

# philippine studies

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## **The Church of Paete in 1807: Ecclesiastical Decorations and Furnishings**

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*Philippine Studies* vol. 35 no. 1 (1987) 93–102

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Fri June 27 13:30:20 2008

## Notes and Comments

### The Church of Paete in 1807: Ecclesiastical Decorations and Furnishings REGALADO TROTA JOSE, JR.

It takes some maneuvering to get to the church of Paete. If one successfully navigates the narrow streets lined by the view-obstructing houses, dodges the jeepneys materializing from blind corners, and sidesteps the papier-mache and wood sculptures drying along the alleys, one eventually finds himself in the plaza admiring the exuberantly carved facade of the church. Inside the church, it is quite gratifying to find that a number of the building's antiquities — the *retablos* (altarpieces), the huge panel paintings, and the inner gallery of the dome— have survived. The *baldosa* (tile) pavement, with its cracked and undulating surface, provides mute testimony to generations of parishioners' footsteps.

It is the perennial problem of local art historians that dates and accounts of such art pieces are exceedingly hard to come by. Climate, termites, wars, apathy and ignorance have created a quite inhospitable condition for the survival of documents. Fortunately, however, an inventory of the church furnishings of Paete in 1807 is still preserved in the Archives of the Archdiocese of Manila. Entitled *Lista de Alajas, Ornamentos y estado material dela fabrica de esta Yglesia del Señor Santiago del Pueblo del de Paette*<sup>1</sup>, this document was made in 1807 by the parish priest, Fray Joseph de Alarilla, Franciscan, for the diocesan visitation of

1. A List of the Appurtenances, Vestments and the Physical Condition of the Fabric of this church of Señor Santiago Apostol, of the town of Paete. *Alajas* is a general term to be understood as not only including jewels but also *santos*, furniture, vessels, etc. *Ornamentos* refers not to decoration but to vestments.

Archbishop Fray Juan Antonio Zulaybar.<sup>2</sup> While it is not too helpful in dating (it raises more questions than it answers), it does reveal a very interesting picture of the wealth of the parish at that time.

## THE INVENTORY

### THE CHURCH AND BELLTOWER

On the retablo-style facade, so the inventory goes, was a "well-delineated" image of the parish's patron, Santiago Apostol.<sup>3</sup> The church was 25.5 *brazas* long, 4 *brazas* and 2 *palmas* wide, and 8.5 *brazas* high (with one *braza* equivalent to 1.65 meters and a *palm*, 20 centimeters, this would be 42 meters by 7 meters by 14 meters, respectively). Walls were one *braza* (1.65 meters) thick. With sixteen windows, it enjoyed "*mucho claridad*." The three-storied belltower was proudly described as being all of stone, except for the windows. It carried three large bells, the largest weighing seventy-seven *arrobas* (one *arroba* being roughly 11.5 kilos, this was 885.5 kilos).

### RETABLOS AND THEIR DECORATIONS

The retablo of the church's main altar consisted of three stories. In the center of the first was a grand tabernacle with niches containing images of the four Evangelists, San Agustin, San Gregorio Papa, San Miguel Archangel, San Pedro, and San Pablo, all carved in the round; this was crowned with a Santo Niño. To the right of the tabernacle stood San Pedro de Alcantara, and to the left San Francisco. In the center of the second story was Santiago Apostol, flanked on the right by San Diego de Alcalá, and on the left by San Bernardino de Sena, also all carved in the round. On the third story was a Crucified Christ, with the Virgin and San Juan Evangelista "all painted in various colors".

The present organization of the main altar differs somewhat from that just described. The old tabernacle has been replaced by a later one of silver, and San Pedro and San Pablo have displaced

2. Archives of the Archdiocese of Manila (AAM), Box 4A1, Folder 1807, Laguna.

3. Apparently this image was replaced. The present relief, according to one author, was installed in 1840. Eugenio C. Quesada, *Paete*, 1956, p. 72.

San Francisco and San Pedro Alcantara. Likewise, San Pedro Bautista and San Juan Capistrano have replaced San Diego and San Bernardino, respectively. A crucifix has taken over Santiago's place, which has been moved to the third story. A bas-relief of the Crucifixion, high up on the walls of the cupola, could be the original tenant of this story.

