



A Visual Documentation of Fil-Hispanic Churches

Part XVI-A: Parish Church Complex of La Asunción de Nuestra Señora, Dauis, Bohol

Regalado Trota Jose

Dauis, meaning “point of land,” sits on the edge of Panglao Island across Tagbilaran. The community may have developed through administering or controlling this strategic and naturally protected channel along the Butuan-Cebu trade route. When the Spaniards reached the area in 1565, they encountered only ruins: a force of Ternatans and Portuguese had destroyed Dauis only two or three years earlier. It took some diplomacy for the Castellians to convince the locals that they came on terms different from the previous white-skinned warriors. A century later, enough ruins of massive wooden pillars were still rising above the waters that the Jesuit historian Ignacio Alzina likened the early settlement to Venice.

The earliest book of baptism was dated in April 20, 1697, according to a survey made in 1886. It is possible that the Jesuits began their ministry in Dauis not much earlier than 1697. Cavada, a late 19th century historian, put the foundation date at 1720. Sometime in the 18th century, perhaps around 1753, the Jesuits relocated their mother house in Bohol from Loboc to Dauis. In 1768 all Jesuits were expelled from the Philippines. Their missions in Bohol were entrusted in 1769 to the Augustinian Recollects, who stayed here until 1898. Among their first constructions was a watchtower, the oldest of the Recollects in Bohol, built in 1774 by Fr. Santiago del Corazon de Jesús—a reminder of the strategic importance of this “point of land.”

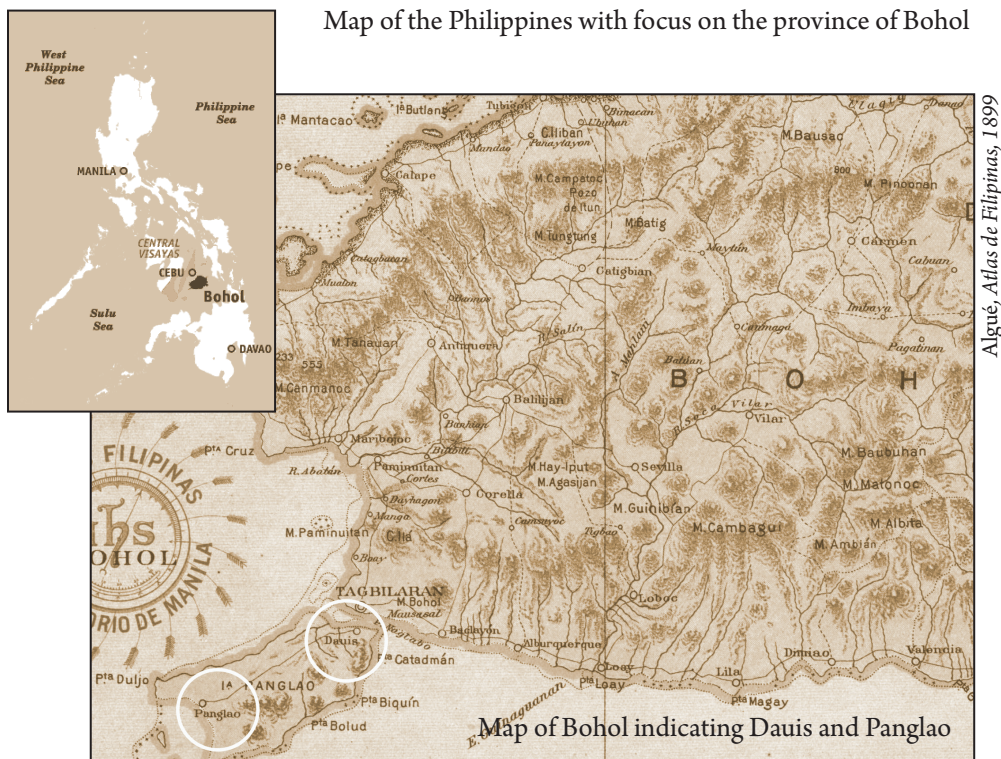
A church built by the Jesuits of light materials was replaced by another in 1753. The Augustinian Recollects began another in 1769 but this burned down in September 1795. Fr Miguel del Pilar, parish priest from 1797 to 1826, built a larger church that seems to be depicted in one of the 1920s paintings over the sala in the convento. According to the 1886 survey, it had walls of *tabique*—thin wooden strips covered with plaster—and a roof of nipa. As seen in the painting, the church formed with the convento a continuous “I” layout instead of the usual “L” or “U”. An archaeological excavation in the grassy field to one side of the *convento* could confirm that this was the area where the fourth church stood.

