

# A Visual Documentation of Fil-Hispanic Churches

## Part VII: Parish Church of Saint Augustine, Paoay, Ilocos Norte<sup>1</sup>

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### Established in a place “to remember”

The northwestern region of Luzon Island is popularly known as the Ilocos. Spanish intervention in the history of what was to be the province of Ilocos Norte began in 1572 when Juan de Salcedo reconnoitered the wide Laoag River. Ten years later, the Spaniards controlled settlements in the following places: Laoag, the largest, with a population of 5,000 souls; the area of Batac, with 4,000 souls; the Bacarra-Vintar area; the area of Dingras with its gold mines; and the valley of Badoc. Formal Christianization of Ilocos Norte began with the acceptance of Laoag and Batac as “houses” (corresponding somewhat to today’s parishes) of the Augustinians in the Chapter of the Order on January 5, 1586. Laoag was placed under the patronage of San Guillermo de Aquitania, while Batac seems to have enjoyed two patrons: San Agustin, formulator of the Rule followed by the Augustinian Order, and the Immaculate Conception of Our Lady. Included in the religious administration of Batac was Paoay, established as a *visita* or way station in 1593. The Order’s Chapter of May 4, 1686,<sup>2</sup> established Paoay as an independent “house” separate from its mother parish Batac. On this occasion San Agustin was made patron saint of Paoay, a rather unusual move because the patronage of Saint Augustine was generally conferred on primary or principal establishments of the Order within a large area such as a province. The move may have been a premonition because in the next century, Paoay was to outnumber Batac in the size of both its population and church.

According to oral tradition, Paoay was founded in a site curiously called Bombay (the name Filipinos apply to all Indians) near Callaguip, about two kilometers west of the present town site. Today’s Callaguip, aptly related to the Iluko word “to remember,” is a hardy land of sand dunes. A path leads to a promontory of

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<sup>2</sup> In this same year Bangui and San Nicolas were separated from Bacarra and Laoag, respectively.

solid rock, Culili Point, that juts into the Luzon Sea. The coral stones used to build the church and tower in Paoay are said to have been quarried from Culili Point. Atop the desolate ridge of Culili, the Laoa or Quiaoit river can be seen snaking its way to the white buildings of Paoay in the distance.<sup>3</sup> One can imagine Culili's boulders being broken down into rectangular blocks, to be floated on bamboo rafts and poled all the way to the construction site in town.

Whether or not Paoay was really born in Culili is not known, nor if it was ever established in places other than the present locality.<sup>4</sup> Ilocos historian Isabelo de los Reyes notes two disasters that hit the Ilocos at the time Paoay was separated from Batac. In 1685 there was an epidemic of small pox and in 1686 a bad rainy season destroyed the harvest.<sup>5</sup> Paradoxically, the year of Paoay's separation also saw the separation of Bangui from Bacarra and San Nicolas from Laoag. Could these "separations" mark the re-founding of towns in different sites, away from diseased or environmentally hostile areas?

### A sight to behold in 1710

A historical marker placed by the Philippines Historical Committee in 1950 states that the cornerstone of the church was laid in 1704.<sup>6</sup> However, a document closer to its actual period of construction gives us a slightly earlier date, plus an intriguingly detailed description of the church as it appeared in 1710.

On November 14, 1707, an earthquake struck northwestern Luzon. Fray Sebastian de Foronda, Augustinian visitor of the Order's ministries in Pampanga

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<sup>3</sup> The Laoa drew its waters from the ricefields of Batac and the small Pasil Lake (now all but dried up). A portion of the river was redirected through a section of Batac in 1719 and hence was named after that town's leader's surname, Quiaoit. (Regalado Trota Jose, *A Chronology of Ilocos Norte History*, [Manila]: National Commission for Culture and the Arts and Museo Ilocos Norte, 2001, 9).

<sup>4</sup> Legend ascribes the ancient seat of Paoay to be at the bottom of the larger of two lakes in town, locally called *Dakkel a Danum* ("large water") or simply Paoay Lake (in former times Nalvuan or Nangguyudan). The wealthy settlement disappeared in a flood due to the selfishness and pride of its people. The formation of this lake was linked to three geologic upheavals that occurred at the same time in 1641 in different parts of the Philippines. It seems however that the area affected was further south, near the La Union-Pangasinan border. Raymundo Punongbayan theorizes that Paoay Lake was formed when churning waves from the sea generated sand dunes, which then were pushed further east by constant wind action, thereby damming the water from the nearby hills and resulting in today's lake. (Raymundo S. Punongbayan, "Ever-changing water basins", in Jose Y. Dalisay, Jr., ed., *Kasaysayan The Story of the Filipino People*, Hongkong: Asia Publishing Company Limited, 1998, Vol. 1 *The Philippine Archipelago*, 170-171).

<sup>5</sup> Isabelo de los Reyes y Florentino, *Historia de Ilocos*, Manila, Imprenta de La Opinion, 1890, Vol. II.

<sup>6</sup> "Parish founded by Augustinian missionaries, 1593. Cornerstone of church laid, 1704; of convent, 1707; of tower, 1793. Used before completion and kept in repair by the people under the joint auspices of the church and the town officials. Inauguration ceremonies, 28 February 1896; church damaged by earthquake, 1706 and 1927. Tower used as observation post by *katipuneros* during the Revolution, by *guerilleros* during the Japanese occupation." (*Historical Markers Regions I-IV and CAR*, Manila: National Historical Institute, 1993, p. 91).

and Ilocos, was sent in December 1709 to examine the damages suffered by the Ilocos churches. His observations were compiled in a report prepared by Captain Lucas Manzano de Ochoa, and remained in manuscript form in San Agustin Monastery, Intramuros, until published in a journal in 1920.<sup>7</sup> The report narrates the inspection as the team worked its way northward, beginning with Namacpacan (now Luna, La Union; no date but possibly December 1709); Bangar, La Union (16 December, 1709); Candon, Ilocos Sur (no date); Narvacan, Ilocos Sur (no date); Bantay, Ilocos Sur (24 December, 1709); Cabugao, Ilocos Sur (13 January 1710); Paoay, Ilocos Norte (14 January 1710); San Nicolas, Ilocos Norte (15 January 1710); Dingras, Ilocos Norte (16 January 1710); Ilauag [Laoag], Ilocos Norte (17 January 1710); Bacarra, Ilocos Norte (18 January 1710); and finally backtracking to Batag [Batac], Ilocos Norte (20 January 1710). From here they may have returned to Manila by way of sailing from Culili Point or from Currimao, another anchorage just southwest of Paoay.

The Foronda-Manzano report is significant for the information given on the sites visited: years of construction, materials used, earthquake damage, and patron saints. In some instances, interpreters were availed of; data were provided by officials from each town. All accounts state that the townspeople gave their labor willingly in the construction of their church, and that they were not coerced. It was the parish priest who provided for most of the expenses, including building materials, nails and other metal items, and decorations. Workers were also fed rice.

The church of San Agustin of Paoay, the visitators declared, was one of the most perfect and well-adorned churches in the islands (The report devotes almost two pages to Paoay, whereas the other towns only merited a paragraph each.). The façade of the church had five niches that each housed a carved image of a saint. The walls of brick and stone were propped up by buttresses (called *estrivos* in the document) that were wide at the base but tapered at the top. On the gospel side (to the left as one faces the altar), about midway along the nave was a baptistry. On each side of the exterior corresponding to the main altar inside was a stairway of stone (*escalera de piedra capaza*), what we would call today a step buttress. Each bay had a window with capiz panes. The roof was of thick bamboo (*caña boxo*) covered with a layer of lime as a defense against fire.