Silver ornaments were lavished on the main altar, the most outstanding of which was a tabernacle consisting of three stages, 2 *varas* (1.66 meters) high and one vara (83 cm.) wide, with a gilt crucifix on its door. Just in front of the retablo was a pair of *gradillas* (small steps on which were placed various ornaments), six *ramilletes* (stylized bouquets in relief), and eight candlestands, all of wrought silver. The niche of Santiago was similarly adorned with five *ramilletes* and four candlestands. The rubrics of the mass were encased in three silver frames (collectively called *sacras*) covered with glass. In the middle of the church, hanging from the cupola, was a four-sconced *lampara* of silver, which served as a sanctuary lamp. (Could some of these pieces be those pictured in the "*Eucaristia*" section of the large "Salvation of Mankind" painting hanging on the right side of the nave? )

To the left of the main altar stood the retablo of Nuestra Señora de la O, whose ornate fully carved image had head and hands of ivory, and was adorned with a gilded crown and other jewels. To her right was San Antonio de Padua, and to her left was San Simon de Judas. On the upper story was a representation of the Assumption of the Virgin, with the Apostles. This last, a *relieve* or bas-relief, is the only one that has remained of the original images, as in their places now stand Santa Barbara, Nstra. Sra. del Carmen, and Santa Lucia.

On the right of the main altar was the retablo dedicated to San Luis Rey de Francia. The saint's large carved image stood in the center, with its corresponding curtains. To his right stood San Pasqual Baylon, and to his left Santo Domingo de Guzman, both also carved. Above them was a representation of the Descent of the Holy Spirit, another *relieve* which again is the only original image that has remained. Those below are now Sta. Clara, San Jose, and San Antonio de Padua (this image may have been transferred from the retablo of Nstra. Sra. de la O). All the sculptures for these altars, the inventory describes, were gold-leafed.

To the right of the altar of San Luis stood the retablo of Nuestra Señora de los Dolores. On this image, corresponding to the more

popularly-known *Pieta*, were affixed a *rostrillo* (an aureole around the face) of gilt silver, and seven swords piercing her heart. (Both ornaments are now either missing or kept in custody). The niche was enclosed with glass. On the second story stood a Santo Christo, or crucifix, four palmos (80 cm.) tall.<sup>4</sup>

There are two altars mentioned in this 1807 inventory which do not exist anymore. The first was dedicated to the Santo Niño, located to the left as one entered from the main entrance. The Santo Niño, of carved wood, wore a white silk habit embroidered with gold and silver thread, cinctured at the waist with a belt from which dangled eight small silver bells. He carried a rosary fashioned from eleven *granos* (55 centigrams) of gold, with its gold cross set with precious stones. (There were other jewels mentioned but tears in the manuscript have rendered them illegible). On both sides of the altar hung two *estampas* (prints): on the left, one of the Purissima (sic) Concepcion, and on the right one of San Josef. This altar was furnished with a gilded tabernacle, frontal, candlesticks, gradillas, and ramilletes.

The second altar was dedicated to the *Animas* or Souls in Purgatory. The *estampa*, picturing "various souls in Purgatory" was placed next to the door of the sacristy, to the left of the main altar, probably where the altar of the Santo Sepulcro or Dead Christ now stands.<sup>5</sup> The altar likewise had its wooden frontal and candlestands, all painted black, with a crucifix also of wood; it served as a *tumba* (funeral altar). (Could this *estampa* refer to the painting with San Francisco assisting souls, now hanging on the right wall, just before the transept? ) We were not able to ascertain the existence of the last altar, that of San Juan Bautista in the baptistry, which occupied the lowest story of the belltower. It was described as a painted retablo, with the carved image measuring six palmos (1.20 meters) in heights.

4. This is a particularly fine and memorable altarpiece. Delicately chiseled, sinuous leaves and oversized blossoms cram the surface, almost engulfing the *santos*. The Dead Christ, by the way, is almost of the same proportion as the Blessed Virgin, unlike many other Filipino examples where the Son is dwarfed by the Mother.

