

El Padre Capitan: The Missionary Life of Fr. Agustin de San Pedro, OAR (1599–1660), in Romblon Province

KRISTOFFER R. ESQUEJO

ABSTRACT

Within the order of the Augustinian Recollects, one of the most prominent figures was a Portuguese cleric named Fr. Agustin de San Pedro (1599–1660). Dubbed “El Padre Capitan,” he spent more than half of his life in this far-flung Spanish colony. Aside from being a priest, he had an engineering background. He served the people of Romblon in Central Philippines in his dual career as a spiritual leader and military figure. Besides countering Moro raids, he built structures, such as a local church and fortresses, which stand until today.

This paper seeks to highlight two major points: (1) the Recollect missions put the peripheral province of Romblon in the map of Philippine colonial history under Spain, and (2) Fr. Agustin de San Pedro deserves recognition and a distinct place in the annals of Romblon.

KRISTOFFER R. ESQUEJO is assistant professor at the Department of History, University of the Philippines (UP) Diliman. He obtained BA History (*magna cum laude*) and MA History from UP Diliman, where he is currently a PhD History student.

KEYWORDS

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INTRODUCTION

In 2013, the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) officially declared the following heritage sites in the province of Romblon as “important cultural properties”: Casa del San Fernando in Sibuyan; Old Municipal Building, the Triada de Aguas, and the colonial bridges in Romblon Island; and the Guyangan cave system in Banton. Meanwhile, the twin forts—namely, Fuerza de San Andres and Fuerza de Santiago—as well as St. Joseph’s Cathedral, all built by the Augustinian Recollects in Romblon town, were declared “National Cultural Treasures.” The signing of the memorandum of agreement took place between the NCCA and the local parish and the Save the Fort San Andres Movement Inc. The memorandum includes a commitment of the government to provide grants to the Romblon diocese and the nongovernment organization for the preservation of the said cultural treasures.¹

By studying the local history of the province of Romblon, one would realize that the pioneering Augustinian Recollects actually played a major part in turning this archipelagic province predominantly Roman Catholic up to the present. From 1635, the religious order administered the spiritual care of the province in spite of enormous hardships and bitterness. Aside from its very small population, the main difficulties came from its geographic location—that is, the islands being far from one another, separated by a very rough sea, and frequently visited by strong typhoons. Moreover, the soil was reported to be unproductive, and there were the perennial problems of interisland transportation and communication.²

Still, the Augustinian Recollects diligently pursued their labors as best manifested in the life of Fr. Agustin de San Pedro, known as “El Padre Capitan” (The Priest Captain). A towering figure in the seventeenth-century provincial annals, he was responsible for building the first local church (now a cathedral) and several fortresses in the islands of Romblon and Banton. Because of him, the Romblomanons became safe and well-trained for combat during the tumultuous period of “Moro Wars.”

Fr. San Pedro was only one of those given the title “El Padre Capitan.” In reality, he was the first in a long list of missionary heroes who fought against the Moros of Mindanao. These include Fr. Antonio de Santa Ana, OAR, who died on the bulwark of Fort Taytay in 1736 while fighting the Moros; Fr. Marcelino del Espiritu Santo, OAR, who successfully repulsed the Moro attack in Cuyo in 1752; Fr. Jose Ducos, SJ, who frustrated the Moro raid against Iligan in 1752; and Fr. Pascual Ibañez, OAR, who perished in action during Urbiztondo’s assault on Jolo in 1851.³ However, it was only Fr. San Pedro who truly made a lasting mark in a small and peripheral province like Romblon.

This paper focuses on the missionary life and career of Fr. San Pedro in Romblon province. He was a notable figure who played key roles in the defense and evangelization of Romblon people amidst Moro attacks from the south. Already a hero of faith in his own right during his Mindanao campaigns against the famous Sultan Kudarat, he endeared himself to the natives of Romblon due to his engineering and military prowess.