Inside, the church was divided into three naves by fourteen posts (*harigues*); the ceiling (*zaquizame*) was of woven bamboo strips, fully painted and featuring coats-of-arms that were also painted and gilded. Truly a sight to behold was the main altar-piece, the *retablo mayor*, which consisted of three levels and was as high as the ceiling. It was fully gold-leafed and featured wooden images of saints in half-relief (*de media talla*). The *retablo* rested on a pedestal covered with a frontal that was painted

<sup>7</sup>“Informe sobre el estado de varias iglesias de Ilocos en los años 1709 y 1710,” in *Archivo Historico*, XIII (Enero 1920), p. 209. The article states that the original report used to be kept at the San Agustin church in Manila, but now could not be found.

with the four evangelists. In the middle was a gilded tabernacle flanked by *gradillas* (stepped pedestals) supporting candlestands, branches, and chandeliers all painted and silver-leafed. Flanking the *retablo* were six paintings on canvas done by a fine hand (*de buen pincel*). The triumphal arch separating the sanctuary from the nave was adorned with a magnificently carved wooden frame that was likewise painted and gold-leafed. On each side of the main altar was another *retablo* of similar ornateness.

In the baptistry was a gold-leafed *retablo* with a painting of the Baptism of Christ. Musicians and singers were provided benches in the choirloft, which also featured a carved crucifix and two well-executed paintings. Thirteen paintings of the Passion of Christ hung on the walls of the sacristy, which boasted of still another gold-leafed *retablo* with a carved crucifix. Throughout the rest of the church were 27 large canvases (about 1.20 meters high), with gilded and painted frames; tantalizingly and exasperatingly, their subjects were not mentioned.

The belltower, typical of the Ilocos, was separate from the church. It consisted of four sturdy timbers from which three bells were suspended. The convento was then under construction. It was of brick, and timbers (*llaves y quilazon*) were just being laid out for the roof. There was a living room (*sala*), storeroom (*despensa*), and two bedrooms (*celdas*), one of which faced north and looked onto the church; it thus appears that this earlier and smaller convento stood at the right side of the church as one faced the façade.

Through an interpreter, Don Lucas Paguli, the following building history was obtained. Construction began in 1699 and ended in 1702. The community contributed their labor and 243 pesos and 1 real, but the rest of the expenses for the enterprise including nails, decorations, *retablos*, paintings, and others amounting to more than 1,000 pesos were borne by the parish priest, Fray Antonio de Estavillo. Fr. Estavillo paid the chief builders of both church and convento, and gave rice, tobacco and wine to those who cut wood from the forest and transported them to the workplace. The townspeople answered in the negative if anyone was compelled to build the church of stone and brick. Some added that it was easier to build in stone than in wood, because the stone was available about a half league from the town and the only major expense would be its transport to the site. Obtaining wood, by contrast, was more difficult because the workers had to go to the forests of the distant mountains; also, good hardwood was not easily accessible. Those who provided testimonies were: Andres de Vergara, mayor; Martin Quisang, Cristoval de Leon, Joseph Soto, Cornelio Clemente, and Tomas Cadalig, citizens of Paoay, and Hermenegildo de la Concepcion, secretary of the locally-born residents (*naturales*).

### **Real construction time**

For the longest time, the construction period given in the 1710 account (1699-1702, or three to four years) has been accepted for the present monument.

The 1710 description fits today's Paoay church so closely, considering the following features: the façade with five niches, the baptistry on the gospel side, the tapering buttresses, the step buttresses, and the windows at each bay. Although the intricately carved *retablos* and other decoration, which would presumably be in some kind of Baroque style, have completely been replaced by *retablos* in the Neo-classic style today. This is understandable, knowing that the church underwent much renovation in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As one reviews building histories of other Fil-Hispanic churches, however, it becomes clear that the present gargantuan church would have taken so much longer to erect.

Thankfully, the Foronda-Manzano report gives measurements for the church. The nave measured 72 *varas* from sanctuary to the main door, and was 18 *varas* wide. The walls were one *vara* thick, and reached six *varas* in height in the nave, and eight in the sanctuary. The outside walls measured three *varas* at the base. The unit of measurement used then, the *vara*, was equivalent to 83.6 centimeters. This is according to Ramon Irureta Goyena, who wrote a book in 1896 on Philippine weights and measures.<sup>8</sup> Fine, you would say; was this the same value two centuries earlier? Research at the Spanish equivalent of the Encyclopedia Britannica, the so-called *Espasa Calpe*, gives us an affirmative answer. The *vara* was also called the *vara real*, or the *vara de Castilla*. There was another measure called the *vara de Aragon*, but this was even smaller at 77.20 cm.

With 83.6 centimeters to the *vara*, we are able to place the resulting figures in a table.

	1710 measurements		2011 measurements	Difference	Ratio of 2011/ 1710 measurements <sup>9</sup>
	Varas	Metric equivalent			
Thickness of walls	1 vara	0.836 m.	2.17 m.	1.34 m.	2.61
Length of nave from entrance to sacristy	72 varas	60.19 m.	76.11 m.	15.92 m.	1.26
Width of nave	18 varas	15.04 m.	20.29 m.	5.25 m.	1.35

<sup>8</sup> Ramon Irureta Goyena, *Sistema Metrico Decimal...*, Manila: Tipo-Litografia de Chofré y C.a, 1896. Irureta Goyena's objective was to bring the Philippines into the metric world. An engineer and professor at the Manila School of Arts at the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Irureta Goyena became one of the pioneering professors at the fledgling College of Engineering of the University of Santo Tomas in the early 1900s.

<sup>9</sup> The calculations in this column were included just to see if the church expanded in all directions at the same time. As can be seen, different sections of the church expanded or were reduced practically independent of each other.

Length of buttress at base	3 varas	2.50 m.	7.00 m.	4.5 m.	2.8
Height of wall at presbytery and sacristy (presumably at the side, not at the center)	8 varas	6.68 m.	10.09 m.	3.41 m.	1.51
Height of wall of nave	6 varas	5.01 m. (1.67 m. lower than the presbytery)	10.09 m. (comparatively same height throughout nave and apse)	5.08 m.	2.01

Comparing the 1710 church with what stands today, we find that the earlier walls were more than two and a half times thinner than the present ones. The earlier church would have extended only from the façade up to somewhere near the two step buttresses in length. The width of its façade would have spanned about a bay and a half on each side of the present brick main entrance. The earlier buttresses were almost only a third of the size of the present ones. The 1710 church had an apse 1.6 meters higher than the nave; the present church has an apse and nave of the equal height. It is hard to escape the conclusion that today's church is an expanded version of the 1710 building.

Bolstering this idea is the near impossibility of finding bamboo poles long enough to serve as roof trusses for a church as humongous as the present one; a feat that could have been achieved had the church been smaller, such as that described in 1710. (This writer would like to highlight the uniqueness of the use of bamboo rafters for a large edifice, and the even more unusual device of minimizing the risk of fire by applying a layer of lime over the bamboo roof. I have hardly come across any similar account.)<sup>10</sup>

Still another clue that may shed light on the original church is an excavation carried out by the National Museum in October-November 2000. In Test Pit #3, dug from the inside wall to the base of the columns supporting the choirloft, a mass of masonry was discovered just underneath the said columns. This masonry could be the foundation of the columns. On another angle, the columns stand approximately where the edge of the nave of the hypothesized 1710 church would be. Further examination will have to be carried out to verify if this indeed forms part of the earlier and smaller church.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> The church in Nagpartian (now Burgos), Ilocos Norte was described in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century with walls of masonry and a roof of bamboo (*techumbre de caña*). Camilo Millan y Villanueva, *Ilocos Norte. Descripción general de dicha Provincia por Pero Nuño*, Manila: Imprenta de "El Eco de Filipinas," 1891, p. 75.

<sup>11</sup> See Eusebio Z. Dizon and Angel P. Bautista, "Additional documentation for the restoration of the San Agustin Church at Paoay Ilocos Norte. Archaeological Assessment," *National Museum Papers*, (2000), Vol. 10 No. 2, pp. 1-25. On Test Pit #3, see pp. 10-11 and Fig. 9, *ibid*.

The same 1710 report states that the church of Laoag was begun in 1659 and finished in 1700, or 41 years later. This is a more plausible model for the duration of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century church construction in colonial Philippines. Gaspar de San Agustin, an Augustinian chronicler who finished his *Conquistas de las Islas Filipinas* in 1646, says that the Laoag church with its convento was one of the most beautiful and sumptuous in the islands, and the best constructed in the Ilocos. During the Malong Revolt which broke out in the Ilocos between the years 1660 and 1661, this church was burned by Pedro Almazan and his allies. The enormously thick walls of the Laoag church (now a Cathedral) indeed seem to testify to the travails and length of time that the builders had to endure.

