

A Celebration of God's Creatures as seen in historic Philippine church art

*Regalado Trota José**

Archives, University of Santo Tomas, Manila, Philippines



omplementing the theme of this issue of *Philippiniana Sacra* is this small selection of images showcasing details of church art in the Philippines from the 17th to the early 20th centuries. These micro-views illustrate how Filipinos and their fellow-workers incorporated motifs from nature such as leaves, flowers, bubbles, animals, and coral into their artistic creations. Through these images we wish to draw our readers away from the “big picture” of the broad, all-engulfing surfaces of buildings and altar pieces to the seeming “trivia” of crevices and raised forms by mostly anonymous hands. We have selected examples from masonry, wood sculpture, metal work, and prints. We end this section with images from what must be one of the most whimsically designed history books, printed at the University of Santo Tomas Press.**PS**

A face peers from among the lush
vegetal ornamentation of a holy water
stoup in Boljoon, Cebu.



* Regalado Trota Jose can be contacted at trotajose55@yahoo.com and archives@ust.edu.ph.

Images in Masonry

Details from the arch of the Well of Santa Lucia, Caysasay, Taal, Batangas.
Early 18th century.



RTJ 2017

Right edge of the arch.



RTJ 2017

Central section of the arch, with an image of Our Lady in a roundel.

Pediment of façade of the parish church of Santo Tomas de Villanueva, Miagao, Iloilo. Late 18th century.

In the center Saint Christopher, with the Baby Jesus on his shoulder, holds on to a coconut tree. On either side of him may be seen papaya and guava trees.



RTJ 2002



RTJ

Section of the right side entrance of the parish church of San Juan Bautista, Calumpit, Bulacan. 17th-18th centuries.

In what must be one of the most 'botanical' renditions of The Visitation, the Virgin Mary and Saint Elizabeth greet each other as they emerge from humongous blooms.

Upper pediment of the façade of the parish church of San Ildefonso, Tanay, Rizal. Late 18th century.

The niche of the patron saint is flanked with stylized, sinuous leaves that roll into volutes.



RTJ 2000

RTJ



Finial over the right transept of the parish church of Santiago Apostol, Betis, Pampanga. 18th century.

RTJ



Finial over pediment of the right transept of the parish church of Santiago Apostol, Betis, Pampanga. 18th century.

RTJ



Leafy swirls worked on the *palitada* (lime plaster) on the façade of the ruins of the church in Pindangan, San Fernando, La Union. Early 18th century.

RTJ



Leafy scrolls similar to those in Pindangan are seen on the *palitada* of the façade of the parish church of San Agustin, Paoay, Ilocos Norte. Late 17th century.

RTJ



Carved coralstone leafy design, possibly from an earlier church, incorporated in the late 17th century parish church of San Agustin, Paoay, Ilocos Norte.



RTJ

Brickwork with a raised flower design, from the façade of the parish church of San Matias Apostol, Tumauni, Isabela. 1780s.

RTJ 2002



Bouquet of flowers in a vase, carved on the stone façade of the parish church of San Pablo Apostol, San Pablo, Isabela. Early 18th century.



RTJ

Intricate interworking of vines, tendrils, and ropes on the coralstone façade of the parish church of San Juan de Sahagun, Tigbauan, Iloilo. Early 18th century.

RTJ



An anahaw leaf substitutes for the usual rays of light surrounding the cross, in this detail over the side entrance of the parish church of San Juan Bautista in Pambujan, Northern Samar. 19th century.



RTJ 2017

Bouquet of flowers in a pot-bellied vase, on the façade of the chapel of Nuestra Señora de las Angustias, Tayabas, Quezon. 19th century.

RTJ 2017



Stylized flowers on the stone blocks of the façade of the parish church of San Francisco de Asis, Manjuyod, Negros Oriental. 19th century.

RTJ



Refined leaf arrangement flanking the entrance to the cemetery of San Joaquin, Iloilo. Second half, 19th century.

RTJ



Papal tiara and the crossed keys of St. Peter nestled in leafy splendor, over the main entrance of the parish church of San Luis Gonzaga, San Luis, Pampanga. 1790s.

RTJ



Leafy swirls and scrolls encircling a bubble form, recalling the Chinese pearl motif, on the façade of the Cathedral of San Pablo Apostol, Vigan, Ilocos Sur. 1790s.

RTJ



Holy water stoup with leaves and flowers, parish church of Patrocinio de Nuestra Señora, Boljoon, Cebu. around 1800.

RTJ 2016



Holy water stoup, parish church of San Marcos Evangelista, Cabugao, Ilocos Sur. 19th century.