EARLY SPANISH VISITS TO ROMBLON

According to one account, “Relation of the Voyage to Luzon,” Martin de Goiti⁴ and his men were the first Europeans who visited the Romblon archipelago in 1570. From Panay, they were on their way to Luzon when they passed by the islands of Sibuyan and Banton. They observed that there was an abundance

of gold mines and goats on these islands inhabited by natives they called “*pintados*”⁵ due to the unusual tattoos on their bodies. Before their departure, the islands were immediately divided into three *encomiendas*, which were royally arranged territories where taxes were collected by the Spanish *conquistadores*.⁶

A year later, Miguel Lopez de Legazpi himself and his men set foot on these islands while on their way north. They were believed to have landed in the southwestern part of Romblon Island known today as Sitio Aglumyom, a place that got its name from a popular legend. It was told that when a native woman was asked by a Spaniard for the name of the place, she answered “*nagalumyom*,” thinking that she was being asked about what the hen was doing in its nest. The vernacular word meaning “sitting in the nest” was believed to have been adopted by the Spaniards until it evolved into “Lomlom” and “Donblon.” Eventually, it became “Romblon,” the present name of the island, which was already adopted by the town as well as the entire province.⁷

Interestingly, other legends explain the origin of the provincial name with reference to the shape of the Romblon Island itself. For one historian, it came from the Spanish word “*roblon*,” which is also another term for “*tornillo*” and an equivalent of the English word “screw.” Supposedly, Spaniards, who were foremost experts in navigation, noticed the screwlike shape of this island.⁸ For another historian, it originated from the word “*doubloon*,” which refers to the Spanish coin that was eventually adopted by the Moros in paying dowries for their brides-to-be. It was said that the Spaniards might have named the island considering the likeness of its shape to the said coin.⁹

ADVENT OF STO. NIÑO DEVOTION

In 1580, Spanish chronicler Miguel de Loarca visited the Romblon archipelago. According to his account, entitled “*Relacion de las islas Filipinas*,” he personally visited and

described every major island, such as Osigan (Tablas), Sibuyan, Anbil (Carabao), Simara, Banton, and Donblon (Romblon). Similar to de Goiti's account, he also noticed the abundance of gold in these islands and the pintados living in Sibuyan. He also mentioned that there was plenty of wax in Osigan and Romblon. Furthermore, he was amazed at Anbil having inhabitants who were experts in shipbuilding.¹⁰

Along with Loarca's arrival was the beginning of Romblomanons' strong devotion toward the Sto. Niño. It is noteworthy that this religious devotion was quite common to other Visayan provinces, such as Aklan, Iloilo, and Cebu.¹¹ According to a popular legend, Loarca brought with him an image of the Holy Child in his stay in Romblon Island. Whenever they were attempting to leave the port, a storm would suddenly come. This happened for seven consecutive times, which led them to abandon the mission and finally leave the religious image to the local church. This legend eventually created the Biniray Festival in the 1990s, a fluvial parade reenacting the seven attempts, which is held every year in the month of January.¹²

In a brief article, "Romblon's Fiesta: Author's Note," N.V.M. Gonzalez, National Artist for Literature and born in the island, exquisitely described the legend of the Holy Child:

For reasons quite unclear, there was this magnificent icon of the Holy Infant Jesus on board a galleon bound for Spain that ran into foul weather, this being the *habagat* season in the Visayas ... There was a break in the weather after some three days or so—the story goes—and the galleon prepared to resume her voyage only to return just as soon as she had lost that cover afforded by the surrounding islands. Six times she braved the elements; and after yet another try, the southwesterly monsoon being probably on the wane, it was decided that El Señor be taken to the local mission church ... During the month that followed repairs were undertaken; finally, it was the *amihan* season

and, over all, better weather for leaving Philippine waters.
But El Señor could not be moved from its temporary altar.
Was this not a sign that El Señor meant to stay?¹³

Eventually, the Romblon archipelago was put under the spiritual administration of the Bishop of Cebu and the Parish of Ajuy in Panay. Banton¹⁴ became the first pueblo in 1622, while Romblon town was elevated to a pueblo through the power of Joao Tabora on 19 March 1631 during the feast day of St. Joseph, spouse of the Virgin Mary. For the next four years, Fr. Francisco Rodriguez Relator became the town's coadjutor-administrator.¹⁵

