiating priest sings the *Ecce lignum crucis*.

The table crucifixes that have appropriate bases to keep them standing (See Plate 14-B and 14-D) appear to have been altar crucifixes usually placed on top of tabernacles whether on the main or side altars. They are usually made of bronze entirely, or partly bronze (usually the Christ and its ornamentation) and wood (Plate 14-B). Those found in homes are usually centerpieces in family altars.

The smallest of the cruciforms used for religious (and sometimes ornamental) purposes are the cross pendants worn in rosaries and in other necklaces. The small crosses with the image of Christ are definitely imported from outside Batanes. But the gold crosses worn for both religious and ornamental purposes are very frequently the handiwork of Ivatan goldsmiths. Small pendant crosses have been extensively used by Ivatans especially because of the tradition taught them by their Dominican missionaries to wear the rosary beads around their necks both as sign of devotion and as reminder for the habitual prayer of the rosary. It has also become the common belief that wearing such symbols of piety can ward off evil.

Crucifixes exclusively used in connection with church liturgy are the processional crosses (See Plate 14-C) with their matching *ciriales* or processional candle holders. The processional crosses

are usually of varied design that is adapted to the mood of the liturgy. Funeral processions, for example, used less ornate crosses, while high church festivals use the more ornate ones. Those in use today come from the 19th century, it seems, though the date of their purchase from outside Batanes is not definitely known. It is the wear, the style, and oral tradition that has assigned them to the last century. Although they are poorly maintained, as farmer *sacristanes* have only but Sundays and Holy Days to handle them, many of these crosses continue to bear clear evidence of the high artistry that fashioned them long ago. Their silver parts and plating continue to bear the charm of the age that produced them.

Though not in big number, the precious crucifixes with ivory Christs need to be noted. Fr. Rafael Carpintero, O.P. of San Vicente in Sabtang, for example, told this writer how he discovered one such ivory crucifix. It was black with dirt it accumulated from ages of neglect in some corner of the church. When he washed it, he found out what he himself showed me — an exquisitely crafted ivory Christ. Such artifacts, like all the other ivory pieces, were not made in Batanes but brought in from outside either by the Dominicans themselves or homecoming Ivatans who got them from Manila and other places in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

One of the popular religious exercises of Holy Week has been *the Via Crucis* or the Stations of the Cross. By church rule, this is to be performed with pictorial representations of the events that happened to Jesus carrying the Cross on His way to Calvary, and with these a cross (usually of wood in the past) on each station. Churches, therefore, even in far off places like Batanes, were provided with such aids to devotion. What type of *estampas de pintura* were used in the 18th and 19th centuries is not known today. But within memory, the churches were provided with press printed pictures, usually polychromatic, and framed in wood and glass. As these degenerated, recent replacements are made of plaster low relief and painted to appear like bronze.

Related still to the drama of the passion and Death of Christ is the image of the suffering Christ under the title of *Nuestro*

Señor de Santa Paciencia. This image has not been found in many places. In fact the only one seen by this writer was the one at Basco (Plate 14-E). It is 54 centimeters from head to pedestal, and is enclosed in a glass bubble. This image has been used as an aid to meditation on the humility and uncomplaining suffering of the Redeemer. This used to be on one of the side altars of the cathedral at Basco, but after its three gold rays on the head were stolen, it was removed for safe keeping by the parish priest.

The *Nuestro Señor del Santo Entierro* is the image of the dead Jesus, usually enclosed in an ornate sort of bier and carried in procession on Good Friday to dramatize what took place at Calvary after the lifeless body of Jesus was taken down from the Cross and brought to burial at the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea (Luke 23:50-55). The image is of wood, and life size. A good example of this is the one in the church of San Carlos in Mahatao. Ivatans call the procession *kapamuvun* (the burial).

