

**NUESTRA SEÑORA DEL PILLAR: REDISCOVERING
THE ARTS OF A HERITAGE CHURCH**

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to rediscover the arts in the heritage church. Nuestra Señora Del Pilar, a well-known church in Cauayan City. The descriptive qualitative method of research was used to describe the architectural style, structure and design of the church. An interview was also conducted to an architect, parish priest and parishioners who are knowledgeable of the church. Results of the study revealed that the heritage church was made up of Spanish Colonial architecture combined with Baroque style. Its structure was made up of first class materials, galvanized gabled roof, crossed step façade, four-storey quadrilateral bell tower, Solomonic and Roman doric columns, different arches like semi-circular arch and segmented arch. Its design is ornately decorated with European patterns.

Keywords: *heritage church, arts, architectural style, structure, design*

INTRODUCTION

Art is manifested in every aspect of life. As art continually grows, it presents a significant role in building up a church making it a display pride in ethnicity. Throughout history, art has played a leading role in the development of Western Art that is why it has been the life and blood of humanities and use as decorations and styles in all churches. It is manifested that in churches, art is present and seen arts as a place to wrestle with living out our faith on a daily basis. Nevertheless, it is believed that the place of the arts have changed significantly in the community especially when new media are used to express an idea and have become more economically, socially, culturally and politically sustainable (Johnson, 2009).

Since art is identifiable in churches and has the power to change old-fashioned style into a well-run chic, heritage churches are very evident with this. It consists of all visual works produced in an attempt to exemplify, supplement and portray in tangible form the teachings of the Catholic Church. This includes sculpture, painting, mosaics, metalwork, classical designs and even architecture. Heritage churches are apparently recognized by their architectural style, structure and design making it a tourist attraction. In the study of Busby (2002), the findings showed that because of the restored structures and designs in the heritage church, it promotes the extant heritage and considered as visitors' attraction.

However, with all the glorious and wondrous designs and styles of heritage churches, some parts of the church were being renovated because of catastrophes like massive earthquake and wars. Due to renovation, the original glory of a heritage church loses its identity and unique characteristics. Most researches agreed that renovation is being done especially when there are unexpected calamities such as earthquake. Another factor of renovation is the vulnerability of materials. For this reason, new building will be built characterized by the use of concrete materials considering their firmness, stability and toughness (Carbonara, 2016). One classic example is the heritage church in Cauayan City, the Nuestra Señora Del Pilar.

Nuestra Señora Del Pilar is a well-known church in Cauayan City. It is made up of ornately decorated designs and restored bricks on its facade. It was in the year 1739 when a group of Dominican missionaries landed in Turayong later named Cauayan after the many clusters of bamboos found in the area. The missionaries were able to convert 140 Gaddangs to Christian faith. As the faith of Gaddangs kept growing, the Dominican authorities declared a mission to build a full-fledged parish which was dedicated to Our Lady of Pillar. This heritage church is considered as one of the tourist destinations in the city and center for worshipping. However, the beautiful church was ruined by earthquake and World War II that led to renovation making it a modernized one. This study aimed to rediscover the arts of a heritage church in Cauayan City. Specifically, it tried to identify the architectural style, structure and design of the heritage church and to interpret the architectural style, structure and design present in the church.

METHODS

This study employed the descriptive qualitative research. This study was conducted in Nuestra Señora Del Pilar and Barangay District III in Cauayan City, Isabela. The informants of the study composed of 30 elders especially Gaddang who are near the church, architect, priest and 4 parishioners of the church. The elders who are Gaddang were chosen because they have the knowledge to share with regard to the history of the church. An architect was chosen to interpret the architectural style, structure and design of the church. Lastly, the priest and the parishioners were also chosen because they have broad knowledge about the church and a way to know the arts present in the church.

In-depth interview and photo documentation were used to gather information. But prior to the conduct of the study, permission was sought to concerned persons. Once approved, the researchers took photos of the architectural style, structure and design of the heritage church. An interview was also conducted to substantiate or validate the photo documentation. The researchers sought help from the City Architect for the interpretation of the photo documentation. And finally, the data gathered were analyzed through photo analysis.

RESULTS

Architectural Style of the Church

The church's over all architectural style falls under the Spanish Colonial architecture combined with Baroque style, a European style of architecture and decoration, and it is dedicated to Nuestra Senora Del Pilar. The church itself is raised near at the highway to easily invite people for worshipping. The color of the bricks of the church's façade and the bell tower do not match because it has been wrecked by a strong earthquake. Thus, the church is supported by columns at ground floor level and the windows are facing the street usually shaped by the image of Apo Pillar in the stained glass.