The fifth and present church was commenced in 1863 by Fray Julio Saldaña, Augustinian Recollect parish priest from 1861 to 1879 and from 1882 to 1898. This church, according to the 1886 report, was only about a meter more in length than the old one, but almost nine more in width and six more in height. When the first level of the façade was completed in 1879, Fray Saldaña had his name and date placed on the classical frieze above the principal arcade. There was a spacious sacristy, but on the 8th and 9th of January, 1884, part of the dome fell over it when one of its supports collapsed. The upper level of the façade was finished only in the early 1920s by the secular priest Fr. Natalio del Mar. Though the church was consecrated on August 23, 1923 by Bishop Juan Gorordo of Cebu, construction continued beyond this date. A cross was installed over the pediment in 1924. Two belfries were planned but only one went up in 1938-1939. This was seventy-six years after Fray Saldaña laid the cornerstone.

The section of the convento that is parallel to the church is built of coralstone blocks that are large and not as finely cut as those used in the L-shaped, newer wing. This suggests that the building, or parts of it, may date from Jesuit times. The newer convento, perpendicular to the “Jesuit” wing, as well as repairs and additions to said wing, were undertaken by Fr. Manuel Carasusan, parish priest from 1838 to 1848.

On August 29, 2011, the National Museum declared the Daus watchtower, and the Shrine parish complex of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary together with its liturgical objects, as National Cultural Treasures. The complex was significantly damaged by the earthquake of October 15, 2013, and restoration work is being undertaken by the National Historical Commission of the Philippines in coordination with the Diocese of Tagbilaran.

Map of the Philippines with focus on the province of Bohol





RTJ 2006

Aerial view of Dauis, here seen with the 20th century Governor Jacinto Borja (formerly Taytay) Bridge connecting it with Tagbilaran. The church complex occupies a tongue of land extending from Panglao Island.

RTJ 2001



Dauis church, tower and convento seen from Tagbilaran. The short, 1784 tower is hidden by the trees right of the church.

RTJ 2000



Possible rendition of the church that replaced another that burned down in 1795. This was built by Fr. Miguel del Pilar OAR, parish priest from 1797 to 1826. This depiction appears in the 1920s painted ceiling over the sala of the *convento*.

RTJ 2000



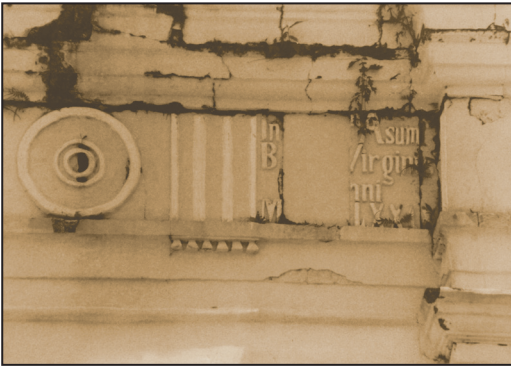
Facade of the church built by Fr. Julio Saldaña OAR when he was parish priest from 1861 to 1879 and 1882 to 1898. The lower part of the facade was begun in 1836; it bears the year 1879, while the upper part was completed in 1923. The belfry was finished in 1938-1939.

NCCA 2013



The earthquake of October 15, 2013 caused the collapse of the upper level of the facade, demolishing in its stead the 1879 portico.

RTJ 1995



Portion of the raised inscription over the portico, referring to the church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, in the year MDCCCLXXIX (1879).

Portion of the raised inscription over the portico, referring to Fr. Julio Saldaña, Discalced Augustinian, as the builder of the church.



RTJ 1997

RTJ 1998



View of the choirloft, showing the early 20th century addition (white walls) over the darkened 19th century coralstone walls. The heaviness of the later concrete may have added to the destruction of the facade.

Section of the transept, showing cut stones dislodged the from the wall as a result of the 2013 earthquake.



NCCA 2013

RTJ 1998



View of the nave from the choirloft.

RTJ 1997



View of the nave looking towards the choirloft. The ceiling is painted to simulate an *artesonado* or coffered vault.