RTJ



Lower section of a pillar supporting the choirloft in the parish church of San Vicente Ferrer, Dupax del Sur, Nueva Vizcaya. 1780s.



RTJ

Upper section of the same pillar. There are two such robust pillars worked with vegetal and other natural motifs by local artists.

Edgar Allan Sembrano 2014



Section of the intricately worked *palitada* on a wall of the convento of the parish church of San Agustin, Baliuag, Bulacan.



RTJ

Panel of a mosaic with real seashells and corals, in the parish church of La Purísima Concepción de Nuestra Señora, Guiuan, Eastern Samar. 19th century.

Upper section of a wall between the choirloft and the convento of the parish church of San Andres Apostol, Masinloc, Zambales. 19th century. This is a rare example of a wall with carved bas-reliefs still retaining their original painted colors, in this case depicting leaves, stars, and the partridge symbolic of San Nicolas de Tolentino, patron of the Augustinian Recollects who built the church.



RTJ 2002

Edgar Allan Sembrano 2014



Stone baptismal font, intricately carved with leaves and tendrils, in the Cathedral of San Gregorio Magno, Old Albay, Legazpi City.

Upper portion of a baptismal font, parish church of La Inmaculada Concepción de Nuestra Señora, Quipayo, Camarines Sur. Its carved base depicts stylized lotus leaves; the section above depicts stylized flowers.



RTJ 2015

Images in Wood

RTJ 2007



Detail of the rear of a cross enshrined in the central retablo of the parish church of San Jose, Baras, Rizal. The year 1614 is inscribed on its base.



An engraving of the retablo of Nuestra Señora de Guia, as it looked when the church in Ermita, Manila was inaugurated in 1711.

RTJ 2017



Section of the door of an enormous cabinet in the sacristy of San Agustin Church, Intramuros, Manila. Perhaps 17th century.

Four square panels forming the large wooden door at the left side of the parish church of San Gregorio Magno, Indang, Cavite. Perhaps 17th century.



Section of a door leading from the vestibule to the convento in the parish church of Santiago Apostol, Bolinao, Pangasinan. 17th-18th centuries.



RTJ 2005

RTJ

RTJ



Niche with the image of San Nicolas de Tolentino, in the left side retablo of the parish church of San Guillermo, Bacolor, Pampanga. It is flanked by columns so intricately carved one can pass a finger through the tendrils. Early 18th century.

RTJ



Carved column and flange of a retablo in the parish church of San Raymundo de Peñafort, Malaueg (now Rizal), Cagayan. 17th-18th centuries.

RTJ



Portion of an *estípite* (inverted obelisk) and flange of a retablo in the baptistry in the co-cathedral of the Epiphany of Our Lord in Lingayen, Pangasinan. Late 17th or early 18th century.

Solomonic, or twisted column formerly from an 18th century retablo, now reused in the early 20th century retablo, in the shrine and parish church of Nuestra Señora del Rosario, Manaoag, Pangasinan.



Aldrin Ong 2000

RTJ 2016



Panel with a beast representing St. Mark, flanked by twisted columns, in the pulpit of the parish church of San Guillermo Ermitaño, Magsingal, Ilocos Sur. 18th century.

RTJ 2005



Elaborately carved lower section of a side retablo in the parish church of San Pedro in Makati City, Metro Manila. Early 18th century.

RTJ 2017



Twisted columns and a flange of the retablo in the parish church of San Antonio de Padua, Bonbonon, Negros Oriental. 18th century.

RTJ 2015



Sinuous outline of a flange of the central retablo in the parish church of the Santo Niño, Cortes, Bohol. 18th century.

RTJ 2017



Crest and band of flowers of the *portavoz*, or soundboard of the pulpit of the shrine of Nuestra Señora de Caysasay, Taal, Batangas. Possibly 17th century.

RTJ 2017



Frontal of the central retablo, parish church of San Nicolas de Bari, Siaton, Negros Oriental. Late 17th-18th century.

RTJ 2002



Panel featuring an angel surrounded by vines and tendrils, from a side retablo in the parish church La Purísima Concepción de Nuestra Señora, Pan-ay, Capiz. 18th century.

RTJ 2016



Side retablo, fringed with rococo elements, in the parish church of San Nicolas de Tolentino, Sinait, Ilocos Sur. Late 18th century.

RTJ 2017



Retablo with rococo elements in the sacristy of the Basilica of San Miguel Arcangel, Tayabas, Quezon. Late 18th century.