### **A church built by cloth**

What forces could have moved the Paoayños and their parish priests to raise such a ponderous and cavernous church? We are not quite sure, but there are at least two leads: the first is natural, the other is industrial.

The most likely natural force would be seismic. Earthquakes have been a constant in Ilocos history from ancient times to the present. The Ilocos churches in general, and the Ilocos Norte churches in particular, have been written about as the ultimate in “earthquake baroque” because of their thick walls, heavy buttresses, and separate belltowers (so that these would hopefully not fall on the church if shaken). The Spanish architect Javier Galván Guijo however also reminds us that thick walls and heavy buttresses were needed as well to support roofs of tile (*techumbres de teja*)<sup>12</sup>. Such baked clay roofs would be difficult for us to imagine today, considering the great effort required to raise the tiles and lay them on incredible expanses in the air. Yet the governor of Ilocos Norte, Camilo Millán, noted in his book published in 1891 that those churches with tile roofs included: Paoay, Badoc, Bacarra, Pasuquin, and Bangui.<sup>13</sup> The step buttresses would have facilitated the transport of tiles and other materials to the roof. Apart from Paoay, such step buttresses may be seen on Laoag (now barely recognizable under a Lourdes grotto), Badoc, and Bacarra, in Ilocos Norte, and in Vigan and other churches in Ilocos Sur and La Union.

The scroll and step buttresses of Paoay, furthermore, were added onto more modest supports at an unknown time: perhaps during a period of wealth of the town? This question leads us to the second possible force for raising the present grandiose church. The Ilocos towns were well-known for the excellent cotton cloth they wove, which they turned into blankets and all sorts of articles of clothing. Paoay was among the most prominent of these, and in fact has managed to maintain a lively textile

<sup>12</sup> Javier Galván Guijo, “Apuntes de arquitectura colonial española en Filipinas,” in Carlos Bustos Moreno and Pilar Castro Rodríguez, coords., *Manila 1571-1898. Occidente en Oriente*, Madrid: Ministerio de Fomento, 1998, p. 204.

<sup>13</sup> Those with roofs of galvanized iron (*techumbres de hierro*) were: Laoag, Vintar, Sarrat, Dingras, Piddig, San Nicolas, and Batac. Millan 1891, p.75.

industry to this day. Paoay was the third most populous town in Ilocos Norte in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (after Laoag and Batac)<sup>14</sup>. My hunch is that the size of Paoay church was almost as large as that of present-day Batac, which must have reached a stage not far from its actual size sometime in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. At some point Paoay's weavers must have outstripped Batac in production, thus providing capital for a temple far grander and more monumental than its mother parish. The earliest canonical books of Paoay date from 1758. The loss of the earlier books may have been due to a disaster such as a fire or earthquake, and this year may have marked the start of rebuilding the church.

The establishment of the Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País in 1782 by progressive governor-general José Basco y Vargas and the foundation of the Real Compañía de Filipinas by export-minded businessmen in 1785 provided a dramatic push to agriculture and industry in the country, most especially in the Ilocos. In particular, Basco was looking for cotton cloth and weavers to manufacture them into military uniforms, blankets, sails and other commodities, and he found both cotton and weavers in the Ilocos. In 1807 a Frenchman, Felix Renouard de Saint-Croix visited Paoay and noted that its 18,000 inhabitants knew how to manage well its great fertile plain planted to quantities of first-class cotton such that 2,000 pesos were earned weekly. He exclaimed, "How many cities in Europe would consider themselves happy to have just a half of what Paoay had!" Paoay's parish priest of 20 years, Fr. Jose Nieto, noticed a slack of activity and income when he wrote a report to the governor-general in 1831, but even then his town turned out the largest skeins (*madejas*) of cotton in the province, maintained more than two thousand looms that produced all manner of clothing material, and produced great quantities of indigo (*tayun*) with which to tint the threads blue or black<sup>15</sup>. It must have been the late 18<sup>th</sup> century economic "second wind" that made feasible the construction of the belltower beginning in 1793. Moreover, the tower's finely-cut coral-stone blocks (*sillares*) manifest a leap in technology from the irregularly-cut stones of the church.

### Filling in the pieces

Having considered the kind of forces that would have brought about the marvel that is Paoay, we may now examine the only source that provides a narrative on its construction. "The Paoay Church and the Historical Personages (The town heads in focus)" was written by Nona A. Adaza in 1986. It is cited as the source for an undated work submitted by Reynaldo T. Ragual to Dr. Ernesto Cadiz, a professor of history at the Mariano Marcos State University in Batac, Ilocos Norte. Though I

<sup>14</sup> In 1732: Laoag, 7,584 souls; Batac, 5,000; Paoay, 4,721. In 1760: Laoag, 12,845 souls; Batac, 9,905; Paoay, 8,807. See the figures in the respective towns in Pedro G. Galende, O.S.A., *Angels in Stone. Architecture of Augustinian Churches in the Philippines*, Metro Manila: G.A. Formoso Publishing, 1987.

<sup>15</sup> The material for the preceding lines was taken from Policarpo Hernández, O.S.A., "Descripción corográfica de la provincia de Ilocos Norte. Un escrito inédito del P. José Nieto, O.S.A.," *Archivo Agustiniiano* LXXXVIII: 206 (2004), 239-300. My thanks to Fr. Poli for a copy of his article.

have not seen the original Adaza work, but I would like to refer to this document as the Adaza Ms. because of its being the earlier source.<sup>16</sup> From the wealth of events, years, and personalities presented in this Ms., it seems that the writer was drawing from much earlier sources, documentary or oral, which unfortunately are not cited.<sup>17</sup> Many of the parish priests mentioned do not correspond to the actual years they were in Paoay (see the list of parish priests at the end of this article). The names of the civil leaders, in contrast, mostly jive with their terms in lists published in souvenir programs. We summarize the salient points of the Adaza Ms., so that hopefully the data and chronologies from different sources will complement each other. Our own comments and bits of data are inserted in parenthesis, or placed in footnotes.

According to the Adaza Ms., plans for a more solid church were commenced when Paoay became a town in 1701.<sup>18</sup> All able-bodied men, from age 18 to 60 years, were formed into three groups: a first group to cut timber in the forest, a second to haul it to town, and the third to carry food from the town to the workers in the forest. After two years of collecting the timber, which was stored in a large shed, the manufacture of bricks and gathering of stones was commenced. Women brought baskets of red earth from Bubon, a hilly region west of the port of Currimao, to be mashed by bachelors the whole day through. The mashed soil was formed into bricks which were then fired in two kilns set up in 1703 at the southern part of town. The bricks were likewise set aside in the huge storehouse.

The cornerstone was laid in January 1704,<sup>19</sup> with work stopping only on Sundays and holidays. For the convenience of the workers, a deep well was dug east of the church, with brick steps that led to its sunken orifice (such wells may still be seen in the church compounds of Bacarra and Piddig, Ilocos Norte). In late 1706, an earthquake damaged the façade, but this was repaired and finished in 1707.<sup>20</sup> The convento was finished in 1710 (just about coinciding with the 1710 Foronda-Manzano report). A sacristy was added in 1712, effectively elongating the church. A conflict over ownership of a forest with the people of Badoc suspended work from 1713 to 1714. When Hermenegildo Díaz was head of the town in 1716, work on the church resumed; the roof of bamboo poles (*bolo*) and the ceiling of woven bamboo slats (*sawali*) were installed (in the 1710 report, these were already in place).

<sup>16</sup> Ragual's typed compilation is filed at the MMSU Norteniiana Library in Batac. My thanks to Dr. Cadiz for allowing access to this work.

<sup>17</sup> The last mentioned parish priest of Paoay is Fr. Clemente Tabije, who held the post twice: 1945-1956, and 1968-1973. The Adaza Ms. cites Fr. Tabije in the present tense, "Father Tabije assures that all donors will always be remembered in his daily prayers, especially in his masses," implying some of the information was gathered from him.

<sup>18</sup> According to the Ms., the plans were agreed upon by the head of the town, Martin Guiang, and the parish priest Fr. Gabriel Fabre, when it should have been Antonio Estavillo.