Structure of the Church

The façade of Our Lady of Pillar Church has beautifully restored consists of interesting bas relief sculptured and restored bricks. The bas relief sculptures were replaced with free standing which a receptacle is for relief especially in the Christian altar. And also the portions of the bricks have symbols etched on it, a unique characteristic of the church's façade.



A prominent part of the façade is the crossed step roof. It is a masonry gable extended above the roof with a series of setbacks often found in European Medieval Architecture and has a Christian cross. Every setback has a horseshoe arch whose curve is a little more than a semicircle so that the opening at the bottom is narrower than its greatest span.



Beside the wooden door entrance of the façade is a two-column (Solomonic and Roman Doric). Solomonic Column is a twisted helical shaft and classical capital and base while Roman Doric is slimmer than Greek Doric column and usually adorned with the attic bases. Sporadically, it was arranged as two Solomonic columns to both sides while Roman Doric at the center. But above this, it was arranged differently making Solomonic column at the center and the roman Doric to both sides.



The façade has also rose window attached to both sides of symbolic columns. It is a large and circular medieval window containing tracery, disposed in a radical manner.



Seemingly, the wooden door has its pier arch resting in a column designed to support concentrated load especially one along a nave arcade.



The rest of façade features the restored bricks and symbols engraved on it. The bricks are purely stretched which laid horizontally with its length in the direction of the free of the wall. It was formed as stretcher bond wherein all courses laid as stretcher with the vertical joints of one course falling midway between those of adjustment courses. At the edge of the façade, a classical European pattern has also formed.



The column found to both sides of the rose window has a symbolic interpretation. A four candle shaped which differ its height to the other and a horseshoe arch and twisted column. Through the years, the faith of the Gaddangs kept growing wherein this column filled to capacity in other sacramental rites.



To the left of the church rises the beautiful four-storey quadrilateral bell tower with semi-circular arch design over its windows. The belfry is topped with hip roof which holds a single bell that is use to call for the worshippers to gather for a church service. Before, it was said that it was higher which was later destroyed during the World War II and violent earthquake. The original belfry was ruined while a new one was constructed.

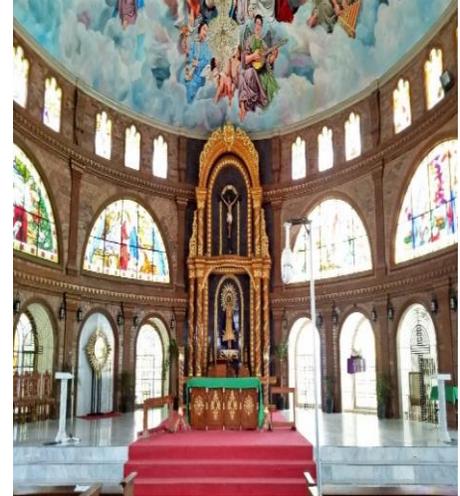


The church has a simple structure of galvanized gabled roof that was made with first class materials. It consists of rectangular shape of roof sections sloping in opposite directions and placed such that the highest, horizontal edges meet to form the roof ridge making it to be a little bit shallow. Although it is weather-resistant, it was still renovated as part of its beautification.



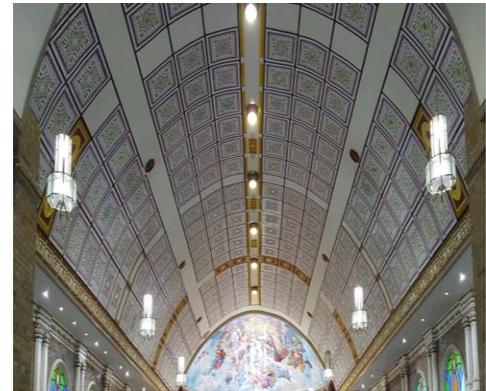
Design of the Church

The present altar used is the renovated one. On the middle is a segmented arch that contains the statue of our Lady of Pillar, above of it is a semicircular arch containing the statue of Jesus Christ in a cross. The two arches have six Solomonian columns, four segmented arch and two on the semicircular arch. These arches are surrounded and decorated with gold plated classical European patterns. On both sides are three layers of different arches. In the first layer are round arches, semicircular arches on the second layer and trefoil arch in the third layer. Some of the arches series are windows and can classify as stained glass windows. Roman Doric post is also present in between of each arches.



The ceiling of the church consists of an ornately decorated mural painting. The painting signifies the grand coronation of Blessed Virgin Mary.

Besides, the ceiling of the church has also classical European pattern which was originated from Europe. This design characterizes colourful, and attractive style.



