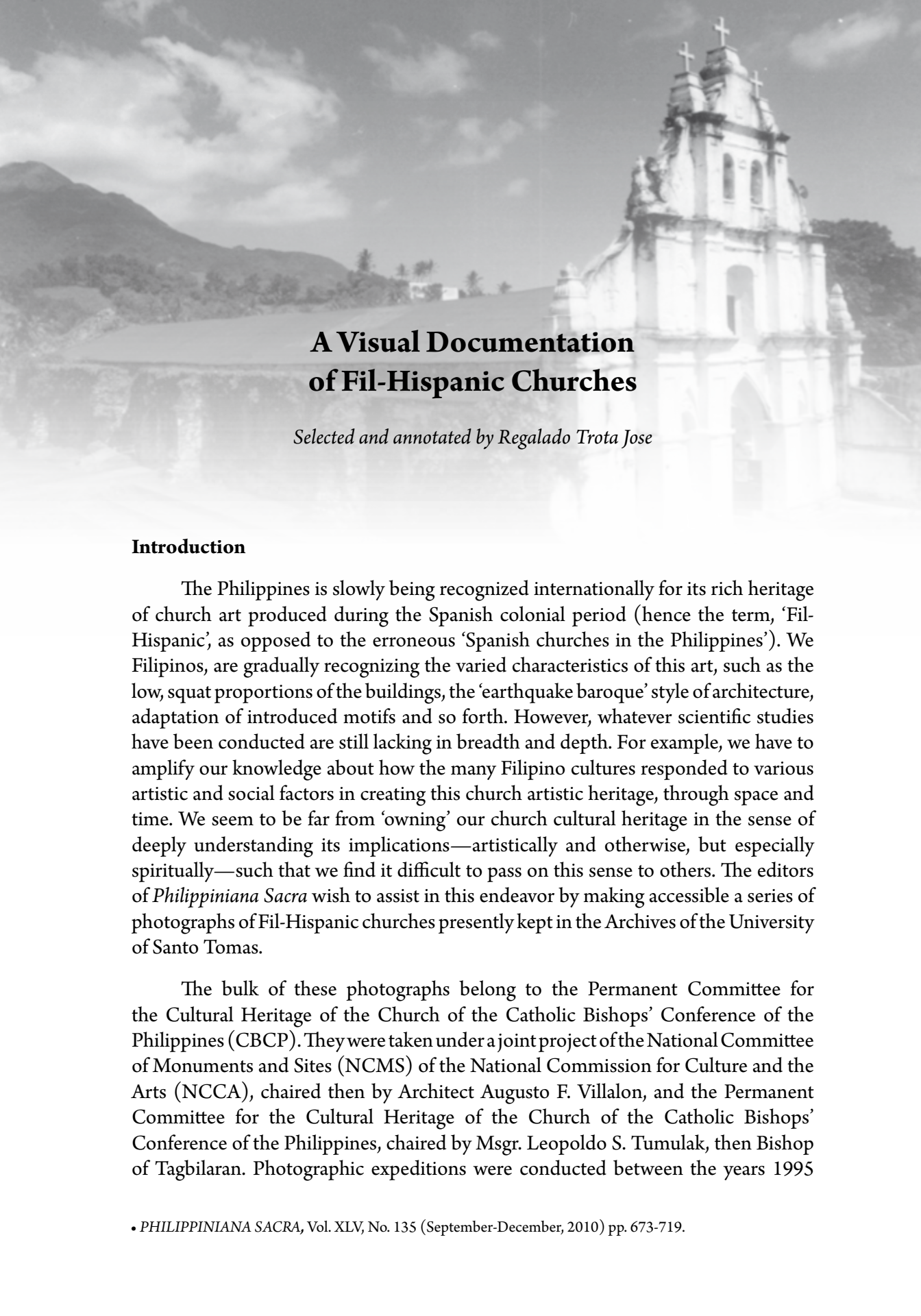




A Visual Documentation of Fil-Hispanic Churches

Selected and annotated by Regalado Trota Jose

Introduction

The Philippines is slowly being recognized internationally for its rich heritage of church art produced during the Spanish colonial period (hence the term, 'Fil-Hispanic', as opposed to the erroneous 'Spanish churches in the Philippines'). We Filipinos, are gradually recognizing the varied characteristics of this art, such as the low, squat proportions of the buildings, the 'earthquake baroque' style of architecture, adaptation of introduced motifs and so forth. However, whatever scientific studies have been conducted are still lacking in breadth and depth. For example, we have to amplify our knowledge about how the many Filipino cultures responded to various artistic and social factors in creating this church artistic heritage, through space and time. We seem to be far from 'owning' our church cultural heritage in the sense of deeply understanding its implications—artistically and otherwise, but especially spiritually—such that we find it difficult to pass on this sense to others. The editors of *Philippiniana Sacra* wish to assist in this endeavor by making accessible a series of photographs of Fil-Hispanic churches presently kept in the Archives of the University of Santo Tomas.

The bulk of these photographs belong to the Permanent Committee for the Cultural Heritage of the Church of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP). They were taken under a joint project of the National Committee of Monuments and Sites (NCMS) of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), chaired then by Architect Augusto F. Villalon, and the Permanent Committee for the Cultural Heritage of the Church of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, chaired by Msgr. Leopoldo S. Tumalak, then Bishop of Tagbilaran. Photographic expeditions were conducted between the years 1995

and 1998. A further set of photographs were taken during the years 2000-2002, when an NCCA team led by Mrs. Esperanza B. Gatbonton visited a number of churches preparatory to their being declared National Cultural Treasures by the National Museum in 2001.