UNDER THE RECOLLECT MISSIONS

In 1635, the Bishop of Cebu had finally decided to put the entire Romblon archipelago under the spiritual jurisdiction of the Augustinian Recollects. Historically, they were the fifth religious order that came to the Philippine Islands throughout Spanish colonization. Here is the order of their arrival since Legazpi came to the country: Augustinians (1565), Franciscans (1577), Jesuits¹⁶ (1581), Dominicans (1587), Augustinian Recollects (1606), and Benedictines (1895).¹⁷

Formally organized in December 1588 in Spain, the Recollection was a reformist movement born within the Augustinian Order with roots that can be traced back to various personalities of the sixteenth century. One of them was Prior General Girolamo Seripando who labored hard for the implementation of reformist goals: "dignity of worship, seriousness of studies, formation of novices, restoration of an authentic common life, unity of the Order." Exemplary Augustinians were Santo Tomas de Villanova, Blessed Alonso de Orozco, and Fr. Luis Montoya. They worked for reforms

in Castille and Portugal,¹⁸ which were deemed successful. Thomas de Villanova, as prior provincial, laid the foundations of the Recollection: contemplation, excellence of divine worship, fraternal charity, reading of the Sacred Scriptures, discipline, zeal for the salvation of souls, and the practice of walking barefoot according to the spirit of the primitive Augustinian monks. Hence, the Recollects became known also as Discalced Augustinians.¹⁹

In 1602, the first Augustinian Recollects from the Province of Castilla established a separate province. More monasteries were founded under their prior provincial, Fr. Juan de San Jeronimo, in the same year. Three years later, ten priests and four brothers boarded the ship in Cadiz but only thirteen of them reached Cebu on 12 May 1606. This paved the way for the acceptance of the Philippine mission of the Augustinian Recollection and their contemplative way of life.²⁰

Despite some internal and external difficulties, the recovery and growth of the Recollection became unstoppable. More souls were added to their spiritual care as more provinces (not as rich as others) were put under their zealous pastoral ministry for the next centuries, such as Bataan, Tarlac, Pampanga, Rizal, Batangas, Cavite, Sorsogon, Laguna, Aurora, Pangasinan, Cebu, Capiz, Misamis, Surigao, and Zamboanga. Eventually, the islands of Mindoro, Lubang, Masbate, Palawan, Negros, Siquijor, and Calamianes were also entrusted to them. In Bohol, Romblon, Mindoro, Zambales, and Palawan, they planned towns as well as forts and watchtowers to protect their flocks against Moro raids.²¹

With great dedication and obedience to their new task, Fr. Pedro de San Jose, OAR, arrived in Romblon town. Unfortunately, his pastoral work was disrupted by the never-ending Moro attacks, reaching even to the point of driving him into the mountains. Muslims were really frightening that in 1644, a friar prior of Romblon town in the person

of Fr. Miguel de la Concepcion, OAR, was seized. These two consecutive events led to the immediate assignment of the already famous El Padre Capitan to be the parish curate of Romblon town.

MORO WARS

In retrospect, the Moro Wars in the Philippines was only a sequel in a minor scale to the Catholic Crusades that were fought by the Christian knights and Muslim warriors in the Holy Land (Palestine) during the Middle Ages. In fact, the derogatory term “Moro” originated as a Spanish term for Moor or Muslim, who conquered their homeland many centuries before their arrival in the Philippines. The bitter rivalry between Spaniards and Muslims resumed upon Spanish discovery of many Muslim inhabitants in Mindanao, Sulu, Mindoro, Manila, and Pampanga. It may be recalled that Raha Sulayman’s kingdom of Maynilad was an Islamic kingdom. Because all Muslims were called Moros (Moors) in Spain, Legazpi and succeeding colonial officials called the Filipino Muslims by that name.²²