RTJ 2000



The sophisticated design of the church can be seen in many places, especially in the space at the crossing. The “arms” of the transept are unique, with walls diagonal to the nave. This configuration is also seen in the churches of Inabanga (Bohol) and Mandaue (Cebu).

View of the apse and 1784 tower from the second floor of the *convento*. Javellana surmises that the low wall around the green yard may be the remains of the Jesuit-built fortification.



RTJ 1996

The apse of Dauis church is one of the very few in the country with a formal facade. The green space in front is a relaxing complement to the beautiful proportions of the apse.



RTJ 2000

One corner of the apse lost much of its wall due to the 2013 earthquake. Steel supports hold the rest of the area in place while the church is undergoing repair.



RTJ 2015

NCAA 2013



Late 19th century *templete* for the main altar. On the floor by the communion rail is a small well, whose water is said to have sprung miraculously when the townspeople sought refuge in the church during a pirate raid.



RTJ 1998

Remnants of a baroque tabernacle have been incorporated into a more modern one.

RTJ 1998



The gospel side *retablo* (left of the main altar), combines the twisted columns, base and cornice of the 18th century altarpiece with a 19th century neoclassic *urna*.



RTJ 1998

The epistle side *retablo* (right of the main altar) is likewise a juxtaposition of baroque and neoclassic elements.

RTJ 1998



Image of San Nicolas de Tolentino above the gospel *retablo*.

RTJ 1998



Image of Our Lady of Consolation in the central niche of the epistle *retablo*.

RTJ 1998



Image of St Joseph and the Child Jesus in the central niche of the gospel *retablo*.

RTJ 1998



Image of San Agustin in front of the gospel.

Wall painting over a closed window, revealed after a restoration in the 1990s.



RTJ 1998

RTJ 1998



Painting of an angel, one of several lining the nave walls, revealed in the same restoration. It is a wonder why such paintings would have been covered up.

Signature of Canuto Avila "and children," dated 1949, over the south side of the sanctuary. The signature of Ray Francia, another painter who decorated many Bohol churches in the late 1920s and 1930s, appears above the north transept.



RTJ 1998

RTJ 1996



The sacristy is unusually high and ample for a Bohol church, although this spaciousness is not “felt” because the room has been compartmentalized.

Detail of the baroque columns and finials, still with their original polychrome, from an earlier altarpiece. These pieces have been re-assembled into the sacristy *retablo* which has been mounted in an unusually high level in the room.



RTJ 1998



RTJ 2000

Sinuous carving on the crest of the chest of drawers or *cajonería* in the sacristy. This carving, strikingly similar to the *okir* motifs of Mindanao and Sulu, may also be seen in sacristy chests in Baclayon and Dimiao, Bohol.

RTJ 2000



General view of the wing of the *convento* parallel to the church. The coralstone blocks used in ground level are larger, though not as finely cut, as those used in the perpendicular, L-shaped wing. This has led Fr. Javellana to suggest that this section of the *convento* may have dated from Jesuit times. The second level, with its cantilevered balcony or *volada* may have been added later.

RTJ 1998



Closer view of the coralstone blocks of the ground level of the *convento*.

RTJ 1996



Section of the wing of the *convento* perpendicular to the church. This wing is of a construction later that parallels to the church.

Detail showing the carved corbels supporting the roof timbers of the *convento*.



RTJ 2000

The upper *convento* walls are of the so-called *tabique* type. The wall is divided into vertical sections by wooden posts. The space between the posts is filled in with pieces of wood laid horizontally, then covered with lime plaster. This technique was used all over the country, varying in the materials placed between the vertical wooden posts. However, it is practically only in Cebu, Bohol, and northern Mindanao where *tabique* walls are extant.



RTJ 2001

The sala at one end of the old *convento* faces the sea. Its octagonal ceiling features paintings by Ray Francia depicting the founding of the Dauis church.



RTJ 1996

NCAA 2013



A watchtower behind the church was built to warn the townspeople of pirates. It was built by Fr. Santiago del Corazon de Jesus OAR and bears the seal of his order, that of the Augustinian Recollects, and the year of its construction, 1774. It was damaged by the 2013 earthquake but restored by the Escuela Taller de Filipinas in May 2015.