<sup>19</sup> During the term of capitan Jose Soto and Fr. Fabre (Adaza Ms.), who again should be Fr. Estavillo.

<sup>20</sup> The earthquake actually struck on November 14, 1707.

Because of the conflict with Badoc, no lumber was procured for the next decade (which may also have led to the use of bamboo instead of wood for the roof). In 1726 Fr. Gabriel Fabro<sup>21</sup> finally led hundreds of men to the forest to gather lumber, with the help of the town leaders Bernardo Quiaoit and Julian Gonzalez. In 1727 an earthquake heavily damaged the church and convento, but with the help of musicians, workers under Father Fabre and Jose Garcia the new town head (*gobernadorcillo*) “completed [the construction] in 30 working days.” Some unspecified work was resumed in 1732 under the term of *gobernadorcillo* Juan Guieb. Not much else was done in the next 13 years except the renewing of the roofs (the need for the step buttresses is clearly seen).

In 1747 it seems a fire burned the church and convent, and apparently it was only seven years later (1754) that some effort was made to rebuild the structures. Could some link be made with the year 1754 and that of the first extant parish records in 1758? Could it be that the enlargement of the church took place in the 1750s or a bit later?<sup>22</sup> The belltower bears the year “1793” over its doorway. According to the Adaza Ms., this marks the year its construction began; it took 28 years to build, concluding in 1821.

A fire in 1849 damaged the church and convento. In 1855 a new roof was being erected when it caved in, killing a worker and injuring several others. Work was carried out in 1857-1859 and a ceiling of *sawali* was installed by Fr. Melchor Castel. (The Jesuit Father Saderra Masó lists earthquakes that hit Ilocos Norte and northern Luzon including Laoag in 1852 and 1862 respectively, but there are no data regarding their effects on the churches in the area.<sup>23</sup> Fr. Ruperto Rodriguez y Ramos, parish priest from 1865 to 1869, is said to have “died due to sufferings caused by work on the church.” Was this “work” in response to some unknown damage to the church?)<sup>24</sup> In the 1880s, there was a move to replace the tile roof with one of galvanized iron, but this was thwarted when a team returning with a haul of lumber from the port of Dirique, Pasuquin, quite a distance away on the north, was lost in a storm at sea.

With the arrival of Fr. Baldomero Real in 1889, and with the help of the *gobernadorcillos* Gabriel Dumlao and Rufino Diaz,<sup>25</sup> things began to move faster for Paoay. This energetic Augustinian (for 8 years he was the chief homilist at San Agustin

<sup>21</sup> Now correctly “aligned” with the list of parish priests.

<sup>22</sup> It is possible that Paoay may have been burned by the followers of Diego Silang in 1762 or 1763. The Augustinian Fr. Pedro del Vivar wrote that Laoag was burned during this period, and “what they did in Laoag they did in almost all the towns.” See Vivar’s “Relacion” in Juan de Medina, O.S.A., *Historia de los Sucesos...*, Manila: Tipo-Litog. De Chofré y Ca., 1893, 283.

<sup>23</sup> Miguel Saderra Masó, S.J., *La Seismología de Filipinas*, Manila: Estab. Tipo-Litog. de Ramírez y Compañía, 1895.

<sup>24</sup> “Murio ...victima de los trabajos y sufrimientos que le ocasionara la obra de aquella iglesia.” Elviro Jorde Pérez, *Catálogo bio-bibliográfico de los religiosos Agustinos...* Manila: Estab. tipog. del Colegio de Sto. Tomás, 1901, 476.

<sup>25</sup> In office 1887 and 1889 respectively, which is somewhat inconsistent with Fr. Real’s term beginning in 1889.

church in Intramuros) introduced the following changes: a roof of galvanized iron, a canvas ceiling replaced with one of galvanized iron; a wooden pulpit replaced with one of wrought iron (bearing the date 1891 and his initials, “BR”); as well as wrought iron doors, windowsills, and communion rails. Whatever extant traces there were of Baroque art were replaced by imposing columns and arches in the neo-classic style. The artists who decorated San Agustin church in Intramuros were brought over in 1894 to paint the walls and ceiling in similar manner. Even the tribunal, today’s Town Hall, needed a personality such as Fr. Real to have it built (Gov. Millan noted that although construction of the tribunal had been authorized on Aug. 13, 1867, no work had yet begun despite the passing of 20 years).<sup>26</sup> Though not mentioned in the Adaza Ms., the convento most probably is also the work of Fr. Real. The convento’s second level is stylistically quite similar to the Colegio del Santisimo Rosario in Vigan which dates from 1891. On his birthday, February 28, 1896, Fr. Baldomero Real led an august assembly including forty priests from the Ilocos, church and civil dignitaries, and bands from six towns in inaugurating the newly renovated complex. (Ironically, Fr. Real had only two years to enjoy his magnum opus. Political events beyond his stentorian abilities overtook Paoay, and he had to leave soon after he signed the Book of Baptisms on April 16, 1898).

The wars that marked the transition from Spanish to American rule left Paoay largely unscathed. However a typhoon on May 9, 1913, unroofed the church and destroyed its painted ceilings. Father Anastacio Ocampo managed to complete three-fourths of the roofing when one morning after a baptism in 1927, the whole roof crashed violently to the floor. Upon the outbreak of the Second World War, one half of the church had already been re-roofed. Further restoration was carried out in 1977 under the personal direction of Mrs. Imelda Romualdez Marcos. In 1985, another typhoon destroyed a section of the roof. (The Church of Saint Augustine of Paoay, Ilocos Norte, was declared a National Cultural Treasure on August 1, 1973, and inscribed in the World Heritage List in 1993. It was not until 1999 that an entirely new roof of galvanized iron sheets was applied over the entire church, including the sacristy that had remained roofless since 1913).<sup>27</sup>

## Recapitulation

Perhaps we can now recapitulate our hypothetical history of Paoay’s church construction. It would seem that the initial construction was completed within the first decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, that is 1699-1710. The majority of the brick façade (first level) would correspond to this first phase. It is quite probable that the church was expanded during the next 80 years or so, amplifying the floor plan observed in 1710 with its extended baptistry, buttresses, and step buttresses. The belltower, with

<sup>26</sup> Millan 1891, 76.

<sup>27</sup> Funding was provided by the National Commission for Culture and the Arts by virtue of the church’s status as a World Heritage Site.

its stonework of regular rectangularly cut coralstone, shows that by 1793 (the year over its doorway) the art of masonry had progressed considerably. The convento may be dated to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### A List of Parish Priests and Assistants of Paoay (Spanish Period)

Note: An earlier version of this list appeared as “Paoay: Preliminary list of parish priests and assistants”, pp. G3-G7, in *Paoay Impressions. Master Plan for the Paoay Heritage District*, 1999. I thank his Excellency, Msgr. Edmundo Abaya, former Bishop of the Diocese of Laoag, for graciously giving me access to the Archives of his diocese so that this list could be amplified.

The Augustinians referred to their ministries in towns as *doctrinas*, the equivalent of today’s parishes. The equivalent of the parish priest then was called a *ministro* or *prior*; his assistant, the *vicario*. In the absence of a parish priest, the interim priest was called a *presidente*. In 1782, during an episcopal visitation of Bauang, La Union, Archbishop Basilio Sancho de Santa Justa y Rufino decreed that *prior* should henceforth be replaced by the new name *cura parroco*, and *presidente* by *interino*. Indented years are those of assistants.