Generally, there were three causes of the Moro Wars. First was the tireless attempts of Spaniards to conquer Mindanao and Sulu. The Muslim Filipinos fought valiantly in defense of their freedom. They preferred to die as freemen in battle than live in bondage. Second was the ardent desire of the Muslims to defend their Islamic faith against the invaders who wanted to propagate a different faith. They were Islam’s champions just as the Spaniards and their native allies were champions of Roman Catholicism. Third was the love of the Muslim Filipinos for adventure. On their swift-sailing vintas, they prowled the seas. They attacked the Christianized pueblos not only to strike a blow against Spain and its religion but also to feel the thrill of battle and to gain the rich spoils of wars.²³

Contrary to popular misconception, the Muslim Filipinos are not “savage pirates” and “brutal *juramentados*”²⁴ as portrayed in the colonial records. Spanish chroniclers and American historians would bitterly malign them due to their strong resistance against any foreign invasion. In reality, they are freedom-loving people just like other Filipino ethnolinguistic groups.²⁵

However, the context of the Moro Wars would explain why the Christianized natives had negative perception of the Muslims. In the case of Romblon, many place-names indicate habitual Moro raids from the south. One good example is the name of Looc town in southern Tablas. Legend has it that a mystical giant named Talabukon defended the people when the place was suddenly attacked by the Moros. He was believed to have choked the enemies’ necks that resulted in their immediate deaths. For a time, the fear of this giant spared the town from future Moro raids. Eventually, the heroic act of choking necks, which is “*ni-looc*” in the vernacular language, was so embedded in the local folklore that it became the name of the town.²⁶

FROM PORTUGAL TO MINDANAO: THE COMING OF FR. SAN PEDRO

Born in 1599, Fr. Agustin de San Pedro was born in Braganza, Portugal, to Miguel Rodriguez and Maria Moreyto. He studied grammar and rhetoric in his birthplace and afterward took up philosophy and theology in the renowned University of Salamanca in Spain. Captivated by the call to religious life, he entered the Augustinian Recollect convent in Valladolid, where he would don the habit and later, in 1619, profess the vows. During his formation years, he was also strongly interested in mathematics and military arts.²⁷

Enamored with missionary zeal, the young Agustin volunteered to go to the Philippine Islands. On 7 July 1622, he voyaged from Cadiz to the New World together with thirteen gallant companions. One of them was Martin de San Nicolas who would be among the Japanese martyrs beatified in 1990 by Pope John Paul II. When the group arrived in Mexico, San Pedro was finally ordained as a priest. The following year, he was included in the sixth batch of Recollect missionaries who docked in Manila. Immediately after his arrival, he was assigned in Mindanao. With Fr. Jacinto de San Fulgencio, he evangelized the natives dwelling in the banks of Butuan River. However, intermittent threats arose in their mission territory. This prompted him to make use of his innate talents in architecture and gunnery by erecting a fort in Lanao.²⁸

From 1626 to 1644, Fr. San Pedro actively participated in waging a series of wars against the forces of Sultan Kudarat (Corralat in other documents). For three succeeding chapters²⁹ of 1629, 1632, and 1635, he was elected prior of Cagayan. In 1638, he became a prior of Butuan, then went back to Cagayan three years later and Butuan again where he stayed up to 1644.³⁰

Kudarat harbored a boiling resentment against Fr. San Pedro for his effective implementation of *reduccion* or the process of bringing natives together in a reduced area of settlement. Because of this, the emerging Christianized community of Cagayan was always under siege. As a response, the priest fortified the said village while he trained the natives in the management of arms. This was done to make the village people fearless in time of danger, and not be intimidated by a multitude. They were taught to be fully accustomed to firearms so they could fight and conquer any number of troops.³¹

When Kudarat was plotting a surprise attack, Fr. San Pedro was immediately informed by his lookouts. As a response, the priest made extensive preparations for the defense. The neighboring provinces sent aid to them composed of six Spanish soldiers and one hundred experienced Indios.