The *Nuestro Señor de la Resurreccion* is an indispensable image in the *kapayvayat* (the meeting of Jesus and Mary after Jesus rose from the dead) early on Easter morning, usually just before the sun rises. In Batanes today, there are two types of the Resurreccion image: (a) the common image one finds in much of Catholic Philippines — the adult whiteclad Christ holding triumphantly a white banner of victory, and (b) the Holy Child type (See Plates 8 and 17-C) with the distinctive banner of the Resurrection, and which is actually used regularly during the Easter Sunday procession. The only place in the Batanes where this sort of *Santo Niño de la Resurrección* (if I may call it that) is used, as far as I have observed, is the parish of San Vicente in Sabtang.

The Santo Niño of the Resurrection of Sabtang is unusual among the Santo Niños in that both in pictures and in statues, the Holy Child is depicted with a globe on its left hand surmounted by a cross (Plate 6) and its right hand in the position of blessing (Plates 6, 17-A and 17-B). The Sabtang Santo Niño is evidently intended to be of the Resurrection, not merely an adaptation for convenience due to lack of a proper image. The statue, made of

fine ivory and with superior workmanship, holds a tiny globe on its right hand representing the world he had redeemed from sin, and on its left hand it holds the banner of the resurrection triumph. It is usually dressed in white, although in very recent time, gold-colored clothing has been used.

There is another type of Sto. Niño — that of Christmas. During the Christmas season, a day or days are set aside for the image of the newly-born Jesus to be brought to the homes of the faithful for veneration. All the parish churches have at least one of these Christmas Santo Niños.

Paintings. The "estampas de pintura" requested by the pioneer missionaries appear not to have survived the ravages of time and weather. But my survey in the present seems to distinguish two types of *estampas*: the prints, and the true paintings.

Printed pictures do not appear in the churches, except in the form of stations-of-cross pictures — of recent vintage, the older ones having been discarded due to their advanced stage of degeneration. But even pictures of the stations of the cross have now gradually given way to low relief depictions made of plaster like the ones at the cathedral at Basco. But they appear to be of low or no artistic value. The vast number of religious prints are in private homes, mostly press-printed pictures framed in wood and glass. Most of such pictures are traceable to Manila where family members or relatives bought them.

The more artistic religious pictures are the paintings, usually in oil on canvas. Survivals of this type are few in the extreme. (See Plates 15 and 16.) And those that have survived are little more than shadows of what they used to be. Except the Sto. Niño (Plate 15) which is still in relative good form despite all the parts from which paint have peeled off, the others are merely recognizable in their bare outlines (Plate 16).

The painting shown on Plate 15 was probably painted in a studio outside Batanes, perhaps Manila, in the 19th century. It was originally stretched on wooden framework apparently in-

tended for fitting into a proper picture frame to be hang on some wall. But when it was procured for use at the mission church of Sabtang, it was converted into a processional picture called "estandarte" by the local people. It was, therefore, sewn into a large textile processional standard attached to a long cross pole by which it was carried around the church square every second Sunday of the month before the Mass, as was the custom in Dominican missions up to recently.[21] Its poor state of preservation has been largely due to mishandling and lack of care. After the processions, it was usually placed in the sacristy that is almost always damp, with nothing to protect the paint except the thin layer of varnish. When I came looking for it for study and photographing on May 8, 1983, I found it thrown into a large drawer at the sacristy along with other nearly unrecognizable oil paintings (which had also been used for processions).

Oral tradition recalls that once upon a time,[22] paintings of the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary used to adorn the majestic *arco* above the high altar of the Church of San Vicente in Sabtang during the month of October — the month of the Rosary. This *arco* contained the queenly statue of the Rosary (Plate 5) garbed with white and blue ornately and profusely brocaded with embossed embroidery in gold and silver thread. It was also customary to deck such majestic *arcos* wiih artificial flowers made of mother-of-pearl. Although no sample of it remains, these paintings were probably oil on wood panel, oblong or circular, and detachable for easy safekeeping when not in use. Fr. Gumersindo Hernández, O.P. who was missionary in Sabtang from the 1950s to the 1960s seems to remember remnants of these in the store room under the convent, but nothing can be found there now. A similar set of rosary panels may have been in use at Sto. Domingo at Basco, but generations of renovations in that church have left

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[21] I had walked in those processions until I left Batanes for Manila at the age of 18. In those years, I got my first hand acquaintance with almost all that is now being written in this paper.