#### Legend:

- AP Archives of the Parish of St. Augustine, Paoay, Ilocos Norte (the Spanish-period canonical books are now in the Archives of the Diocese of Laoag, Laoag City). The books commence from 1758 (Confirmations, though it has not been possible to locate the parish priests’ names here until 1774). It has been possible to obtain names of parish priests and their assistants from Baptismal books which begin in 1780, although the books from 1880 to 1889 are missing and hence some names are lacking in this period.
- arr arrived in Manila.
- b. born
- BB Buceta, M.- Bravo, F. *Diccionario geográfico ...* Madrid, 1850.
- cdj coadjutor
- D. Don
- d. died
- Fr. Fray
- JP Jorde Pérez, Elviro, O.S.A. *Catálogo bio-bibliográfico de los Religiosos Agustinos ...* Manila, 1901, followed by page number.
- na next assignment
- MM Merino, Manuel, O.S.A. *Agustinos Evangelizadores de Filipinas 1565-1965*. Madrid: Ediciones Archivo Agustiniiano, 1965.
- MN Nieto, Marcelino, O.S.A. “The work of the Augustinians in Ilocos.” *Ilocos Review*, III:1-2 (January-December 1971), p. 195.
- P. Padre; in the case of secular priests, this could also refer to *Presbítero*.
- PH Hernández, Policarpo, O.S.A. “Parish priests who administered the St. Augustine Catholic Church of Paoay.” *400 Years of Christianity (1593-1993)* [Paoay Fiesta Souvenir Program]. N.p., [1993]. 2 pp., unpagged.

Available Dates	Name	Lifespan	Sources/ Remarks
1686-1689	P. Fr. Lucas Sánchez	1653-1692 (Merino: d. 1731, Manila)	JP 159. PH. JM
1689-1690	P. Fr. Juan García	d. 1699, Batac	JP 126-7. PH. JM 31.
1692	P. Fr. Pedro Carreaga	1654- d. 1702, at sea	JP 156. PH
1692-1694	P. Fr. Juan García (2 <sup>nd</sup> time)	d. 1700, Batac	JP 126-7. JM 31.
1692-1697	P. Fr. Sebastian Yorrea		PH [not in JP]
1695-1698 na	P. Fr. Pedro Carreaga (2 <sup>nd</sup> time)	1654-1702	JP 156.
1698-1699 na	P. Fr. Antonio Estavillo <sup>1</sup>	d. 1723 Dec. 2, Badoc	JP 148. PH. JM
1699	P. Fr. Juan García (3 <sup>rd</sup> time)	d. 1700, Batac	JP 126-7. JM 31. PH
1699-1700	P. Fr. Juan de Aguirre (?)		PH. [not in JP]
1701-1704 na	P. Fr. Antonio Estavillo (2 <sup>nd</sup> time)	d. 1723 Dec. 2, Badoc	JP 148. PH. JM
1707-1722	P. Fr. Antonio Estavillo (3 <sup>rd</sup> time)	d. 1723 Dec. 2, Badoc	JP 148. PH. JM
1720-1723	P. Fr. Francisco Fontanilla	d. 1740, Cabugao	JP 211-2. PH. JM
1723-1725	P. Fr. Juan Rosete	d. 1735, Bantay	JP 222. PH. JM
1725-1728 na	P. Fr. Gabriel Fabro <sup>2</sup>	d. 1745, Manila	JP 218. PH. JM
1728-1732	P. Fr. Juan Eugenio Costales	1669- d. 1732, Paoay	JP 174. PH. JM
1732-1740 na	P. Fr. García Brasero	d. 1758, Laoag	JP 384-5. PH. JM
1735	P. Fr. Ramón López		PH [not in JP]
1737-1739	P. Fr. Jose Cantero	1698- d. 1739, Paoay	JP 242. PH. JM
1740-1742	P. Fr. Marcos Arecheta	1695- d. 1744, Ilocos	JP 241. PH. JM
1742-1744	P. Fr. Manuel Madriaga	d. 1744, Laoag	JP 235. PH. JM
1744-1750	P. Fr. Sebastian Larrea	d. 1751, Dingras	JP 391. PH: b. Manila. JM
1750-1751	P. Fr. Juan Agüería	1708- d. 1767, Sarrat	JP 256. PH. JM
just before 1754	P. Fr. Francisco Seura	1708-1768	JP 254. JM
1753-1756	P. Fr. Tomás Torres	1713-1768	JP 270. PH. JM
1756	P. Fr. José Cortés	1715- d. 1756, Paoay	JP 271. PH
1757-1759 na	P. Fr. Vicente Calleja	1713-1777	JP 272-3. PH
1759	P. Fr. Francisco Javier Córdoba	1712-1764	JP 256. PH
1761-1762	P. Fr. Manuel Muñoz	1711-1781	JP 304. PH
1762-1765 na	P. Fr. Manuel Moreno	1723-1772	JP 286, 296. PH. Imprisoned by Silang in Bantay, 1762.
1765-1769	P. Fr. Matías Echevarría	1719-1786	JP 264. PH: b. Mexico.
1769	P. Fr. Pedro Vivár	1737-1771	JP 296-7
1771	P. Fr. Manuel Muñoz (2 <sup>nd</sup> time)	1711-1781	PH
1773-1775	P. Fr. Jose Cuadrado/ Cuadrado	1728-1797	JP 307. PH. AP
1775-1777 na	P. Fr. Nicolás de la Fuente	1746- d. 1782, Paoay	JP 335. PH

1781 Jan-Dec	P. Fr. Nicolas de la Fuente (2 <sup>nd</sup> time)	1746- d. 1782, Paoay	JP 335. AP
1780-1781	P. Fr. Bartholome Gutierrez, vicario		AP
1781-1782	P. Fr. Manuel Aparicio, vicario		AP
1781 Dec.-1782 April	P. Fr. Gregorio Rivera, presidente		AP
1782 April-1794	P. Fr. Agustín Gómez	1745- d. 1795, Paoay	JP 333. PH. AP
1791	P. Fr. Antonio García, vicario		AP
1790-1791 na	P. Fr. Gerardo Roch	b. 1762	JP 354. PH. physicist, chemist
1794-1795	P. Fr. Manuel Aparicio, ministro de Laoag y Presidente de Paoay		AP
1794-1975	P. D. Manuel de los Reyes, cdj		AP
1795-1802 March	P. Fr. Ramón López	1755- d. Dec. 1815, Paoay	JP 354. Definidor, 1802. AP
1796-1798	P. Fr. Joseph Antonio Arredondo, vicario	1769-1804	JP 369. PH. AP
1797	P. Fr. Joseph Nieto, vicario	1772- d. 1836, Paoay	JP 368. Later parish priest of Paoay, 1816-1836
1798	P. Fr. Juan Maldonado, vicario		AP
1799-1801	P. Fr. Agustin Díez, vicario		AP
1802 Feb.-Mar	P. Fr. Vicente Febres, vicario		AP
1802 March-June	P. Fr. Vicente Febres, presidente y ministro		AP
1802 July-1815	P. Fr. Ramón López	1755- d. Dec. 1815, Paoay	JP 354. Definidor, 1802. AP
1802-1803	P. D. Fermin de Messa, cdj		AP
1803-1805	P. D. Balthazar Duquenay, cdj		AP
1805	P. D. Julian Duquenay, cdj		AP
1805-1806	P. Fr. Juan Arriortua, vicario		AP
1806	P. Fr. Santiago Gallo, vicario		AP
1809-1810	P. D. Fausto Raymundo, cdj		AP
1811-1813	P. D. Juan Baptista, cdj		AP
1814-1815	P. D. Cipriano de la Cruz, cdj		AP. PH
1815-1816 Feb.	P. Fr. Juan Arriortua, interino (ministro de Batac)		AP
1816 March	P. Fr. Juan Sugasti, ministro y presidente		AP. PH. [not in JP]
1816-1820	P. Fr. Manuel Hospital	1769- d. Sept. 1820, Paoay	JP 369. PH. AP- no regular position in Paoay

1816 March-1836	P. Fr. José Nieto	1772- d. 1836, Paoay	JP 368. PH. Former vicario of Paoay, 1797. Sent report on Basi Revolt, 1811; another report on Ilocos Norte to the governor-general, 1831. Commissioned 2 bells, dated 1821
1816-1820	P. Fr. Manuel Hospital	1769- d. Sept. 1820, Paoay	JP 369. PH. AP- no regular position in Paoay
1819	P. Fr. Luis Antonio Carrera, vicario		AP
1819	P. D. Marcos de Arce, cdj		AP
1820	P. D. Julian Duquenay, cdj		AP
1820-1821	P. D. Leon Pasqual, cdj		AP
1821-1832	P. D. Lucas Tudla, cdj		AP
1821-1825	P. D. Juan del Castillo, cdj		AP
1825; 1833-1836	P. D. Remigio de Jesus, cdj		AP
1825-1828	P. D. Dionicio Serrano, cdj		AP
1828	P. D. Silvestre Lazo, cdj		AP
1828-1829	P. D. Felix Zárate, cdj		AP
1828-1832	P. D. Dorotheo Catungal, cdj		AP
1831	P. Fr. Gabriel Enríquez	d. 1858	JP 424
1832	P. D. Manuel de la Cruz, cdj		AP
1833-1834	P. D. Florentino de Jesus, cdj		AP
1835-1849	P. D. Andres de Leon, cdj		AP; interino for Paoay, 1849-1853
1836-1837	P. Fr. Casimiro Muñoz, presidente y ministro	1809-1844	JP 436. PH. AP
1837-1849	P. Fr. Guillermo Piris	1800-1863	JP 416. PH. AP. Commissioned bell, dated 1837, now in Currimao
1839	P. D. Victor Cariño, cdj		AP
1839-1853	P. D. Justo Pastor Dominguez, cdj		AP
1846	P. D. Agustin de Castro, cdj		AP
1849-1853	P. D. Andrés de León, interino		BB. PH. AP. Only secular priest to be interim parish priest of Paoay during the Spanish regime.