RTJ 1997



RTJ 1997

At each angle of the tower's six sides are stone heads, some with sharp noses. Curiously, they resemble the terracotta head of San Vicente Ferrer in Dupax (Nueval Vizcaya) and the stone heads in the belltower of Baclayon, Bohol (1777).

A head from one of the angles of the tower.

Woodwork of the cupola of the belltower.



RTJ 1996

Part XVI-B: Parish Church Complex of San Agustin, Panglao, Bohol

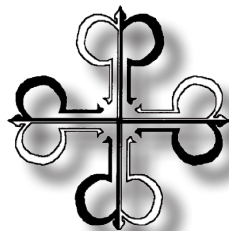
The early history of Panglao is shrouded in confusion, arising from the fact that Panglao is the name of both an island and a town on that island. The town is nestled in a secluded bay at the south-western end of the island. The more 'historic' part of the island is found in Dauis, which was known as a flourishing community in the middle of the 16th century. Could this have been the original Panglao, destroyed by a Ternatan-Portuguese raid around 1563 and re-established under its ancient name in its present site on the exact opposite of the island? 'Panglao' appears in accounts as early as about 1612, but without clearer geographical indication beyond its location, which is the southwest of Bohol island.

Jesuit historians suggest that the settlement of Panglao was a mission station of Dauis until they were expelled in 1768. Accounts of the Augustinian Recollects who replaced the Jesuits mention 1782 as the founding of the parish and town of Panglao. However, Redondo's 1886 report cites a source saying that the parish began only in 1803. There are no available accounts of an early church. The earliest dated structure is the watchtower by the beach, which bears the year 1851 in its inner entrance. It is the tallest tower in the province of Bohol, with views to Cebu, Negros, Siquijor and even Camiguin on a clear day.

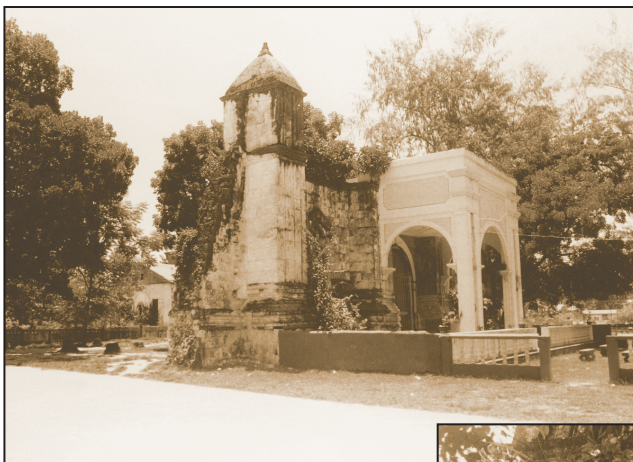
Ruins of a facade of a stone church stand to the left of the present church. The year 1858 or 1859 can be barely made out over the main entrance. The rest of the nave may have consisted of wooden posts and slender wood-and-plaster walls now long gone since. The end of the church seems to have extended all the way to where the convento now stands, forming an "I" plan like that in Dauis in the first half of the 19th century.

Construction of the present cruciform church was started by Fray Valentin Utande, parish priest from 1894 to 1897. Wood for the framework was floated all the way from Sevilla and Lóboc. The greater part of the nave was up by the 1920s. With a number of areas still unfinished, the church was inaugurated on September 1, 1924 by Bishop Juan Gorordo of Cebu. The parish priest at that time, Padre Quiterio Sarigumba, placed his initials P.Q.S. at the apex of the pediment. The initials of this builder priest—who as a seminarian and was one of the four to lay the cornerstone of the University of Santo Tomas in its new campus in Sampaloc in 1911—are also found in Jagná and Maribojóc.

On August 29, 2011, the National Museum of the Philippines declared the Panglao watchtower a National Cultural Treasure, and the Parish Church complex of San Agustin, the plaza, the old municipio, the escuelas de niños y niñas, and the archway and mortuary chapel of the 19th century cemetery were collectively declared Important Cultural Properties. ■



RTJ 1997



Ruin of the facade of an earlier church, with a date over the main entrance that can be vaguely read as 1858 or 1859. The facade was flanked by stout pillars ending in turret-like finials. The site has been developed as a shrine with the addition of a portico.

Each of the flanks sprouts an unusual baroque silhouette cut in stone, a technique unknown in the rest of the province.