RTJ 2002



Crest of a side retablo in the parish church of La Purísima Concepción de Nuestra Señora, Pan-ay, Capiz. 18th century.

RTJ



Frontal of a side retablo in the parish church of La Purísima Concepción de Nuestra Señora, Guiuan, Eastern Samar. Late 18th century.

RTJ



Panel from the base of the central retablo of the parish church of Santiago Apostol, Betis, Pampanga. 18th century.

RTJ 2017



Tabernacle, parish church of San Nicolas de Bari, Siaton, Negros Oriental. Late 18th century.

RTJ 2017



Detail of carved door of the façade of San Agustin Church, Intramuros, Manila. Late 18th century.

RTJ 2016



Pedestal for a saint in the central retablo of the parish church of San Nicolas de Tolentino, Sinait, Ilocos Sur. Late 18th century.

RTJ



Pedestal for a *cirial*, a pole for one of a pair of processional candles. Parish church of San Andres Apostol, Bugallon, Pangasinan. Late 18th century.

RTJ 2016



RTJ 2016



Left and right flanges of the left side retablo of the Cathedral of San Pablo Apostol, Vigan, Ilocos Sur. Note the crested bird emerging from the C-scroll. Late 18th century.

RTJ 2016



Base element of the left side retablo of the Cathedral of San Pablo Apostol, Vigan, Ilocos Sur. Late 18th century.



RTJ 2002

Upper section of the doors of the main entrance to the parish church of San Pedro Apostol, Candon, Ilocos Sur. 19th century.



RTJ 2015

Upper corner of the main door to the parish church of La Purísima Concepción de Nuestra Señora, Pan-ay, Capiz. 19th century.



RTJ 2014

Head-board of the vestry chest in the sacristy of the parish church of San Nicolas de Tolentino, Dimiao, Bohol. 18th -19th centuries.

RTJ

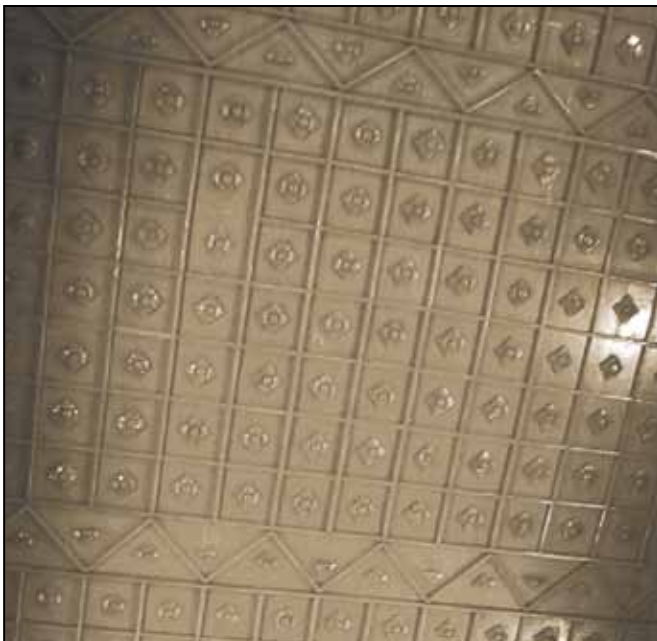


Coffered ceiling of the parish church of Santa Catalina de Alejandria, Carcar, Cebu. 19th century.



RTJ 2017

One of the doors to the parish church of San Agustin, Bacong, Negros Oriental. 19th century.



RTJ 2000

Coffered ceiling of the cathedral of Nuestra Señora del Rosario, Dipolog, Zamboanga del Norte. 19th century.

RTJ 2017



RTJ 2017



Carved ornaments on the central retablo of the parish church of Our Lady of Divine Providence, Maria, Siquijor. 19th century.

RTJ 2017



Base for the holy water bowl, parish church of San Jacinto de Polonia, Camalaniugan, Cagayan. 18th-19th centuries.

RTJ



Confessional carved with flowers and vines, parish church of San Agustin, Panglao, Bohol. Early 20th century.

RTJ



Deeply carved panels from an early retablo, now re-used as support for the present retablo of the parish church of San Cristobal, Bangar, La Union. 19th century.

RTJ



Depiction of 'Tower of Ivory' by means of a tower on an elephant, in the parish church of Nuestra Señora de la Luz, Loon, Bohol. 19th century.