[22] Many of the old folks I grew up with in my home barrio of Savidug in the parish/mission of San Vicente Ferrer, Sabtang, especially my grand-aunt Ursula Hidalgo, used to describe to me these things. I saw the arcos, but I had not seen anymore the pictures. They probably resembled those on the altar of the Holy Rosary in Vigan Cathedral today.

nothing original except the walls and a few appurtenances. There is no sign that there was any attempt to do paintings on church walls except on wood panels on ceilings (usually a dove representing the Holy Spirit as was the case on the ceiling of the santuary in the original church of Sabtang — now lost because of renovation), and a few other places like baptismal rooms (the rare example being that of Mahatao where a very small and rather poorly executed *Agnus Dei* (Lamb of God) is painted on the door).

Religious articles associated with liturgy and prayer

I put in this category the (a) tabernacles, (b) monstrances, (c) sanctuary lamp holders, (d) jars for holy water, and (e) baptismal fonts. Belonging here, too, should be chalices and ciboriums, the ornately embroidered sacred vestments, censers, and the like— all of which I am arbitrarily excluding from this paper.

While for secular art, contemplation may suffice, religious art attempts to signify the hidden reality of the sacred and the divine. Secular art is an end in itself, but religious art signifies what can be seen only in faith. As signifier, it is also a means of demanding of the beholder certain appropriate gestures or behavior. Thus, for example, sanctuary lamps indicate which altar contains the Blessed Sacrament. Before this altar, venerable Catholic practice requires appropriate gesture of adoration of the Eucharistic Christ. If the lamp points to which altar, the tabernacle announces in just which spot the Eucharist is. Thus, both the lamp and the tabernacle are signifiers and callers to adoration. They do not exist for their own sake but for a nobler reality. In effect, religious articles associated with liturgy and prayer are aids toward a fuller participation and realization of the nature of the sacred functions. They are meant to lift the heart, as the Latin mass of earlier times put it: *Sursum corda!*

As lifters of the heart to God, tabernacles have usually been worked to convey the sense of the royal and the mysterious: they are ornately and nobly designed, and they have doors that are under lock and key most of the time. In the case of the Batanes

tabernacles, because of the prevailing styles in the rest of the Philippines at the time of their making and installation, they look like any of the tabernacles which were made in the 18th and nineteenth centuries (See Plates 18 and 19). Whether these were fabricated in Luzon and shipped to Batanes for installation or they were made in Batanes by artisans in the islands is not definitely known. But it is certain these were made by artisans trained in Luzon, probably Manila. It will be recalled that there was a request even before the conquest of the islands that Pampango artists be sent there. It is not likely that the 40 requested all went; but it is certain that even from the contact period, artisans from Luzon were brought to Batanes. It is assumed that such artists did not only exercise their craft there but also trained or inspired natives to do as they did — create things of beauty and elegance. If this be so, at least some of the tabernacles may have been local product. One tabernacle with known maker is that of the chapel of Savidug. It was made by a native of the place, Fray Gregorio Hontomin, O.P. In any case, the message is that religious art in Batanes documents the integration of the Ivatans to the national cultural life of the Philippines.

Monstrances or *custodia* as Ivatans call them, by their nature are not numerous. They are certainly not the product of Ivatan craftsmanship, for this type of church equipment is treated as a sacred vessel, and along with chalices and ciboriums were purchased by the Dominican procurator General and shipped to the missions as need required. What need be noted here is the great elegance of these paraphernalia for the public exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. Its usual form suggests that of a gold chalice with a tall shaft at the top of which appears the Sacred Host from which a glorious gold sunburst radiates.