RTJ 1997

RTJ 1997



A short distance from the ruin is the actual church, begun in the 1890s by Fr. Valentin Utande OAR and inaugurated in 1924 by Fr. Quiterio Sarigumba. Padre Sarigumba placed his initials 'P.Q.S.' over the clock on the pediment.

South view of the church.
The open grounds of the
complex constitute what
is possibly the largest
church plaza in Bohol.



RTJ 1997

NCAA 2013



To remedy a possible
shortage of cut stone,
the upper sections of
the walls were faced
with thick lime plaster
applied in layers.

The cupola and
pediments of the
apse and transepts
were finished with
galvanized iron
sheets.



RTJ 1997

RTJ 1997



The ceiling paintings over the crossing, transept and sanctuary are in the style of Ray Francia and Canuto Avila, Cebu-based artists who decorated churches in the area in the 1920s and 1930s.

RTJ 1997



The ceiling paintings over the nave, with their dizzying perspectives and blue-and-ochre palette, are arguably the most unusual in the province.

RTJ 1997



Northern transept and sanctuary. The main *retablo* is in the form of a *templete*.

RTJ 2015



Central image of the patron, St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo.

RTJ 2015



Below San Agustín is the image of the Santo Niño holding a paddle, said to symbolize his many waterborne "travels."

NCCA 2013



Right side *retablo* with the central image of Our Lady of Consolation.

RTJ 2001



The confessional is exuberantly carved with birds frolicking among flowers and vines. A similar pair is in Tuburan, Cebu.

Archway to the cemetery.



RTJ 1998

RTJ 1998



The year 1875 or 1876 appears over the entrance. There is an admonition in Cebuano, reminding passers-by of their temporal nature.

From the rear, the unusual “flattened ogee” arch of the gateway can be better appreciated.



RTJ 1998

RTJ 1998



The graveyard, with coffins and tombs of infants and children near the atrial cross. Since this photo was taken, a tomb has been erected obscuring the view of the chapel in the distance.

Skull and cross-bones motif on one of the tombs inside the chapel.



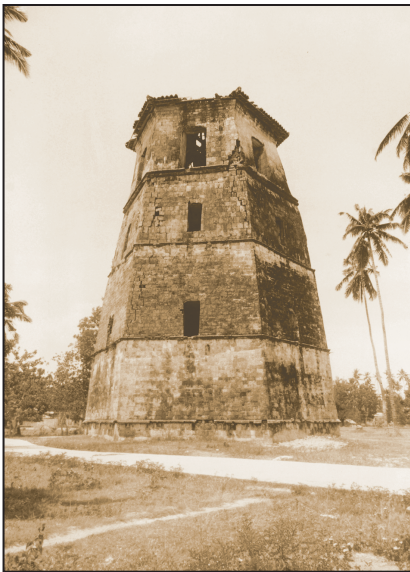
RTJ 1998

RTJ 1998



A flower arising from an angel's head ornaments the pediment of the chapel.

RTJ 1997



A stone watchtower, Bohol's tallest, stands guard a short distance behind the church. It affords views over Cebu, Negros, Siquijor and Camiguin.

The year 1851 appears inside the entrance of the tower, making it the oldest dated structure in Panglao. It was probably built to aid in the extirpation of the pirate raids from the south, which was aggressively pursued in the middle of the 19th century.

RTJ 1998



RTJ 1998



Interior of the hexagonal tower. The log toppled to one side used to support the steps that led to the top of the tower. Damage caused by the 2013 earthquake is being repaired by the National Museum.

The L-shaped *convento*, with a ground level of coralstone and an upper level of wood.



RTJ 1997



RTJ 1997

Interior of the lower level of the *convento*, showing two of the massive posts holding up the upper level.

One of two primary schools built of coralstone in the second half of the 19th century.



RTJ 1997



RTJ 1997

Wooden openwork with the seal of Saint Augustine on a carroza or processional carriage in the church.



Image of the Assumption of Our Lady, patroness of Dauis, as it appeared during the Diocesan Marian Congress of Tagbilaran City in December 1954. The ivory head and hands were stolen in the 1970s. This picture, now available in the souvenir shop of the Dauis *convento*, is included here in the hope that the ivory parts be returned to the parish.

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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), the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, 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 trotajose55@yahoo.com.