5. This latter was built, according to a small inscription, in 1944.

## SANTOS

Throughout the nave of the church, supported on columns, were carved wooden images of various saints. On the left stood Santiago Apostol, San Joaquin, San Joseph, San Buenaventura, San Antonio de Padua, and Santa Catalina. Opposite them stood San Luis Rey de Francis, Santa Ana, San Juan Bautista, San Pedro Alcantara, Santa Clara, and Santa Rossa. There were also various crucifixes: a large one used for the *Via Crucis*, another large one under a baldaquin in the choirloft, four small ones of ivory placed on the altars, and a small one of wood.

## ALTAR FITTINGS

The church was amply stocked with altar furnishings. (In other parish inventories everything was listed perfunctorily, but the Paete curate carefully grouped the items according to type, as if to show off that having more than one of each kind, they could easily supply another church). There were four wooden *frontales* (frontals), carved and gilded; three pairs of *gradillas*, likewise carved and gilded, for the side altars; three pairs of ordinary ones, and three more pairs of larger size, painted especially for festive days; three *sagrarios* (tabernacles) with their keys, for the altars; and one special tabernacle for the *Monumento* (Altar for the Blessed Sacrament) on Holy Thursday. There was a wealth of *ramilletes*: twenty-eight of carved wood, with small pieces of glass, *de primera clase* (first class; perhaps these were larger and more elaborately carved? ); ten gilded and painted with the likenesses of various saints; and twenty-one smaller ones, also gilded, with thirteen of them adorned with glass in the middle. Of *sacras*, there were a dozen "first class" pieces, painted and gilded, and a dozen others also painted, but for everyday use. We should mention too the six missal stands (one painted black), four handbells (including a large one for High Mass), and a *turno* (bell-wheel) with twenty-four small bells, rung during consecration.

The church also possessed frontals of cloth, in purple, green, and black, three for each color (one for the main altar and two for the *colaterales* or side altars). The most expensive covering for the altar table was a *mantel* (table cloth) of embroidered silk. There were *manteles* for the different altars and *credencias* (side tables), and were of different materials appropriate for ordinary and

festive days. These came with their matching *palias* (tabernacle curtains). Each of the major *santos*—*Santiago*, Nstra. Sra. de la Ò, San Luis Nstra. Sra. de los Dolores, and the Santo Niño—had its own curtain. During Holy Week, the four large retablos were shrouded with broad sheets of black *cacha* (muslin). There was also a black baldaquin or canopy to shelter a large crucifix which was set up after the Via Crucis ritual. Special backdrops, possibly painted or embroidered, were hung for Christmas and for the feast of *Corpus Christi*. On Marian holidays a beautiful damask *estandarte* (banner) was unfurled, on which was painted a Nstra. Sra. del Rosario with San Francisco and Santo Domingo de Guzman. This was flanked by two *faroles de ojalata* (tin lanterns).

#### ILLUMINATION

To light up the *capilla mayor* (the sanctuary or the area where the main altar stood), two wooden, six-branched chandeliers suspended from the ceiling, and four *hacheros* (large, heavy candlestands) were provided. Hanging in front of the altar of the Dolores were two metal chandeliers with four branches each. On holy days an arsenal of twenty eight metal *candeleros* (candlestands), ten large and eight small ones of gilded wood, and fifty two others of painted wood, was carefully arranged about the altars. What a veritable festival of lights the church must have been, with the flickering flames of all those candles reflected on the burnished silver decorations! On Holy Thursday eight painted wooden chandeliers illuminated the Monumento housing the Blessed Sacrament. Thirty *candeleros* kept vigil over the Dead Christ from Good Friday to Black Saturday; and on an *hachon* (large candlestand) was propped the *Cirio Pasqual* (Paschal Candle) to denote the Easter Season.