1853-1864	P. Fr. Melchor Casté <sup>l</sup>	d. 1864 May 24, Paoay	JP 422. PH. JM.AP
1853-1864	P. D. Andrés de León, cdj		AP
1855-1869	P. D. Ciriaco Arranz Cruz, cdj		AP
1856	P. Fr. Juan Pascual (?)		PH [not in JP]
1864-1865	P. D. Andrés de León, interino (2 <sup>nd</sup> time)		PH. AP
1865-1869	P. Fr. Ruperto Rodríguez y Ramos	1830- d. 3 March 1869, Paoay	JP. PH: "died due to sufferings caused by work on the church". AP
1867	P. D. Pantaleon Evangelista, cdj		AP
1869-1873	P. Fr. Casimiro Melgosa	1841-1895	JP 523. PH. AP
1869-1870	P. D. Antonio Padua Eugenio, cdj		AP
1870-1889	P. D. Juan Resurreccion, cdj		AP
1873	P. Fr. Ricardo Alonso, interino		AP
1873-1884	P. Fr. Valentín Aparicio	1836-1884	JP 506: Renovated cemetery. AP
1880-1885	P. Fr. Pedro Ibáñez (only studied Iloco here)	b. 1857	JP 606
1884-1885	P. Fr. Elías Suárez	1852- d. 1885, Paoay	JP 596-7. PH
1886-1889 na	P. Fr. Rafael Redondo <sup>4</sup>	1841-1898	JP 524-5. Killed by revolutionaries in Candon. Commissioned 2 bells, 1887
1886-1889	P. D. Servando Castro		PH
1889	P. D. Juan Resurreccion, cdj		AP
1889-1898	P. Fr. Baldomero Real <sup>5</sup>	1851-1915	JP 590-1. Was famous preacher in Manila. Renovated the church, convento, and built the municipal hall.
1889, 1898	P. Fr. Fidel Franco, cdj	1860-1915	AP
1890	P. D. Gregorio Ballesteros, cdj		AP
1890-1891	P. Fr. David Díez, compañero		AP [not in JM]
1891	P. Fr. Ildefonso Villanueva		AP [not in JM]
1891-1892; 1896-1898	P. D. Joaquin Florendo, cdj		AP
1891-1892 Jan.	P. Fr. Francisco de la Banda, compañero	1865-1934	AP. JP 654
1892-1893	P. Fr. Clemente Ybañez	d. 1924	AP
1893	Fr. Cecilio Güemes (deacon)	1870-1921	JP 669; writer
Late 1894-1895	P. Fr. Tomás Rodríguez	1852-1921	JP 674-5. Later Prior General of the Augustinian Order, 1898

1896-1897	P. Fr. Casimiro Castro		AP. [not in JM]
1896, 1898	P. D. Justo Claudio		AP
1897	P. Fr. Ricardo Deza	d. 1918	AP. JM
1898	P. Fr. Silvano Camporro		AP. [not in JM]
1898-1899	P. D. Servando Castro, interino		AP
1899-1901	P. D. Quirino Evangelista		AP

## (Endnotes)

<sup>1</sup> Fr. Estavillo: b. La Rioja, Spain; arr. 1679. Assignments: Sinit, 1681; Bantay, 1686; Laoag, 1689, 1705; Baoang, 1693; Batac, 1695, 1699, 1704; Paoay, 1698, 1701, 1707; Badoc 1722.

<sup>2</sup> Fr. Fabro: b. Burgos, Spain; arr. 1712. Assignments: Tagudin, 1720; Paoay, 1725; Dingras, 1728; Bangui, 1729; Baoang, 1731; Bacnotan 1734 and 1740; Namacpacan, 1737; d. Manila, 1746.

<sup>3</sup> Fr. Castell: b. Teruel; arr. 1827. Assignments: Narvacan, 1832; Bauang 1835; Vintar, 1836; Paoay, 1856. d. 1864 May 24.

<sup>4</sup> Fr. Redondo: b. Leon, 1841; arr. 1863. Assignments: Bantay, 1867; Sinit, 1869; Cabugao 1870; Santa (where he built a huge convento), 1875; Paoay, 1886; San Fernando, La Union 1893; Candon, 1897; killed in Candon by revolutionaries, 25 March 1898.

<sup>5</sup> Fr. Real: b. 1851, Valladolid; arr. 1875. Ordained in Vigan 1876. Assignments: Balaoang, 1877; Benguet 1878; Predicador General (primary preacher) 1881-1889, San Agustin, Manila; Paoay, 1889-1898, reconstructed church and convento and built tribunal. After the Revolution was transferred to Colombia, and died in Santander, Spain in 1913.

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*R Ahlborn* Richard E. Ahlborn  
*MFM* Michael F. Manalo  
*RTJ* Regalado Trota Jose



Regalado Trota Jose has advocated for the study and protection of the cultural heritage of the Catholic Church in the Philippines since the 1980s. He has worked with numerous local public and private organizations such as the Ayala Museum, the University of the Philippines (A.B. Anthropology, 1978; M.A. Philippine Studies, 1991) and the University of Santo Tomas. He is now the Archivist and professor at the Cultural Heritage Studies Program of the University of Santo Tomas. He can be contacted at [archives@mnl.ust.edu.ph](mailto:archives@mnl.ust.edu.ph).

RTJ 2001



The desolate promontory at Culili Point, jutting into the Luzon Sea

View from the top of the hill at Culili Point. The coralline rocks used for the church in Paoay are said to have been obtained from this remote landscape. In the distance may be seen the mouth of the Laoa River, which leads to Paoay.



RTJ 2001

RTJ 2003



View of Paoay church from the air, looking towards the façade and bell tower. On the left of the church may be seen the quadrangle fenced-off by brick, which most possibly was the old graveyard. Since the destruction of the old convento in 1983, a new convento and a multi-purpose hall were erected on this space.

View of the façade and tower in the 1980s, when both buildings were threatened by profuse vegetal growth.



LUIS FAUSTINO 1980

RTJ 1992



Frontal view of the façade

The band of bricks shows the wider spread of the earlier doorway.