A valuable addition to the CBCP collection is the series of photos taken by Richard Ahlborn, a Fulbright Research Grantee who traveled to many Philippine churches in 1958-1959. A first collection of his photos and negatives, numbering around 600, was donated in 1982-1983 to the Tulane University Latin American Photographic Archive in New Orleans, Louisiana, USA. A copy was made from each of these negatives for Mr. Ahlborn's use. It is this second set which was generously given by Mr. Ahlborn himself to the CBCP Committee through this author, who met Mr. Ahlborn in a Jesuit conference in Boston in 1997; I participated in the conference upon the invitation of Fr. Rene Javellana, S.J. Mr. Ahlborn then was Curator for the Division of Cultural History at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C. He is at present Curator Emeritus (retired) of the same Division. This splendid (and heavy) gift to the Filipino people was brought to the Philippines in 1999 through the care of Leila Alampay in Washington, D.C., and this author's parents Regalado and Remedios Jose.

The publication of these photographs in *Philippiniana Sacra* will be complemented with those from other sources such as:

1. Photographs from the UST Archives itself, a collection accumulated through the years and only recently made accessible in albums.
2. Photographs taken in 2003, when a team led by Fr. Isidro Abaño, O.P. scoured churches around Luzon and Visayas for ivory *santos* (Catholic religious images) as part of a project of the University of Santo Tomas, the Catholic Bishop's Conference of the Philippines, and the Ayala Museum, that would yield material for an important exhibit on Philippine ivory sponsored by the latter museum in 2004.
3. Photographs taken through various years by this author.

Whenever possible, the years when the photographs were taken will be indicated in one corner of the illustration.

The photographer and/or source of the photograph will similarly be indicated, through the use of the following abbreviations:

AUST	Archives of the University of Santo Tomas
BC	Buen Calubayan/ UST- CBCP- Ayala Museum Project, 2003
NSA	Noel San Andres/ CBCP-NCCA Project
REA	Richard E. Ahlborn
RTJ	Regalado Trota Jose

The coverage of aspects of church art will be varied. When available, a photo of the church within its context will be featured. This will be followed with architectural sections and details (exterior, then interior), then altar pieces, religious sculpture, furniture, ecclesiastical vessels, other relevant buildings and spaces such as the convento and cemetery, and so on. Due to unavailability of time, very little historical information will be provided.

For our first installment, we would like to feature the Batanes Islands.

