

ARTICLE

**Critique on the 1983 historical marker installed  
by the National Historical Institute  
at the Our Lady of the Assumption Cathedral,  
Maasin City, Southern Leyte, Philippines**

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ABSTRACT

In 1983, the National Historical Institute of the Republic of the Philippines placed a historical marker on the front left side of the Our Lady of the Assumption Cathedral, a two-hundred-year-old structure located in Maasin City, Southern Leyte, Philippines. This Cathedral is the seat of the now half-a-century-old Diocese of Maasin. While pursuing a larger research project, entitled “Cataloguing and baselining the seven Filipino–Spanish churches of the Diocese of Maasin,” which was funded by the National Commission on Culture and the Arts of the Republic of the Philippines, the research team was able to uncover glaring errors in such a historical marker. This paper addresses these errors, explains their possible causes/sources, and proposes a more historically accurate text that can be used to revise this important historical marker.

KEYWORDS

Our Lady of the Assumption Cathedral, Diocese of Maasin, Maasin City, historical marker,  
National Historical Institute of the Republic of the Philippines,  
National Historical Commission of the Philippines

## Introduction

While the investigation of heritage has been a prevalent topic in the field of social sciences, inquiries on critical heritage studies are equally significant. Tim Winter's (2013) essay, entitled "Clarifying the critical in Critical Heritage Studies," emphasizes the themes about the formulation of the critical heritage studies and the modification of its focus. The author highlights the critical issues of contemporary society outside the peripherals of heritage. The research suggests delving deeply into the complex interdependence of the social science- and humanities-based methodologies and into the professional conservation approach articulated by scientific materialism. Furthermore, this work proposes to consider regional and global evolution by establishing postmodern perspectives, which contribute to the materialization of the heritage.

Various scholars around the world have examined the study of the cultural landscape unveiling the contemporary perspectives of geographers, archaeologists, sociologists, and architects. Yvonne Whelan's (2016) book, entitled *Heritage, memory and the politics of identity: New perspectives on the cultural landscape*, discusses the significance of the varying perspectives to understand the overlapping and perplexing interdependence among identity, memory, heritage, and the cultural landscape. In investigating these complex relationships, the material exposes uniting manifestations from Ireland, England, Scotland, and the United States through modern approaches. The importance of history is shown in the modern creation of identity narratives from case studies and in the sites of cultural heritage through the hegemony of monuments and parades. The author admits the possibility of politicizing heritage for various intentions, such as illustrating the shifting perspectives of specific heritage sites and buildings and (re)constructing particularly created identities (2016).

The existence of historical markers in a specific cultural heritage suggests its importance in the country's history. Benjamin Curran's (2019) work, entitled *Historical Marker Repair Components and Methods*, proves the costly yet significant repair component of historical markers in the United States. He insists that a part of it can be restored without replacing the whole existing marker. However, the usual problem lies in "the proximity of these markers to the road that makes them subject to considerable damage when struck by vehicles", thus necessitating the re-casting of the entire marker. Historical markers are generally made of cast metal, including bronze or aluminum, which means they are very expensive to produce and replace (approximately US\$2,500 to US\$3,000 per marker as of 2019). Despite the fact that Curran's patent application essay centers on the technical aspect of making and repairing a historical marker, it also denotes the greater responsibility of ensuring that historically accurate text should be embedded owing to the meticulous and expensive process of manufacturing them.

Experts have already organized data prior to the digitization of information. Although important documents and artifacts are now made available to people around the world through the digital revolution, they used to be accessible only to the curators. The essay published by Antal van den Bosch et al. (2009), entitled “Making a clean sweep of cultural heritage,” adds that the best feature of digitization is the generation of metadata, which facilitates the updating, checking, and maintaining of information that provides the definite digital representations of cultural heritage. The study mentions that the highest level of quality information from curators, scholars, and data managers of cultural heritage is not always reflected in practice. If the digitized data contain errors, the researchers must analyze the extent of such errors and propose more historically accurate information that is deserving of the digitization process.