RTJ 2017



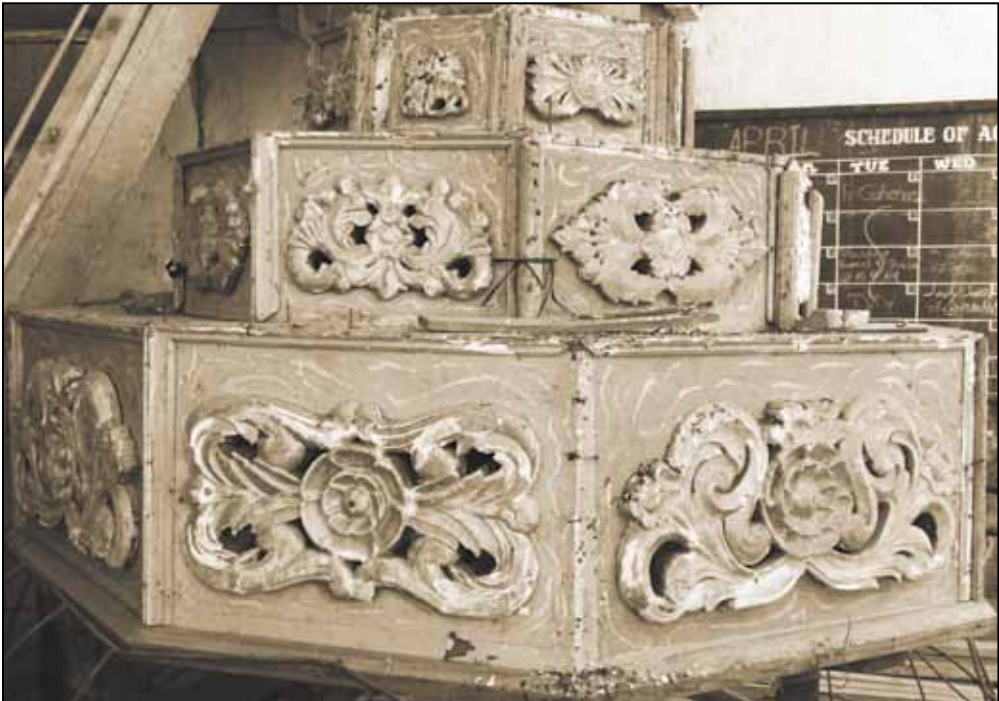
Panel from a frontal of the central retablo in the parish church of San Francisco de Asis, in Siquijor on the island of the same name. This is a very rare example of reverse painting, where colors and gold-leaf are applied on the rear of a glass panel. 19th century.

RTJ 2017



Two tiers of a processional carriage in the parish church of San Agustin in Bacong, Negros Oriental. 19th century.

RTJ 2017



Three tiers of a processional carriage in the parish church of San Isidro Labrador, Lazi, Siquijor. Late 19th early 20th centuries.

Images in Metal

RTJ 2017



Base of a crucifix dated 1793 and signed 'Bar[tolo]me Gut[ierr]es', in the diocesan museum of San Fernando, La Union.

RTJ 2003



Processional silver crucifix, in the museum of the Basilica of La Purísima Concepción de Nuestra Señora in Batangas City. Late 18th century.

RTJ 2006



Front panel of a tabernacle, formerly in the parish church of San Pedro Telmo, Aparri, Cagayan, now in the Archdiocesan Museum in the Lyceum of Aparri. Late 18th century.

RTJ 2000



Basin and lower portion of the sanctuary lamp in the parish church of Santiago Apostol, Dapitan, Zamboanga del Norte. Late 18th century.

Gradilla, a stepped pedestal for candles and flowers, in the parish church of La Purísima Concepcion de Nuestra Señora, Santa Cruz, Ilocos Sur. 19th century.



RTJ 2016

RTJ 2015



Section of a silver frontal from the Cathedral of San Pedro y San Pablo, Sorsogon, Sorsogon. 19th century.

The horse of Saint Martin of Tours, as depicted on a bell at the Basilica of San Martin de Tours, Taal, Batangas. Early 19th century.



RTJ 2017

[illegible][illegible]

PHILIPPINIANA SACRA, Vol. LII, No. 157 (September-December, 2017)



Title page of Domingo Collantes' *Historia de la Provincia del Santísimo Rosario de Filipinas, China y Tunquin Orden de Predicadores. Cuarta Parte desde el año de 1700* (Manila: Imprenta del Real, y Pontificia Vniversidad de Santo Tomas, por Juan Franc. de los Santos, 1783).



Detail from the title page of Collantes' *Historia*.



Viñetas (printed ornamentations usually placed at the end of a chapter) from Collantes' 1783 *Historia*.



Nine capital letters taken from the beginnings of chapters in Collantes' 1783 *Historia*.