The Batanes Islands comprise the northernmost province of the Philippines. The name is derived from Batan Island, the largest and most populated of the group, where four of the towns—Basco (the capital), Mahatao, Ivaná, and Uyugan—are located. Southwest of Batan is Sabtang Island, with its lone municipality of the same name. The Dominicans built stone churches and conventos in the five towns mentioned, as well as stone chapels in Itbud (Uyugan), and Savidug and Chavayan in Sabtang. A unique building was the *beaterio*, a house where lay unmarried women lived under the Rule of the Third Order of St. Dominic; from here they cooperated with the missionary in the civil and religious education of the people. Interesting too are the ruins of a leprosarium, in San Joaquin, a district of Basco facing Valugan Bay and the Pacific Ocean to the east. The church complex of San Carlos Borromeo parish in Mahatao, with its well-preserved church, convento, and *beaterio*, was declared a National Cultural Treasure by the National Museum on July 31, 2001.





Basco. General view of the
area around the Cathedral.

RTJ | 1998

Basco. Cathedral of St. Dominic of Guzman. View of the façade (west end) and north side. Mt. Iraya (also Irraya) in the background.

RTJ | 1998





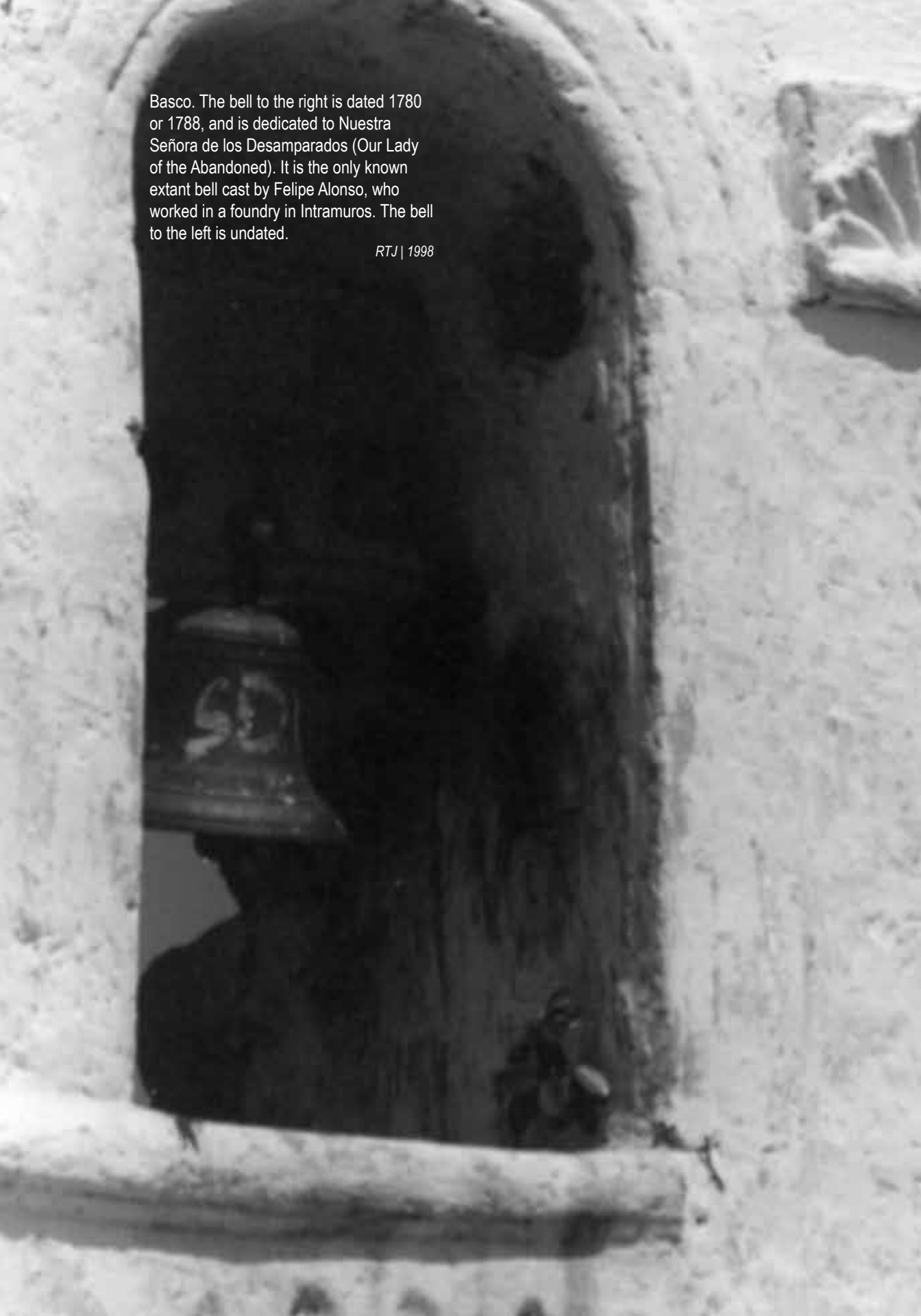


Basco. Principal façade. The upper level of this wall collapsed a few years after the photo was taken, but was later rebuilt. The façades of the churches of Basco, Mahatao and Sabtang are distinguished by openings in their upper storeys where bells are hung, thus classifying them as *espadaña* façades. This type of façade is rather rare in the Philippines, with one other example found in the Cemetery Chapel of Vigan (Ilocos Sur). Baguey (Cagayan) has an *espadaña* belltower, as does the 1950s San Antonio de Padua church in Forbes Park, Makati—although this latter is based more on the California mission model. José Rizal caricatured hollow persons in the character of Doña Victoria de [sic] de Espadaña.