The Moros arrived with more than thirty caracoa boats and two thousand men, but their assault was futile. Acknowledging that they could no longer seize the village and seeing the considerable loss of their men, the Moro invaders retreated. Fr. San Pedro ordered his men to pursue the fleeing Moros of whom only a few were able to escape.³²

FROM MINDANAO TO ROMBLON: THE NEW MISSION OF FR. SAN PEDRO

Upon learning about what happened to Fr. de la Concepcion, the provincial chapters of 1644 and 1647 ordered the famous El Padre Capitan to be transferred to Romblon town. Knowing that the Romblon archipelago was an open prey to the marauders, two objectives were given to him: first, to feed the people of Romblon with the word of God (evangelization), and second, to protect them by teaching them the use of armaments. Moreover, he also built the forts of San Andres and Santiago as lookouts and protection for the people of the town of Romblon.³³

One day, the Moros attacked the island of Romblon. However, with the strategy of Fr. San Pedro, the people of Romblon successfully resisted the assault and claimed the lives of the enemies. On the next day, three hundred pirates came back and disembarked in Lucban islet. As a response, the friar prepared his men for the skirmish inshore. In that bloody encounter, the priest and the natives triumphed with few casualties.³⁴

When Fr. San Pedro was assigned in the island of Banton, he built a church, walled with thick ramparts covering half a hectare, and a convent. He also constructed a fort overlooking the bay on the hills of Banton. This became known as “Fuerte de San Nicolas de Tolentino,” named after the town’s patron saint. It took many years of hard labor to finish the said structures, which still stand to this day in the middle of Brgy. Poblacion.

These edifices, somehow, saved the lives of several generations of people who could have been victims of a countless series of Moro attacks until the seventeenth century.³⁵

Aside from the Moros of Mindanao, the Dutch were another enemy of Spain who habitually conducted raids in various parts of the Philippine Islands. It must be noted that the Netherlands at that time was a colony of Spain fighting for her own independence. Historians would always argue that the Spaniards were better colonizers than the Dutch due to latter's bad record as cruel colonial masters of the Spice Islands and the whole present-day Indonesia.³⁶ In 1646, the Dutch fleet successfully devastated the communities of Masinloc and Iba in Zambales, Mariveles in Bataan, Surigao, and Romblon, Romblon. It was written that many natives suffered from the hands of these enemies while several Spanish missionaries were tortured and killed. After three years, the Dutch attempted to capture the loyalty of the natives from the Spaniards, yet they failed.³⁷ It seemed that Fr. San Pedro once again succeeded in defending his spiritual flock from harm.

THE LATTER YEARS OF FR. SAN PEDRO

After his tenure in Romblon, Fr. San Pedro was appointed provincial secretary by the incumbent father provincial, Fr. Jose de la Anunciacion. In the succeeding two years, he went back to Mindanao. In 1653, he became prior of Tandag. In 1656, he became prior of port of Butuan for the third time. When the chapter of 1659 convened, he finally quit from his office in order to vote in behalf of Father Councilor who was absent at that time. In 1660, the old priest came back to Romblon, Romblon, where he died at the age of sixty-one. It is believed that his cadaver had been buried near the cathedral he built.³⁸

It is beyond our understanding how and why Fr. San Pedro loved the people of a small island geographically located at the

center of the Philippine Islands. Aside from the cathedral and the fortresses he built, he left nothing but stories of his timeless greatness as retold by later friar chroniclers and historians.

Currently, a vault near the cathedral contained his remains and a simple marker bears this description of him:

Fr. Agustin de San Pedro, OAR, was an intrepid evangelizer and builder. He began the construction of:

- (1) Romblon parish church and belfry in 1640
- (2) The two fortresses Fort Santiago and Fort San Andres in 1644
- (3) Bantoon church and convent and the surrounding thick walls, and
- (4) The fortress on the hills of Bantoon overlooking the wide seas in 1640–1650.