RTJ 2001



RTJ 2003



RTJ 2003



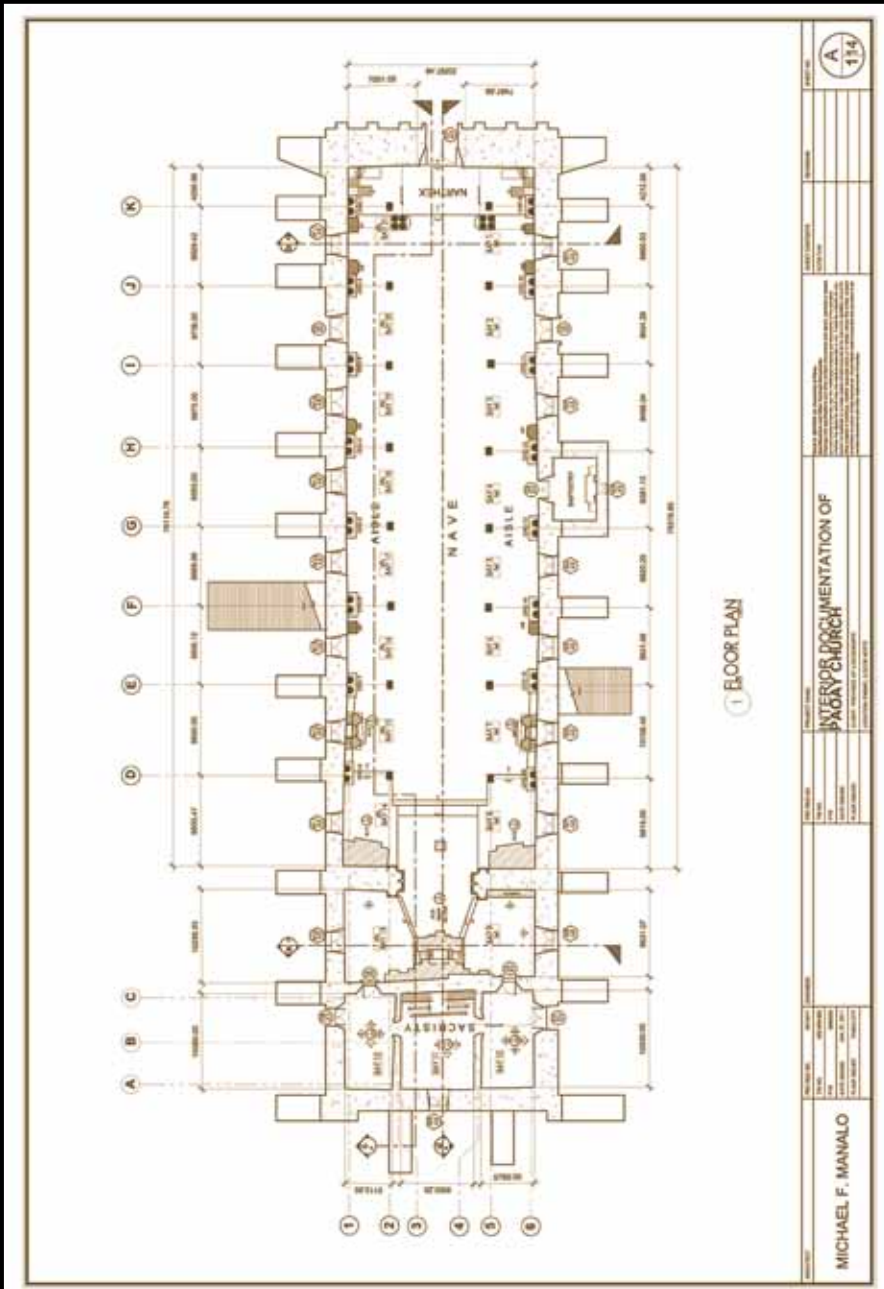
RTJ 2003



RTJ 2003

Various views of the church and the town from the air. One can make out the sea on the horizon of the lower right photo.

COURTESY OF ARCHITECT MICHAEL F. MANALO 2011



Plan of Paoay church, as drawn by Architect Michael F. Manalo, 2011. Notice the variations in the thickness of the walls. Features on one side of the nave (buttresses, double columns) do not correspond neatly with their counterparts on the other side of the nave. The slight dis-alignment of the wall behind the *retablo mayor* is quite intriguing and may hold a clue in the building history of the church.

RTJ 2001



A particularly significant vestige of the decoration is this swirly fern form left of the main entrance. It is virtually unique in Fil-Hispanic art, and its closest counterpart is another vestige in the ruin of Pindangan, San Fernando, La Union (bottom photo).

The Paoay example is interesting for the way in which the plaster was applied over the previously carved coralstone, and then set off by a band of bricks laid vertically instead of horizontally.

Author's reconstruction of leaf design



RTJ 2012

RTJ 1992



Detail of ruin at Pindangan, San Fernando, La Union

Weather-worn stone bas-relief of an unidentified saint to the left of the main doorway. Beneath the finely worked lime plaster may be seen the curious manner of combining horizontally-laid bricks with vertical ones.



RTJ 1992



RTJ 1994

Coral-stone bas-relief of a saint on horseback, (Santiago slaying the Moors or Saint George and the Dragon?) This image formerly on the exterior wall of the apse has since disappeared.



RTJ 2002

Stone bas-relief of the Augustinian saint San Nicolas de Tolentino collected from Bacarra (and now with the Diocesan Museum) helps to identify the previously unidentified one in Paoay.



RTJ 1994

Exterior of the apse, showing the brickwork pediment over the rough coralstone level.

R. AHLBORN c. 1960



Upper part of the pediment

RTJ 2003



Detail showing the seal of Spain (royal crown over the arms of Castilla and Leon, flanked by the pillars of Hercules loosely encircled by bands marked "Plus Ultra" (more over there)).

RTJ 2000



Similar Spanish coat-of-arms on the façade of Sinit church, Ilocos Sur

Details of the upper pediment, showing a sun and what could be a moon. Such symbols often appeared opposite each other in Christian iconography, as in the detail below taken from a bas-relief of Our Lady in Oslob, Cebu.

RTJ 2003



RTJ 2003



RTJ 2008



PRIVATE COLLECTION

RTJ 1994



The sun/ moon symbols of Paoay are framed in a lace-like border, similar to a silver tray for *buyo* (betel nut; left), or the base of a chalice (right). The two latter objects are stylistically related to middle to late 18th century Philippine styles.

Portion of the raking cornice showing a crouching Chinese lion. The four-petaled flower slightly below right of the lion is similar to that on the apex of the pediment of Laoag Cathedral (middle photo).



RTJ 1992



RTJ 2003

Closer view of the Chinese lion seen from the bell tower (the upper part of its head seems to have been pegged on and is now lost)



RTJ 1994

RTJ 1994



Doorway to south side of the apse. Much of the lime plaster (*palitada*) on this side has been preserved.

Doorway to south side of the nave. One can see the imposition of the more formal 1890s esthetics on the former width of the entrance.



RTJ 1992

RTJ 1994



Doorway to north side of the apse. In contrast to the south side, hardly any of the *palitada* has remained.

Doorway to north side of the nave. Less carving remains of the old doorway, but it is more defined; there are also remains of a halo of rays that remind one of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico.



RTJ 1992

There is a surprising variety of carving styles all over the church.



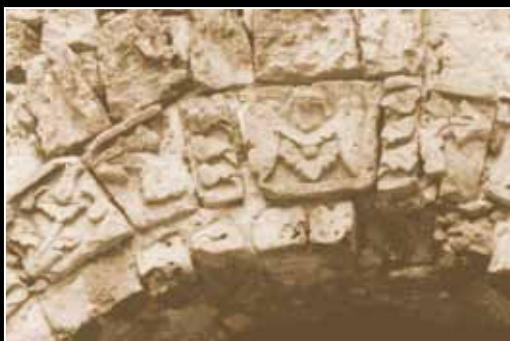
MFEM 2011

Bas-relief of Our Lady of Sorrows,  
on the south side



RTJ 2001

Detail of floral carving by the  
north side entrance



RTJ 1994

The carved blocks of leaves on  
either side of the angel head were  
wrongfully interchanged.

Loose stone block with  
leafy carving



RTJ 2001

The buttresses of Paoay are the most powerful and eloquent of their kind in the Philippines.



RTJ 1992



RTJ 1992

The buttresses flanking the façade feature double volutes, while the rest of the buttresses are decorated with only one volute.

It is clear that the volute buttresses were appended to the quadrangular ones at some later date. This may have happened when the bamboo roofing collapsed and it was decided to rebuild the roof with timber rafters and brick. This would result in a tremendous outward push on the walls, necessitating their reinforcement with “cyclopean” buttresses, as Javier Galvan put it.



RTJ 1994

The step buttress on the south side. One can see how the smaller and earlier buttress was engulfed by the later one.



RTJ 1994



RTJ 2003

The step buttress on the church at Badoc, south of Paoay. One can also see how much lower the earlier walls were, and how these walls of irregularly shaped coral-stones contrast with the higher and well-regulated rows of brick.