Among the lists of religious ornaments in gold confiscated by the Katipuneros in 1898, monstrances are not mentioned. But Fr. Alfredo Castanón, O.P., of Ivana tells the story he heard from his predecessors in the mission of how the monstrance in Ivana escaped confiscation. It was kept in a wooden box that did not look too impressive. It lay somewhere in the convent. And when the soldiers ransacked the convent, they got gold ornaments belonging to the image of the Virgin in the church, and a host of other

valuables. But the box containing the monstrance was kicked aside and left unopened. Thus it has survived to this day.[23]

Sanctuary lamp holders, for their function, are sometimes disproportionately large, like the ones in Sabtang and in Mahatao for example. (See Plate 21.) They are made of bronze and are certainly not local product of Batanes. They are of immense contrast to those little glass lamps that serve as sanctuary lamps in present day churches. But those bygone times were ages of poetry and symbolism that spoke eloquently even to the unlettered Christian. The fire of the lamp was not merely a signal indicating the Real presence. It also, on another dimension, signified *lumen Christi.* By the same poetic consciousness, it was far from inappropriate to house that light in a splendid and large bronze lampholder.

A *jar for holy water,* or possibly just water for mass, at the sacristy of Ivana indicates deliberate production of a vessel for religious use. A low relief design on its outside prominently features the monogram of the Blessed Virgin Mary — the interlocked letters M and A (see Plate 22). The monogram is surrounded by what appear to be stylized lilies. It stands on a niche that seems to have been designed for it.

Baptismal fonts, being what they are, never needed to be done by specialists in what may be called baptismal font-making. It was enough for a good stone carver to figure out and execute one. And that is what the maker of the Mahatao baptismal font must have done: bring into his font-making his knowledge of stone carving. The result is an artifact of some design, functional, but looking too massive for the task it is expected to do. (See Plate 23.) In certain places, the more significant artifact in the baptistry is the glazed jar of Chinese origin that contains holy water.

Ornaments associated with acts of religion are differentiated in this paper from the "religious articles associated with liturgy and prayer" in that the ornaments are considered less essential,

[23] Told to this writer on May 8, 1983, at the convent, on the occasion of his going there to observe and photograph religious artifacts of the Ivana church.

whereas the "religious articles" like the tabernacle can still be a tabernacle even if it were just a plain box where the Blessed Sacrament can be kept, the ornaments are merely decorative and non-essential. For example, the halo of stars around the head of the statue of the Blessed Virgin may be removed without lessening the sacred character of the image, although it may look less impressive as a work of art without it. The role, then, of the ornaments is basically esthetic.

"Acts of religion" is admittedly a very broad term comprehending liturgy, prayers and the like. But in a narrower sense, the use of an image to profess a belief, the erection of an altar as an act related to or facilitating worship, these are acts of religion. Adorning such concrete manifestations of religious profession produces the ornaments referred to here. Thus, under this heading are included (a) jewelry and other ornaments attached to or pertinent to holy images, (b) decorations on altars (and pulpits, but these have disappeared with the coming of loud speakers), (c) embroidery on materials pertinent to liturgy, and (d) altars dedicated and specially decorated for specific holy personages.

The jewelry and other ornaments attached to or pertinent to holy images belong generally to two branches of art: jewelry-making, and sculpture. The earrings, rings, necklaces and pendants are works of jewelers. But the canes, staffs, crowns, aureoles and haloes belong to sculptors in that they are part of portrayal of the character of the person they represent in the statues. But there are points of merging between the two, as for example in the work of those Baroque jewelers, the gold smiths who fashioned the splendid star-studded haloes of the images of the Virgin Mary such as the one shown in Plate 24, for example. It will not, however, be the point of this paper to make the distinctions since the problem has long been laid to rest by the goldsmith sculptor genius Benvenuto Cellini (1500-1571).