Why did El Padre Capitan choose to stay and die here? There was no exact answer from him but a brief description of the seventeenth-century Romblomanons might give a clue. A Recollect priest named Fr. Mateo Delgado positively viewed the inhabitants of this province:

The people are honest, pacific, docile and very intelligent. They trade in the products of the land—oil, goats, swine and bonete. They have a great abundance of domestic animals. They construct ships, build houses, and make other things of wood with great skill, all of which they take to Manila, as well as to other places to sell.³⁹

LATER TRADITION OF “EL PADRE CAPITAN”

After the demise of Fr. San Pedro, the tradition of being an “El Padre Capitan” among Recollect missionaries remained. His

idea of constructing forts, fort-like churches, and watchtowers in order to defend the flock and the faith, as seen in Calamianes, Masbate, Mindoro, Bohol, Surigao, Tandag, and Palawan, were continued by Fr. Juan de San Severo (died in 1697) and Fr. Lucas de la Cruz (1716–1761). Eventually, latter missionaries were able to acquire weapons and led successful punitive expeditions of Spanish and Visayan troops against the Moros of Mindanao and Sulu. These were Fr. Bernardo de San Agustin (died in 1821), Fr. Pascual Ibañez (1821–1851), and Fr. Ramon Zueco (1828–1889).⁴⁰

In summary, historian Pedro Herce narrates the great rivalry of Augustinian Recollects and the Moros during the Spanish colonial era:

In the history of the Recollect missions in the Philippines one constant incident was the clashes between the missionary and the muslim pirate. Perhaps, due to this fact, the territories entrusted to the Recollects might be considered the hardest bones in the evangelization of the Philippines. It should be sufficient to remember some of these territories: Mindanao, Palawan, Mindoro, Calamianes, and Masbate. In all these places, the greatest worry of the missionary was the threat of the muslim piracy on account of its devastating effects. We saw how the Recollects tried to counter this threat by building fortresses, obtaining garrisons, and taking the offensive against the muslim pirates. It is true that the muslim was the most savage enemy of the Recollects, but it is no less true that for the muslim the enemy most feared was the Recollects.⁴¹

ROMBLON AFTER EL PADRE CAPITAN

Unfortunately, Moro raids still continued even after El Padre Capitan's death. According to a local historian, a major

tuning point took place in 1844 when the Spanish colonial government purchased four steamships that could travel faster than the Moro vintas. This technological innovation was first tested in Romblon town when vintas could be seen from afar. The local authorities sent a steamship to run after the Moros. It resulted in the successful capture of the Moros in Carabao Island while other vintas were wrecked and sank. In 1870, all Moro raids in the province finally ceased.⁴²

In 1818, Romblon became part of Capiz. In 1853, it was converted into a *comandancia politico-militar*. Within the seventeenth century, pueblos emerged as external and internal migrations took place within the archipelago, which significantly contributed to the rapid rise of native population. Aside from the Ati group of Panay and the Mangyan group of Mindoro, Unhan Visayans and Nayon Visayans from northern Panay poured into Tablas. Bantoanons from the north also established settlements in the neighboring islands; Tagalogs from Batangas came in at the end of the seventeenth century.⁴³ Interestingly, the founding of these pueblos always coincided with the inauguration of town churches. Whether these were deliberate or not, it resulted in the similarities of their respective founding dates and religious feast days: Cajidiocan (both 1848), Odiongan (1841/1859), Looc (1874/1863), Magallanes (1862/1867), Badajoz (1868/1871), Azagra (unknown/1881), and Corcuera (1866/1885). Finally, Salado was elevated as a pueblo in 1892, and a church was erected in 1894.⁴⁴

On 27 May 1865, the new Diocese of Jaro or St. Elizabeth (in honor of Queen Isabela) was separated from the big diocese of Cebu. Detached were now the islands of Panay and Negros, Romblon, Palawan and Jolo groups, and the provinces of Zamboanga, Cotabato, and Davao in Mindanao.⁴⁵

During the Philippine Revolution of 1896, the Augustinian Recollects were forced to abandon their parishes in Romblon. Some of them were taken prisoners by the revolutionary forces from Luzon. They only came back when the situation returned

to normalcy. Thirty-two years after their return, only the parishes of Romblon, Badajoz (now San Agustin), Cajidiocan, and San Fernando had permanent parish priests. However, they occasionally visited the other parishes when a serious need for the service of a priest arose.⁴⁶