RTJ | 1998

Basco. An earthquake on July 16,
1990 toppled the upper levels of the
façade. It has since been restored.
RTJ | 2002





Basco. The bell to the right is dated 1780 or 1788, and is dedicated to Nuestra Señora de los Desamparados (Our Lady of the Abandoned). It is the only known extant bell cast by Felipe Alonso, who worked in a foundry in Intramuros. The bell to the left is undated.

RTJ | 1998





Basco. Ornamental details
on the facade.

RTJ | 1998



Basco. The south wall of the
cathedral with a step buttress.

RTJ | 1998



Basco. Exterior of the north wall. The aisle along the north side of the cathedral was closed off soon after the building was constructed (between 1812 and 1825) when it was realized that the church was too wide.

RTJ | 1998







Basco. The space between the north wall and the wall separating the north aisle from the rest of the church.

RTJ | 1998



Basco. Section of the north
wall, with pointed windows.
RTJ | 1998





Basco. East end (back) of the cathedral. A large section was similarly closed off due to the excessive length of the building.

RTJ | 1998





Basco. East end of the cathedral and portion of the south wall to the left. The abandoned space between the first east wall and the second wall that shortened the length of the church is clearly seen.

RTJ | 1998





Basco. Section of the stonework of the first east wall; the apex of the second east wall, with its *palitada* blackened but still intact, rises in the back.

RTJ | 1998





Basco. Interior of the nave,
looking towards the present
sanctuary. The wall that narrows
the north side is on the left.

RTJ | 1998





Statue of Our Lady of the Rosary
(without the Christ Child) in a side altar.