DISCUSSION

Architectural Style of the Church

When Spaniards began to colonize the part of Cauayan City, they built a church for Gaddang people who were the first settlers in the region. That is why Nuestra Señora Del Pillar church is made up of Spanish Colonial architecture combined with Baroque Style, it is characterized by conspicuous use of decoration, sculpture and color. The Spanish Colonial architecture was the chosen architectural style because the Gaddang people before lost their faith. Because of this, the church is raised near the highway to invite the Gaddang people for worshipping and it is dedicated to Our Lady of Pillar as their patron saint in the community. In support, in Southwestern Colombia, a church dedicated to Our Lady of Las Lajas is raised above the waters by a multistoried-base and the present structure is splendidly seen within a rushing river flow to commemorate the phantom image of their Saint (Estarita, 2008). The Baroque style can be seen in the church's façade and interior. The finding of this study is similar to the findings of Sundt (2015) with the construction of Late Gothic architecture in Latin America and it found out that it had been employed in combination with those based on classical tradition-Renaissance at first and then Baroque.

Overall, the church's architecture is supported by columns at ground floor level consists of bricks and symbols engraved on it. However, the color of the bricks of the church's façade and the bell tower do not match due to strong earthquake yet it maintained the exquisiteness of the church. The literature suggests that Our Lady of Las Lajas' surface decoration provides charmed appearance, a view that is more eloquent than of the church's structure (Sundt et al. 2015). Furthermore, the architectural style of the church has a connection with the faith of the community because their faith was lost before and it tries to invite them all again.

Structure of the Church

When a strong earthquake wrecked the region, the original five-story bell tower was destroyed. After years, World War II began to bomb up the region which resulted a massive damage of some of the parts of the church. Regardless of these catastrophes, the structure of the church especially the façade has beautifully restored consists of stretcher bricks. It is contradictory in the study of Gianmarco et al. (2010), where the recent earthquakes have shown the high susceptibility of the façade of churches, which separated from the walls and unsuccessful by upsetting and preserving. However, most researches showed that some parts of Cathedral of San Marcos in Northern Chile were fabricated and transformed and failed to preserve it due to the devastation of an earthquake (Loyrette, 2011).

In spite of the terrible disasters, a unique characteristic of the Our Lady of Pillar church's façade is apparently seen because of its bas relief sculpture, a sculpture which half of it is attached on the wall, which was later changed by free standing sculpture and bricks who have symbols etched on it. This study is almost the same to the study of Castellazzi (2012) that there are also splendid religious sculptures being preserved in the façade of the church. However, the façade of San Bartolome Church in Seville in the study of Robador (2016) wall paintings are present to give information for the rebuilding of the church. Regardless of any tragedies, Morate et al. (2008) emphasizes that the main concentration of their project is returning the original glory of the church's facade especially the stunning sculptured façade for future generations. Further, recent researches presented that the church's façade with sculpture implies symbolism of faith and history of the church.

Likewise, the prominent part of the structure of the façade of Our Lady of Pillar is the crossed step roof which is made up of bricks instead of wood which is similar to other churches in Isabela and every setback of it has horseshoe arch whose curve is a little more than a semicircle. But it was found in the study of Martins et al. (2012) that the church made use of wood in building up the structure of the façade rather than other materials. Besides, in the study of Lopes (2014), he concluded that roofs have special quality and have great historical and cultural worth.

Part of the structure of the Our Lady of Pillar present in the façade comprises two columns: Solomonic doric and Roman doric. It was placed to both sides of main entrance door but it was arranged very differently at the top of it. It symbolizes curled bamboo and this characterizes the identity of Gaddang. Since the columns of the church have characteristics and symbols, this is contradictory in the study conducted by Horton (2007) that some parts of the church does not need column and found it useless. He also articulated that although the column has an appealing concept, it has failed as a merging opinion for understanding its purpose.

Nonetheless, a church is incomplete without windows. The Our Lady of Pillar church has beautiful rose window attached on both sides of symbolic columns and the wooden door has pier arch resting in a column. It shows individuality of the community. Before the renovation, the elders viewed the bending design around the windows and door of the church as a bamboo

which is an identity of Gaddang. This study is almost similar to the study conducted by Thematique (2013) that the west façade of St. John church has large window with wooden glazing bars and the main door has also semi-circular arc reach beyond the wall to provide support on both sides of the wall.

Still on the façade of the church, both sides of the rose window are symbolic columns. The parishioners and the parish priest believe that these columns are symbols to invite people to go in the church again to restore their faith and the elders interpreted the classical European pattern as a curled bamboo. This study is different to the study of Nagy (2013), wherein the figure of the façade has symbols but it has not always conveyed its message instead it is translatable into words.