On 27 January 1951, the Diocese of Jaro was divided as the provinces of Capiz and Romblon formed the new Diocese of Capiz, under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Cebu. On 19 December 1974, Romblon was created as a new diocese by virtue of Pope Paul VI's papal bull. The Canonical Erection took place on 17 April 1975 with the installation of Most Rev. Nicholas M. Mondejar, DD, as its first bishop. The Solemn Installation took place in Romblon, Romblon, the new seat of the diocese of St. Joseph Parish Church, now a cathedral. The diocese's titular is St. Joseph, Spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary, with Sto. Niño as its secondary patron.⁴⁷

CONCLUSION

This paper discussed the career of a seventeenth-century extraordinary Portuguese friar who belonged to a contemplative reformed order. He gained prominence during the Moro Wars in two ways: by fulfilling his job as a priest, which was to wholeheartedly preach salvation to the natives, and by going beyond the job of a priest through teaching the people how to erect infrastructures for their own protection (as a captain). Truly, Fr. Agustin de San Pedro as a military genius is deserving of the title "El Padre Capitan de Romblon," where he spent decades of his life until death.

To counter Moro raids from southern Philippines, Fr. San Pedro built the Romblon parish church (now St. Joseph Cathedral) and fortresses, such as the Fort Santiago and Fort San Andres in Romblon town, and the Fort of San Nicolas de Tolentino in Banton town. These structures were considered as

his lasting legacies to the people of Romblon. His attachment to the natives of Romblon was so apparent that he returned and spent the last years of his life in the peripheral province.

Through the years, most people of Romblon have stayed faithful to El Padre Capitan's memory and to the religion brought by the Augustinian Recollects. Aside from the spiritual aspect, the physical structures he built also gave the people a sense of pride for their place. It is only expected that the government will continue to instill the value of heritage and support the propagation of historical consciousness.

The life of Fr. Agustin de San Pedro is a testament that one can serve God not only through martyrdom but also through military heroism. It is only but fitting and proper to keep his name alive in the local history of Romblon.



The Ruins of Fort San Andres. It is situated in a nearby hill facing Romblon bay and is currently used by the local weather bureau. Together with Fort Santiago, it was declared by the NCCA as a “National Cultural Treasure” in 2013. Taken by the author on 18 October 2009.



St. Joseph Cathedral. First erected by the Augustinian Recollects in the seventeenth century, it houses the original image of Sto. Nino brought by Loarca’s group. A vault in front of its belfry contains the mortal remains of “El Padre Capitan.” Taken by the author on 18 October 2009.

NOTES

- 1 <http://lifestyle.inquirer.net/105261/romblon-cathedral-ancient-hispanic-forts-declared-national-cultural-treasures> (accessed 26 September 2013). Moreover, the entire Romblon Province was declared “Heritage Province” by the NCCA in 2013 due to the tireless efforts of Mr. Ismael F. Fabicon, a US-based culture advocate from Banton.
- 2 As of now, the province of Romblon is composed of seventeen municipalities with a total land area of 135,593 square meters. It also covers a total of 158 islands, of which only 26 islands have official names according to the report of the Bureau of Coast and Geodetic Survey in 1975.
- 3 Sonia M. Zaide, *The Philippines: A Unique Nation*, 2nd ed. (Quezon City: All-Nations Publishing Co. Inc., 1999), 154–55.
- 4 De Goiti’s title as Maestre-de-Campo eventually became the official name of the Sibale Island near Mindoro.
- 5 Historically, pintados refer to brave Visayan warriors who allied themselves with the Spaniards against the Moros.
- 6 Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson, eds., *The Philippine Islands 1493–1803*, vol. 3 (Cleveland, Ohio: Arthur H. Clark, 1903–1919), 73–74.
- 7 Francis Ray M. Prado, *The History of Carmen Including Historical and Cultural Background of North-eastern Barangays of the Municipality of San Agustin, Romblon* (San Agustin, Romblon: Private Publication, 2005), 15.
- 8 Roland F. Madeja, “Romblon Province: 1570–1946, Its History and Development” (MA thesis, Manuel Luis Quezon University, Manila, 1993), 38.
- 9 Evelyn M. Reyes, “Romblon during the American Regime, 1898–1946” (MA thesis, De La Salle University, Manila, 1995), 12.
- 10 Blair and Robertson, *The Philippine Islands 1493–1803*, 5: 67, 73–77.