#### VESTMENTS

Like many other large parishes, Paete possessed a fine collection of vestments and altar cloths, all elaborately worked and just as meticulously inventoried. Distributed among the colors of the liturgical season, there were six first class *casullas* (chasubles, the outermost vestments of the priest, open-sided and usually guitar-shaped), seven second class ones, and seven ordinary ones;

and four first class *capas* (copes), with four second class ones. There were four first class *albas* (long sleeved white robes worn under the chasubles), including one of *sinamay* (fine abaca fabric), and two second class and three ordinary ones; four *roquetes* (rochets, more popularly called surplices, white upper garments, often trimmed with lace); three *amitos* (amices, square pieces of linen secured around the neck and shoulders, and worn under the alb); eleven *singulos* (girdles), one embroidered with silver and set with small stones; and three *paños de hombros* (humeral veils used during benediction and other rituals). Furthermore there were four white silk veils for weddings. As was the practice in other parishes, they were probably rented out along with the arrae, although these latter are not mentioned. Incidental linens included twenty-nine *corporales* (square pieces of cloth on which the sacred species were prepared), thirty-two *hijuelas* (palls-pieces of cloth, usually stiffened with cardboard, to cover the chalice), and seventy-three *purificadores* (small towels used in cleaning the vessels). There must have been a great deal of wear and tear!

#### LITURGICAL VESSELS

Among ecclesiastical vessels, the church counted three silver chalices (one gilded), each with its paten; two silver *copones* (ciboria) in which were kept the consecrated hosts; one gilded *custodia* (monstrance); and one silver relicario (pyx containing the Viaticum for the sick), with a pair of pouches in which it was carried. There were also a pair of crystal *vinajeras* (cruets for wine and water) with matching silver spoons and a platter; a metal *incensario* (censar) with its *naveta* (incense boat or container) and spoon; and a metal *acetre* (holy water pail) with its *hysopo* (sprinkler).

#### THE SACRISTY

In the sacristy, where the priest vested himself before mass, there was a *lavatorio* with three faucets, where he washed his hands, and a mirror to aid him in checking if everything was correctly worn. All vessels, ornaments, candlestands and other paraphernalia were kept in large *aparadores* (cabinets), two of them of *laua-an*, painted over. Chasubles, vestments and altar



cloths were laid out in two large chests: the first of carved *tindalo*, measuring 5 varas (8.25 meters) long, one vara (1.65 m.) high, and three palmos and a *jeme* (about 70 cm.) wide, with six large and three small drawers, all with their corresponding locks. The second chest was slightly smaller. There was a special cabinet to protect the jewels and gowns of the Virgin (these however were not listed because they were under the custody of the Mayordomo).

Squeezed in among all these chests and cabinets was a small retablo in one corner. In its center stood a Crucifix of wood, flanked on the right by a wooden Santo Niño, three palmos (60 cm.) tall, dressed in a purple habit and other accessories, and on the left by an image of the Resurreccion. At the top was an estampa of Nstra. Sra. de los Dolores covered with glass. About the room hung various estampas (they could have been paintings)—on the left, those portraying San Joseph, San Francisco de Asis, and Señor Ecce Homo; on the right, La Purissima Concepcion, Santo Domingo de Guzman, Señor Ecce Homo, and San Antonio de Padua; and above the doorway to the *capilla mayor*, one of San Pedro de Alcantara.

#### PROCESSIONAL FLOATS AND APPURTENANCES

For processions, there were two sets of four *ciriales* (candles on ornamental poles) each— one of wrought silver, and the other painted black— with their corresponding crosses. During the mass they were mounted on *peanyas* (pedestals; properly spelled in Spanish *peana*) some distance from the main altar. The sixth *peanya* was for one of three *guiones* (standards depicting the Lamb of God on one side and the Veneration of the Holy Eucharist on the other). The first *guion*, with its pole, was of silver, from which tinkled six tiny gilded bells; the next was embroidered with gold and silver thread, and had eleven silver bells; while the third was embroidered with gold and had eleven bells of some other metal. There were two *pendones* (processional flags): one of white *cacha*, and the other of red damask with silken tassels. When the Blessed Sacrament was solemnly carried out of doors, or borne in procession inside the church, a *palio* (ornamental canopy) was held aloft, to protect it from any incidental material. Here there were four to choose from: a white one with golden braids and tassels, a red one with silver trimmings, an ordinary white one,

and a black one for Holy Week.