From chronicles coming from the turn of this century, it is known that jewelry and ornaments usually of gold pertinent to Saints' images held with special veneration by the missionaries and the Ivatan faithful consisted of *"las alhajas de la Virgen,"* and

"un báculo todo de oro del patrón del pueblo, San Carlos, y rosario de oro de la Virgen..."[24] and many others, many of which were confiscated by the Katipuneros upon their arrival in Batanes on the 18th and 19th of September 1898. Today, the staff of San Carlos in Mahatao is not of gold (See Plate 29), and the image of the Virgin in Ivana, whether on solemn occasions (See Plate 30-A) or on ordinary days (Plate 30-B) is without the ornaments that it used to wear before the Katipuneros despoiled it of its "alhajas." By comparison, the Ivana image is plain when seen against the splendor of the Lady of the Rosary of Sabtang, or of Mahatao (Plate 5 and 7-B).

It would be best to discuss the ornaments of the Virgin in connection with those worn by the statues at Sabtang, for it was this statue that escaped the ravages of the Katipuneros. Although not much is said about her jewels by the chronicles, the fact of its still having all the original jewelry and ornaments makes it probably most representative of the grand images of the Virgin in the 19th century. There is, however, oral testimony regarding how the great gold halo of stars (Plate 24) survived.[25] It is this

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[24] José Serres, "Hechos Principales occurridos en las Islas Batanes Desde el Año 1898..." (typescript, at the Archives of the University of Sto. Tomas, Manila.)

[25] Mrs. Catalina Elizondo Hontomin (b. 6 April 1913, in Sabtang), in an interview in Sampaloc, Manila, on June 1, 1983, tells the story:

Nangay du kapaysarisari si Apo mo (addressing the interviewer) *si Andres Hontomin a secretario kanaw nu pali di Apo ñiyu si Jose Egipto Elizondo* (the father of the narrator) *as kavata na s' "yangay ta ahapen u korona nu Santa Maria ta ittu sa u Katipunan am ahapen da ya." Yangay da aw du timban as kahap da su riyal au a rakuh as kaketket da diya as kangay na* (referring to Andres Hontomin) *umlaveng niya du dekey a ahbu* (of the Hontomin house in Malakdang, Sabtang, not far from the church) *dawri su chinavidiñan na a manda du nakapirwa da rana mawara nu pali.*

(Your granduncle Andres Hontomin who was the secretary of the priest at that time went to your granduncle-in-law Jose Egipto Elizondo and said, "Let us go and get the crown of the statue of the Virgin Mary because the Katipuneros are coming and they might confiscate it." So they went to the church and got the large halo and cushioned it and he (Andres) went to bury it in the small basement where it stayed hidden until the return of the Fathers.)

Andres Hontomin was born ca. 1862 and died on February 3, 1917; Jose Elizondo was born ca. 1863 and died August 10, 1938. Jose is Catalina's father, and Andres was her father-in-law. She learned the story from these two men

Asked whether the gold aureole around the face of the Virgin and the royal crown on her head were also taken away for safekeeping by the two, Mrs. Hontomin says she was not told about those two.

tradition that authenticates it as genuinely of the 19th century and is an original rather than a replacement, as probably the halo of the virgin in Mahatao is.

The ornaments of the Virgin in Sabtang consist of a pair of earrings, two necklaces, an aureole around the face, a royal crown, and a somewhat oversized sunburst halo with stars. (See Plate 24.) All are of gold. It probably held in her right hand before a gold rosary, possibly the tambourine rosary she now wears around her neck, but a plastic rosary is what she holds today.

The earrings are called *bumbolya* by Ivatans — teardrop design. Ivatan goldsmiths are known to make such earrings. The aureole around the face and the royal crown are of the same style and were probably made by the same goldsmith or goldsmiths. The large sunburst halo with stars is of intricate geometric and floral patterns. It measures 18-1/2 inches in diameter at the outer circle described by the outmost points of the stars. The tambourine and the chain of gold plates that make up a long necklace may not have been originally designed for the image. The chain of gold plates is too long for the size of the image, for which reason the unsophisticated women who take charge of the wardrobe tangle it as far up as the rays of the facial sunburst aureole. The tambourine necklace or rosary is also somewhat too large, and if placed on the hands of the statue would pull down the flexible arm, or fall unless fastened.