- 11 Most of the patron saints in Luzon are various depictions of the Virgin Mary, like Our Lady of Manaoag in Pangasinan and Our Lady of Peñafrancia in Bicol. However, most of the patron saints in the Visayas are depictions of the Santo Niño—like in Kalibo, Iloilo, Cebu, and Tacloban, as highlighted in their respective colorful festivals.
- 12 In the 1990s, the original image of the Sto. Niño was stolen inside St. Joseph's Cathedral. A few years later, it was finally found and retrieved from an antique dealer in Aklan, which resulted in the rejoicing of its devotees in Romblon, Romblon.
- 13 N.V.M. Gonzales, *A Grammar of Dreams and Other Stories* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press), ix–x.
- 14 Also known as Bantoon, this island town was already a flourishing pre-Spanish community, which was believed to have trading relations with China. The archeological findings inside the Guyangan Caves can attest to this claim. Moreover, the oldest burial cloth in the entire Southeast Asia known as “*ikat*” was found here and is currently under the safekeeping of the National Museum.
- 15 Diocese of Romblon, *Romblon on the Wings of Time: A Commemorative Book on the Silver Jubilee Celebration of the Diocese of Romblon (1975–2000)* (Romblon, Romblon: Diocese of Romblon, 2000), 66.
- 16 In the 1760s, the Spanish king ordered the expulsion of all Jesuits from the Philippine Islands and other colonies due to the latter's vow of obedience to the pope. They were able to return only a little less than a century later, which led to the founding of the Ateneo Municipal de Manila in 1859.
- 17 Zaide, *The Philippines*, 110.
- 18 For sixty years (1580–1640), Spain and Portugal was united into one Crown. Eventually, the two kingdoms of Iberian Peninsula also separated with their own corresponding monarchs.
- 19 Emmanuel L. Romanillos, *The Augustinian Recollects in the Philippines: Hagiography and History* (Quezon City: Recoletos Communications, Inc., 2001), 4.

- 20 Ibid., 4–5.
- 21 Ibid., 5–6.
- 22 Zaide, *The Philippines*, 146.
- 23 Ibid., 149. The indigenous term for raiding is “*pangangayaw*,” a sociocultural habit practiced by both the Tausugs and the Visayans who both had strong maritime tradition and benefited from the aquatic resources of Sulu Sea.
- 24 “Juramentado” comes from Spanish word “juramentar,” which means “to swear.” It was a traditional belief that the Moros were bind with oath to kill any infidel, especially Christians who were their traditional enemies.
- 25 The derogatory term “Moro” eventually became positive as it became a badge of honor for the Muslim Filipinos. In fact, secessionist groups, such as MNLF and MILF, adopted the term.
- 26 As a native of Looc, Romblon, I personally came across this story in my childhood days. There is a barangay called Guinhaya-an, a place where dead Moros were laid, and there is another barangay in a neighboring town called Tabugon, where people were driven away due to a pending Moro attack.
- 27 Diocese of Romblon, *Romblon on the Wings of Time*, 26.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 From the Latin word “*capitulum*,” chapter designates certain ecclesiastical bodies in Roman Catholic churches and religious orders.
- 30 Diocese of Romblon, *Romblon on the Wings of Time*, 26.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Ibid., 27.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 Ibid.

- 35 Ibid., 27, 29.
- 36 Zaide, *The Philippines*, 85.
- 37 Blair and Robertson, *The Philippine Islands 1493–1803*, 41: 193.
- 38 Diocese of Romblon, *Romblon on the Wings of Time*, 27.
- 39 Blair and Robertson, *The Philippine Islands 1493–1803*, 35: 85–86.
- 40 Romanillos, *The Augustinian Recollects in the Philippines*, 106–7.
- 41 Ibid., 107.
- 42 Mateo Meñez, *Brief History of a Typical Philippine Town* (Manila: Saint Rafael Press, 1998), 39.
- 43 Ibid., 3–32.
- 44 Diocese of Romblon, *Romblon on the Wings of Time*, 30–41.
- 45 Ibid., 43.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 Ibid., 55.

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