Meanwhile, the structure of the church especially the facade still restored in spite of recent war and devastating earthquake. The elders of the community viewed the other parts of the façade with a little identity of Gaddang people and the parish priest together with the parishioners read it as religious matters specifically the bass relief sculptures and symbolic columns in the façade of the church.

The beautiful four-storey quadrilateral bell tower with semi-circular arch design over its windows was the new one that was constructed due to violent earthquakes before. Since the original belfry was ruined together with the bell tower, a new one was constructed and still standing up to this day. They considered the materials to be used for the sturdiness and toughness of the structure. Nevertheless, in the study of Balduzzi et al. (2006) which designed to analyze the static and dynamic behaviour of the bell tower of St. Sisto church, it found out that the strength of the tower for the possible occurrence of earthquake is not satisfactory. For this reason, a strengthening intervention was designed in order to decrease the vulnerability of the bell-tower.

On the other side, another study is also congruent to this study conducted by Indirly et al. (2007), which intended to describe the rehabilitation of the S. Giorgio Church Bell-Tower which was damaged by a strong earthquake because of its vulnerability. In this case, the intervention applies Shape Memory Alloy Devices (SMADs), which can be reflected as powerful tool in reduction of susceptibility of structure. It found out that when another earthquake occurred with the same epicenter and magnitude, the bell tower showed no damage of any type.

Also with the enlargement of the church includes the enlargement of the roof. Despite the fact that the original roof was not preserved, it was modernized with a galvanized gabled roof made up of first class materials for atmospheric resistant and other factors that will contribute in restoring the roof. On the other hand, the study proposed by Imposa et. al. (2014) which evaluated the extent of decay in some of the ancient wooden roof. The result found out that tomography has confirmed the presence of deterioration. Thus, decay is mostly found next to the walls of the nave, caused by rainwater intrusion and lack of ventilation.

Design of the Church

Seemingly, the whole interior of the church is the renovated one which includes the altar, pulpit and ceiling of the church. The present altar contains different arches with Solomonic columns, a twisted bamboo as perceived as identity of the Gaddangs. This includes segmented, semicircular, round and trefoil arch. Even so, in the study of Vahur et al. (2009) which aimed to investigate the paintings of altar and stage in the church of St. Mary, it found out that the altar

and the stage of the Vigala church were preserved especially the most striking and unique woodcarving works.

Although classical European pattern designs were much more common in the church's ceiling, it is very evident that there is nothing which generally gives more beauty and solemnity to a church than the height of ceiling. In the ceiling of Our Lady of Pillar, classical European pattern is present and have different symbols. This is related to the study of Christianson (2013), although society has more conservative views, the ceiling of the church is very simple yet it symbolizes ingenuity and honesty.

Aside from the classical European pattern, mural painting is also present in the ceiling of Our Lady of Pillar church. It depicts the grand coronation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Conversely, in British North America, plaster ceilings were much more common than mural or fresco painting (Christianson, 2013). Some researches agreed that every ceiling of church has mural painting but it depends upon the design and concept of it.

Above all, the Nuestra Señora Del Pilar which is a heritage church is filled with artistic architectural style, structure and design. The architectural style of the church is a Spanish Colonial Architecture mixed with Baroque Style. Though it was wrecked by a strong earthquake, the structure of the church's façade is still standing up to this day with free standing sculpture, different columns, restored bricks and symbols engraved on it. Further, with regard to the design, the ceiling of the church is ornately decorated with classical European pattern and mural painting.

CONCLUSION

Nuestra Senora Del Pilar is a historic landmark of Cauayan City, however, some parts of the church was renovated because of earthquake and war making it a modernized church. It was made up of Spanish Colonial architecture combined with Baroque style which are common in the 17th century when the Philippines was colonized by Spaniards. The rose window present in the upper center of the façade make the church unique because it is very rare for churches together with the numerous Solomonic colomns found in the interior and façade of the heritage church.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The local government must provide orientation to the community to learn more about the arts presents in the church that may provide greater understanding with regard to the heritage church.

The background and information about the arts present in the church may be posted in the church. This will help locals and visitor who visit Nuestra Señora Del Pilar to be familiarized with the great history and arts behind the church.

The church also needs to keep records regarding the building and renovation of the church especially the structures and design used in the process to easily provide knowledge about its architecture that can be used for the future researches. It is also highly recommended to preserve its sacred beauty for the future generations.

In the part of MAPEH students, teacher needs to have a greater awareness of architectural design and structures in the teaching and learning of MAPEH to enhance their ability of understanding.

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