I have interviewed some latter generation Ivatan goldsmiths,[26] and it appears that both talent and tools available in Batanes in the past are consistent with the oral tradition claim that at least some of these religious ornaments were Ivatan work. And they reveal a high degree of esthetic and artistic sophistication probably learned in Manila apprenticeship shops or from masters who had come to Batanes to ply their trade.

The image of the Virgin in Mahatao has a somewhat plainer halo of stars. It has a royal crown, but it lacks the facial aureole. Of the Batanes images it appears to be the only one still wearing

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[26] See my "Traditional Ivatan Gold Ornaments," (unpublished MSS, 128 pp., + plates, 1982).

robes identical or similar to those of the 19th century — rich textile decorated with embossed embroidery of gold and silver thread. (See Plate 7-B.)

Another type of gold ornament usually found on images of Christ, especially that of the Holy Child, are the distinctive three rays of light emanating from the head. Whereas these symbolic rays are also found on the heads of the Nazarenos and the Crucifixes, it seems that only the Sto. Niño and the N.S. de Santa Paciencia have them in gold. (See Plates 6, 17-A, B, & C).

There are also conventional ornaments like the twelve stars around the head of images of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal like the one in Itbud, and in Mahatao (Plate 31-A). The one of Mahatao probably had a halo originally of other non-precious metal. But there is evidence that the present halo is of gold donated by pious local faithful and fashioned by local artisans.[27]

Decorations on altars have been more or less elaborate depending on the individual taste and talent of decorators and artisans. The usual ornamentation of altars are floral designs carved on wood and laid on the panels (See Plate 25) of the pre-Vatican II altars which consisted of a long table with stair-like steps rising from the backside and consisting of panels bearing carved vases, and sometimes statues.

I remember some simple decorations on pulpits which I saw last in the early 1960s, but it is not possible now to talk about them since these have disappeared with the appearance of microphones and loud speakers.

Emboidery of religious articles and vestments once was a flourising art among Ivatan womenfolk, particularly the women called *beatas* who lived their whole lives consecrated to the service of the local churches. Although that era is gone, there are still traces of their art in a precious few places. Priests' vestments like copes, robes of images, altar cloths, and even drapery for processional candle holders and crosses used to be decorated with

[27] Miss Rosario Meonada suggested this to me when I interviewed her in Mahatao in 1981. She said that their family gave some gold for that halo. Miss Meonada comes from a family of goldsmiths.

the most ornate embossed embroidery in gold and silver thread. A few of the remains of some of these were seen by this writer in, for example, the storeroom beside the sacristy of the Basco cathedral in 1975 while doing his field work. Some pieces of those embroidered robes had been so old and worn out they had been made into wiping rags by sacristanes and acolytes. But a few are still in use. The altar cloth shown in Plate 20 for example. This is not in gold and silver, but it shows embroidery of a past era.

Altars dedicated to special devotions like the Rosary were, in their own, small-scale architectural achievements. Their chief purpose was not only to provide an appropriate location for veneration of some saint, but also to convey the sense of the majestic and the sacred character of the personage venerated in the given place. One example is the side altar dedicated to the Lady of the Rosary by Fr. Cano in Sabtang in or about 1873. (See Plate 28.)

The unwritten but real function of decorative altars seems to manifest to the eyes of the faithful the sacred drama of the spiritual world trying to reach out to the human world thus providing the faithful prayer aids by attracting the senses toward the spiritual by a plethora of symbols, and ornament-symbols organized around a sacred personality be it Christ or some Saint. It is usual to see in the Dominican high altars Saints Dominic and Catherine of Sienna. During the October festival of the Lady of the Rosary, the image of Mary is located centrally, naturally showing the two Saints on either side. This configuration of the images dramatizes the central holy personages in the propagation of the devotion to the Holy Rosary: the Dominican patriarch and the prototype of all tertiaries of the Order of preachers. Mary's central appearance proffering the rosary beads with Jesus in her arms also proffering the beads is saying silently: "Pray the rosary as Saints Dominic and Catherine did and taught you. It is the wish of the Mother of God, and of God himself."