RTJ | 1998

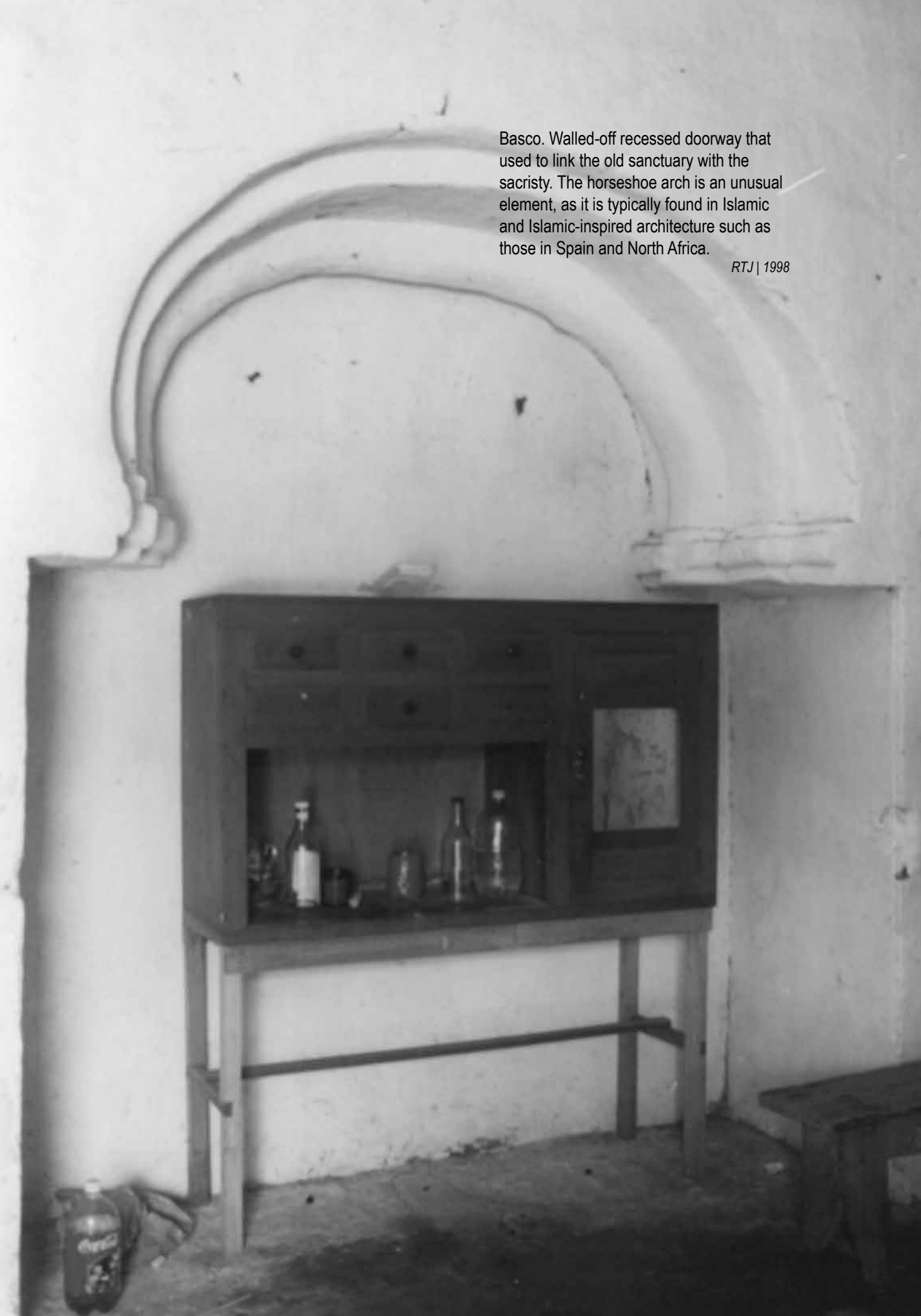
Basco. Portion of the walled-off section of the church, formerly the sanctuary with its *retablo* of masonry. The central niche is back-lit, on the left. A *Santo Entierro* (image of the Dead Christ) with arms that can be repositioned so that it can also be used as a Crucified Christ, lies among the debris.

RTJ | 1998



Basco. Walled-off recessed doorway that used to link the old sanctuary with the sacristy. The horseshoe arch is an unusual element, as it is typically found in Islamic and Islamic-inspired architecture such as those in Spain and North Africa.

RTJ | 1998





Basco. Three *porta-ciriales*, stands for the *ciriales* or processional cross and candlesticks.

RTJ | 1998



→ Basco. Processional image of Our Lady of Sorrows on an *andas*, a platform borne on the shoulders of four men.

RTJ | 1998

Basco. Procession for the penitential *Via Crucis* (Way of the Cross) during Lent.
RTJ | 1998







Basco. The old *convento* (rectory) perpendicular to the church. It is now the Bishop's House.

RTJ | 1998





Basco. Azotea (terrace) at the
back of the *convento*.

RTJ | 1998





Basco. Azotea of the *beaterio*, a house for religious women who helped in catechism and other church activities.

RTJ | 1998



Basco. Another angle of the *beaterio*,
with a low stairway leading to the *azotea*.
RTJ|1998



Basco. Close-up of the carved and moulded
decoration over a *beaterio* window.

RTJ | 1998







Basco. Ruins of the Leprosarium in San Joaquin,
a district on the eastern shore of Batan Island. The
location was pointed out by Dr. Florentino Hornedo
(in the photo, with Rene Javellana, SJ in the white
T-shirt). In the background is Mt. Iraya.

RTJ|1998



Basco. View of the Leprosarium ruins towards
Valugan Bay, by the rim of the Pacific Ocean.
RTJ | 1998