True to the woodcarving tradition of the town, the parish possessed an admirable number of *andas* (hand-borne floats for processions), all magnificently wrought. This is a significant section of the *inventario* since *andas* rarely appeared in such lists of other parishes, and when they did they were of a much smaller number. The first anda was a *Belen* (Nativity scene) with an ivory Santo Niño,<sup>6</sup> apparently dressed in some sort of gold filigree (tears in the manuscript prevent a clear description), lying on a *catrecito* (small cot) likewise decorated with gold, silver, and precious stones. There was another belen, probably meant to follow the first one, replete with angels, the Three Kings and their horses, shepherds, lambs, cows, etc. Still another anda for Christmas was one depicting a "*Mapa*" of the various mysteries of the Nativity, with many figures. The anda for the Virgin (probably Nstra. Sra. de la O) was composed of four columns and arches, topped by a crown-shaped cupola on which perched a gilded image of San Miguel Archangel. Señor Santiago Apostol marched out under an aureole-like arch, from which dangled six wooden flowers, all gilded. Since Paete was a Franciscan parish, there were two floats for San Francisco: one, with its image, used for the Procession of the Cord; and the other, for fiestas, with its carved image six palmos (1.20 meters) tall, complete with hábit, cowl, and cloak. For Holy Week there was an anda each for the Santo Nazareno, with its vestments, and the Santo Sepulchro, resting on *colchones* (mattresses) and *almohadas* (pillows), its face wrapped in a *sabana* (scarf). Finally, there were a float for the Santa Cruz, carved and gilded, and a carved Baldaquin with little glass windows on its gilded sides.

#### UNLISTED ITEMS

For all its intriguing detail, we must note that this inventory is not complete. For example, certain standard pieces of furniture are not listed, such as the *bancos* (benches) for the *principalia*, the pulpit, confessionals, fonts, and musical instruments. Likewise certain necessary vestments, such as maniples and dalmatics for the deacons do not appear. None of the three huge paintings

6. This Niño must have been of a fairly large size, to be seen by the people.

on wood now hanging along the nave are mentioned: San Cristobal, The Salvation of Mankind,<sup>7</sup> and a scene with San Francisco assisting souls to Heaven.

#### LATER ACQUISITION AND RENOVATIONS

In the same archives there is another folder containing some correspondence between the various parish priests of Paete and the Archbishop of Manila, regarding requests for certain purchases and repairs.<sup>8</sup> However these do not date earlier than the second half of the last century, and end abruptly in the early 1880s. Nonetheless one important date is given: the large painting on wood of San Cristobal was purchased for ₱22 on October 1852, in the time of Fr. Francisco de Santa Gonzaleza (signature unclear), although there is no mention of the artist or provenance.<sup>9</sup> By July 1856, Fr. Felix Hernandez had concluded the paving of his church with tiles (possibly the present ones), and had also repainted the large painting of the Animas (the third painting mentioned in the preceding paragraph).<sup>10</sup> Eight years later the three main retablos were re-gilded, at a cost of approximately ₱150, under Fr. Faustino Martin. The tabernacle received a new facade of silver, and the church acquired colored glass windows, all for ₱800, in 1869 under Fr. Buenaventura Fernandes. In the years 1870-71 Fr. Francisco Vellon ordered more repairs and repainting of the main altar and its surroundings, costing about ₱70. The earthquake of 1880 heavily damaged the church and convento, so that Fr. Gregorio Martin had to build a provisional church (much too small, he complained) which was 20 varas long, 8 varas wide, and 4 varas high (33 by 13.2 by 8.6 meters, respectively); he still needed ₱300 for repairs. Here the record stops abruptly. It will take quite a bit more maneuvering through the Archdiocesan Archives to learn more about Paete church.

7. This is a fantastic piece incorporating the Salvation of Mankind, the Sacraments of the Church, the Ship of the Saved and the Ship of the Damned. This last one disgorges its woeful hordes into a monster-strewn vision of Hell, which as may have been intended, is at the eye-level of the viewer.

8. AAM 14A3, 1849-1915A.

9. Recently another painting of the same saint applied on the stone wall was discovered behind this panel.

10. Fr. Hernandez' name can still be partly read at the badly worn inscription at the bottom of the painting.