In the great centers of religious art in Europe this dramatic aspect of religious sculpture and architecture reached more explicit expression. There are churches, for instance, whose central altar figures the Crucifixion. Around this center piece are

biblical figures sculpted to portray the tensions and torsions of emotion accompanying the sacred events. And depending on the unity of the design of the church, there may even be other, probably a multitude, of other biblical characters all designed to ultimately call attention to the central drama of the Crucifixion by means of contorted figures, arms thrust vigorously with fingers pointing toward the main and central figure of Christ on the Cross. The ceiling may show another scene of the sacred drama — God the Father accepting serenely and benignly the sacrifice His son offers to Him, with the Holy Spirit sending forth great shafts of light, possibly from sunlight passing through a stained glass high window, and a host of winged beings enacting grief over the sinful violence of man crucifying God's Son, while others reflect the power and majesty of the Godhead at whose command they appear to be in such a great hurry to fulfill. No such extravagant drama was possible in the Batanes missions. But there was a good deal of simpler drama: Dominican Mariology in images has been essentially that of Mary the queen. She is dressed usually as the crowned sovereign of Dominican churches. This role is appropriately shown by her altars designed to suggest palatial balconies where, as the drama would have it, the Queen of Heaven appears to "show unto us the blessed Fruit of (her) womb, Jesus" as the *Salve Regina* (a favorite Dominican hymn) puts it so well. The decorative altars, therefore, are not mere ornaments or prettified storing places for the images, but also dramatic devices to convey definite religious ideas — as indeed the great stained glass panels of churches in the middle ages were the visual rendition of Scripture and Catholic doctrine announcing the Gospel to an illiterate world.

Ivatan Religious Artists

Extremely little is known about Ivatan religious artists, and although there is evidence to start with, let it suffice here to mention a few tentative notes.

Two names I remember hearing from men who are now dead were those of sculptors Dawatis and Cultura. Statues in the family altar of Lorenzo Lechuga in Sinakan, Sabtang, are attri-

buted to a relative of theirs named Cultura. (Lorenzo himself was married to Benjamina Cultura.) The image of the Nazareno in Sabtang, says Fr. Gumersindo Hernández, O.P. who stayed there for 17 years, now parish priest at Basco, was carved by a native sculptor. The same may have done also the large crucifix in Mahatao which, to me, appears stylistically similar. These sculptors also worked on stone. A statue of St. Vincent Ferrer at the top of a stone tower beside the church at Sabtang, as well as the statues of Adam and Eve at the gate of the cemetery of that town were probably works of native sculptors. Decorations in stone, high relief (See Plate 31), above the main door of the house of Felino Mendez (deceased) in Sinakan was made by a local artisan. But who he was, and why his craft died with him is yet unstudied. A wooden statue of St. Thomas Aquinas in Savidug, Sabtang, was made by the same sculptor Cultura earlier mentioned. It was done upon commission by this writer's father Leon Hornedo and a few other people from Savidug who were working in Manila sometime in the 1920s or thereabout. The sculptor at the time of the commission was working in a shop on Evangelista Street in Quiapo, Manila. The image is of fine workmanship and is today housed in the barrio chapel of Savidug.

What can be said here of Ivatan sculptors is little, there have been Ivatan sculptors who may have learned their trade from those artisans the missionaries brought to Batanes, or who may have learned it from Manila, made a few pieces for both public and private use, but have left no disciples after them so that today there are no Ivatan sculptors in the islands. And no depth study about their history has been made.

As for the goldsmiths, Mrs. Demetria Viola Velez said when interviewed in Basco in March 1982 that she learned her craft through apprenticeship to a goldsmith named Amboy (now deceased). She claims she and the other Ivatan goldsmiths with proper tools could make the ornaments used for the images. Observation of her craftsmanship has convinced this writer that she is telling the truth, giving substance to the tradition that at least some of the ornaments of statues in Batanes were by native artisans.