The mind-boggling woodwork of the church of Sarrat, Ilocos Norte. This is how the trusswork of Paoay would have looked like had it not been destroyed by the typhoon of 1913.



RTJ

R. AHLBORN c. 1960



The step buttress on the south side. At the bottom and halfway along the stairway are finials that vaguely resemble coconuts.

The same kind of finial is found on two stunted columns that flank the entrance to the tower of Laoag, (bottom).



RTJ 2001

R. AHLBORN c. 1960



It is quite probable that the builder of one had something to do with the other, at some unknown date.

ANTONIO MARTINEZ 1995



The enormous buttresses of Paoay are uniquely formed along the lines of volutes.



R. AHLBORN c. 1960

The same volute shape characterizes the buttresses of Badoc, although these are built of brick instead of coralstone. Fr. Antonio Estavillo, the builder of the first stone church of Paoay, was assigned to Badoc in 1722 only to die here at the end of the next year. We are not quite sure, however, if the Paoay volute buttresses were built by him.

R. AHLBORN



The squat, heavy profile of Laoag Cathedral, built 1657-1700, resembles that of Paoay, although the decoration may have been added after the earthquake of 1707.



RTJ 2001

There are bulbous buttresses that seem to have been partially engulfed by possible accretions to the walls of Laoag (additional defense against earthquakes?).

Volutes ornament the arched buttresses on the second level of the Laoag bell tower.

RTJ 2003



RTJ 2003

FERNANDO BRAMBILA, 1792-1793



Volutes, more langourous than those of Paoay, adorned the façade of the Manila Cathedral inaugurated in 1760. The connection is still to be made; did these volutes influence the appearance of others in places such as Paoay?



RTJ 2002

Volutes were quite popular in many churches in the Ilocos, such as this one in Candon. Did Paoay play a role in their diffusion?

The main altar, as it appeared in the 1970s. This and the four side altars erected by Fr. Real in the 1890s were in a sober, heavy classical revival style quite popular in that period.



RTJ 1992



The side *retablo* along the nave and the one across it were positioned over windows, such that their niches are always bathed in light.

A section of the huge sanctuary area. Paired columns were features of the style introduced by Fr. Real in the 1890s.



MEM 2011

MEM 2011



Traces of the original wall paintings commissioned by Fr. Real can only be found in the sanctuary; the 1890s paintings in the rest of the nave were obliterated in subsequent unfortunate renovations.



MEM 2011

Inner face of the rear of the church. The lower level is of irregularly cut stone, while the upper level is of two layers of brick.

The rear of the wall supporting the *retablo mayor*. The lower level is of irregularly cut stone, still retaining much of its plaster. The central portion of the upper level is of similar stone, but not plastered over and in fact looking unfinished. It is surrounded by brickwork, with a mysterious opening (it does not lead to the altarpiece behind; or maybe it did to the previous *retablo*).



MEM 2011



MEM 2011

The central space in the apse, behind the *retablo mayor*. A pair of stairways leads to lofts which presumably served as storage places.

Image of Our Lady of Consolation, said to have been ordered from Barcelona in the 1890s.



RTJ 2001



RTJ 2001

Image of San Agustin, Bishop of Hippo

Crucified Christ on the door to the baptistry; 18th century. The initials “BR” in ornate style appear elsewhere on the wrought iron door. Would this be the “crucifix” in the choirloft or sacristy referred to in the 1710 report?



RTJ 1994



RTJ 1994

Image of San Roque said to have been retrieved in a deep well in the western part of town in 1820 while an epidemic was raging. The waters of the well are believed to have curative powers. A trickle of water emanating from the side of the altar of San Roque in the church is likewise regarded to have healing properties.



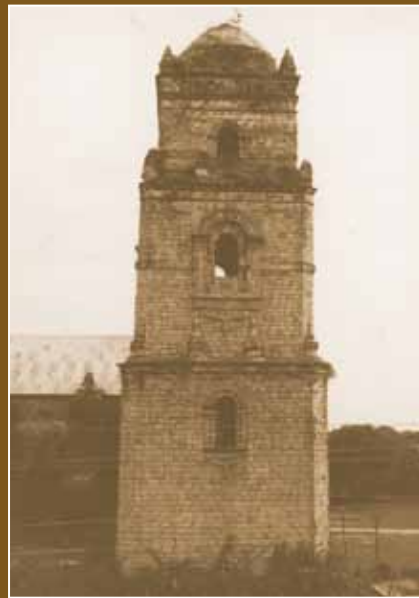
Examples of the elaborate wrought-iron work commissioned by Baldomero Real in the early 1890s. Counter-clockwise, from top left: the seal of the Augustinian Order in a sunburst; panels for communion rails and doors; pulpit and its dome. The initials of Fr. Baldomero Real and the year “1891” appear on the front of the pulpit. The dome has since been re-mounted over the pulpit.

RTJ 1994



RTJ 2001

RTJ 1994



RTJ 1992

Various details of the bell-tower. By 1793, the year over its doorway (middle photo), the art of stone-masonry had developed considerably in Paoay.

Inner view of the dome of the tower



RTJ 1994



RTJ 1994

As seen from the stonework inside the bell tower, there seem to have been at least two stages in its construction.

Detail of the wall at the back of the church in Batac. Coral-stone blocks, most probably from Paoay, were inserted to replace bricks that had broken loose.



RTJ 2001

R. AHLBORN c. 1960



R. AHLBORN c. 1960

A brick fence enclosed a large open space just north of the church. This must have been the site of an old graveyard. In Ilocos Norte, a number of cemeteries were located by the north side of the church, such as Laoag, Bacarra, San Nicolas, and Pasuquin. The site is now occupied by the present convento and a multi-purpose hall.

RTJ 1994



RTJ 1994

A pair of bells was commissioned by Fr. Jose Nieto in 1821, in time for the completion of the bell-tower. On the right is a detail of the inscription on the largest bell, with the name of the town spelled “Paoai.” Two other bells were commissioned by Fr. Rafael Redondo in 1887: one was dedicated to San Rafael, the other to the 15th centenary of the conversion of San Agustin. A fifth bell, now in Currimao, was cast in the 1830s and dedicated to the patron saint of then parish priest Fr. Guillermo Piris.

R. AHLBRON c. 1960



RTJ 1991



RTJ 1994

RTJ 1994



The convento with its rusticated pilasters (flat columns with highly contrasting upper and lower surfaces) on the second level closely resembles the Colegio del Santisimo Rosario built in Vigan in the 1890s (upper right). It therefore must be another achievement of Fr. Baldomero Real. The balusters extant in the 1960s were later replaced by a low masonry wall. The complex was heavily damaged by the earthquake of 1983.

The tribunal or municipal hall, built in the 1890s by Fr. Baldomero Real, O.S.A. The twin columns on the building's frontage are trademarks of Fr. Real's renovation of the church.

RTJ 1999



Two views of a 19th century bridge over the Laoa River (now practically a dry creek) in the center of town



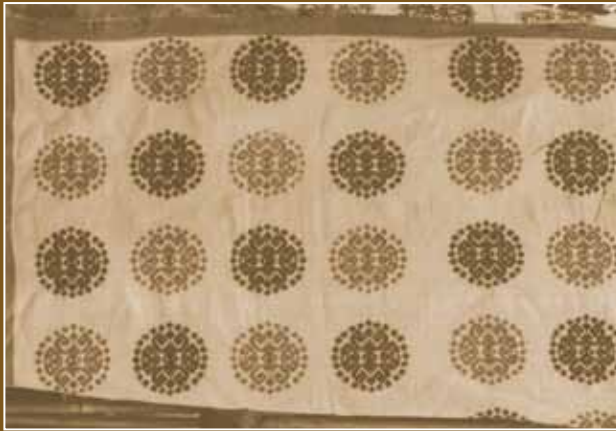
RTJ 1994

RTJ 2003



Two examples of Paoay weaving.

MUSEO ILOCOS NORTE



MUSEO ILOCOS NORTE



After the Easter *sabet* (encounter), a dance is performed wherein a man waving a red flag is 'defeated' by a woman with a white flag.

RTJ 2002