Relgious Art Acquisition in Recent Time

The pattern of acquisition of religious art, particularly images, appears to have generally followed missionary/pastoral interests, but occasionally time markers appear. I am referring to the image of Our Lady of Fatima at Basco (Plate 31-B). To my recollection, this was acquired in the 1950s when the late Msgr. Peregrin de la Fuente, O.P., D.D. was a new prelate in Batanes. The Rosary is an ancient devotion. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the statues the devotion inspired were regal images of Mary the Queen. But Fatima is a 1917 phenomenon. And when the rosary devotion needed to be boosted once more, it was no longer a regal Lady that was presented to inspire it, but a simple white-clad Lady calling to mankind to pray and do penance for sin. (As a result of the new inspiration for the devotion, a district in Sabtang called Malakdang adopted as patroness Our Lady of Fatima in place of an older patron saint, St. Anthony of Padua.)

Acquired at about the same period were images of the Sacred Heart of Jesus to which the members of the Apostleship of prayer have a special devotion. Another was that of Our Lady of Carmel for the members of the Confraternity of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel. A new statue of St. Catherine of Sienna was also procured for the Dominican Tertiaries.

Recent concern of the present missionaries has been less on the acquisition of objects of devotion and works of art but on rebuilding of the dilapidating churches and convents. Within the last 30 years all the old mission churches have been renovated or given major repair. The most recent renovations are those of Itbayat by Fr. Domingo Deniz, O.P., and of Sabtang by Fr. Rafael Carpintero, O.P., who is right now in the midst of the work. There have also been growing involvement of the missionaries in electrification projects for the communities they have under their care. Outboard motors for fishing have been acquired, and these have provided the missionaries good opportunity to establish liaison with the fisherfolk in their parishes and to be of help in affecting the direction of community development. The temper of the times appears to be moving less toward the poetic symbolic

expressions of religion and more toward reviving the idea of the engineer or technologist missionaries whose work in the past often literally "changed the face of the earth."

In religious art, nevertheless, there is a small, but probably incipient new trend. It is equally romantic in mode, but markedly less ornate and self-conscious, simpler and much cheaper to make. An example is the prayer room altar of the recently established convent of the Congregation of the Sisters Missionaries of Dominic at Basco. (See Plate 32.) The crucifix and the tabernacle are perched simply on the unadorned branches of a piece of what was probably intended to look like driftwood.

Conclusion

I have tried to survey cursorily a little of the beginnings of religious art in Batanes, and to present by way of description and pictures what is still extant today of the religious art in Ivatan Catholicism. Through this survey, I have been led to some conclusions, which are:

The religious art in Batanes is essentially a contribution of Spanish Catholicism under the guidance of the Dominican spirit;

That the religious art that were imported and subsequently served as models for Ivatan apprentices who learned from the craftsmen brought by the Spanish government have become part of the cultural heritage of Catholic Batanes, and some of those artifacts are still to be found and in use today;

That the religious artifacts, specially the images of Saints, were in fulfillment of both the demands of orthodox Catholic teaching and the injunction of the Church for the benefit of Christians, as per pronouncements of both the Councils of Nicaea and Trent;

That the types and form of religious imagery (as expected) have been subject to the influence of changing tides of taste and circumstances, and that particular devotions have affected significantly the choice of articles of religious art;

That although there were a few native artisans who produced works of art, these are now all gone and they have left no disciples so that at present there is no longer any local production of religious art;

That at present, acquisition and maintenance of religious art is not a priority among today's missionaries who have shown themselves most concerned with rebuilding and renovating/repairing the old churches and convents, and on the side are also evidently concerned with making the Church's presence felt in the socio-economic life of the Ivatans by way of helping to nurse incipient electrification projects, and the acquisition of equipment helpful in promoting fishing which is a major source of food for the Ivatans; and

That in the limited new religious art seen in Batanes today there is an evident trend toward simpler modernized style, although the relics of the religious artistry of the past continue, though with evident decline, to show evidence of a rich religious culture that once possessed the primacy of place in Ivatan life.

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