Historical markers are storytellers that date back to significant points in history, which shape the current society’s contextual influences. In the local setting, the National Historical Institute of the Philippines installs historical markers at the entrances of declared historical sites, such as ancestral houses, old establishments, or heritage churches. Nicaí de Guzman’s (2019) article, entitled “Important historical markers in the Philippines that you never even noticed,” asserts a culture of neglect based on the physical state and positioning of these markers both in Manila and Cebu. Some of the historical markers mentioned are located in the following: the site of the establishment of the *La Liga Filipina*<sup>1</sup> in Plaza La Liga Filipina in Manila City; the site of the residence of Manuel Bernabe y Hernandez<sup>2</sup> in Parañaque City; the site of the residence of Patricio Mariano<sup>3</sup> in Escolta, Manila; the publication location of the *Kalayaan* newspaper<sup>4</sup> in San Nicolas, Manila; the site of the first organization of the *Asociacion Feminista Filipina* in Rizal Avenue, Manila; the house of Rizal’s relatives in San Fernando, Manila; the *Teatro Junquera* as the oldest playhouse in Cebu; the *Lu Do Copra* Plant as biggest single unit copra in Cebu; the *Imprenta Avila* marker celebrating the golden age of Philippine journalism; and the Aboitiz Ice Plant in Cebu. However, the author admits that the salient factors for this neglect can be attributed to the rapid urban population increase and the rise of large-scale infrastructure projects, making these historical markers even more difficult to spot (2019).

Attorney Lorna Patajo-Kapunan’s (2019) essay, entitled “Historical markers,” identifies some modifications made in the conventional style of historical markers throughout the years. Most of the historical markers were written in Filipino, while the others were in English and Spanish. The prominent lawyer mentioned that some of the historical markers were written in regional languages for the first time: in Cebuano in the commemoration of the Provincial Capitol in Cebu City in 2008, in Ilocano in the commemoration of the Mansion House in Baguio City in 2009, and in Kapampangan in the commemoration of the Holy Rosary Parish Church in Angeles City in 2017. Moreover, the author also noticed several historical markers abroad to commemorate the martyrdom of Jose Rizal using their own languages, such as German and French for the markers located in Germany and Belgium, respectively.

An article published in the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (2019) by an anonymous author, entitled “Defacing History,” highlights the significance of historical markers as a reminder to future generations of the sacrifices made by Filipino ancestors during momentous events in history, such as the torturous Bataan Death March during World War II. Robert Hudson, the Vice President of the non-profit organization, Filipino–American Memorial Endowment Inc., emphasized that the Institution gathers donations for the maintenance of these markers, which cost around ₱18,000 for the replacement of the bases alone. Unfortunately, many of these markers were discovered in a sorry state—sloppily wrapped in garbage, gradually being consumed by overgrown greenery, abruptly transferred to make way for a drainage ditch, thoughtlessly vandalized using markers and spray paint, severely damaged due to excavated foundations, or with illegally detached metal parts that were typically sold to junk shops. Upon investigation, they found that some personnel from the Department of Public Works and Highways carelessly excavated these markers, regarding them as impediments.

This paper analyzes the historical marker installed on the Cathedral of the Diocese of Maasin. The Catholic Diocese of Maasin was created in 1968. Its current jurisdiction covers the entire province of Southern Leyte, Philippines, and six cities and municipalities from its neighboring province of Leyte, namely, the city of Baybay as well as the municipalities of Inopacan, Hindang, Hilongos, Bato, and Matalom. The bigger part of the province of Leyte is under the jurisdiction of the Archdiocese of Palo, while a small fraction is under the jurisdiction of the Diocese of Naval. Figure 1 shows the locations of the Diocese of Maasin, the Archdiocese of Palo, and a portion of the Diocese of Naval on the Island of Leyte.

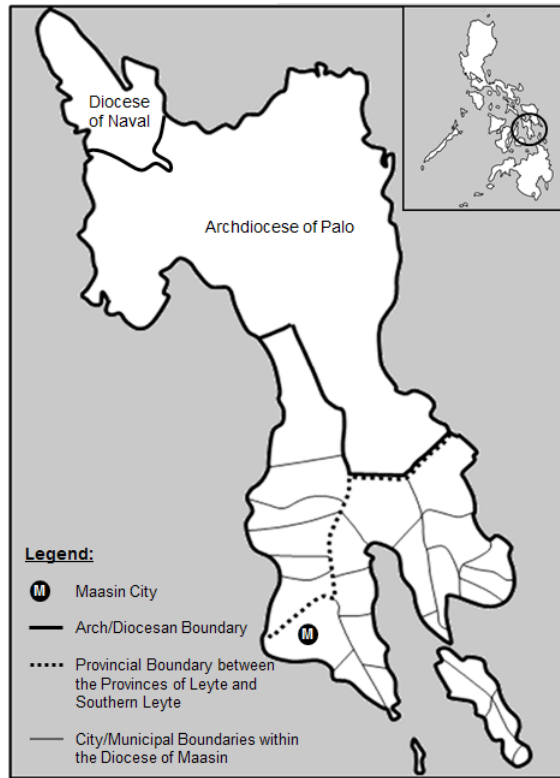


Figure 1. Map of Leyte showing the locations of the Diocese of Maasin, the Archdiocese of Palo, and a portion of the Diocese of Naval. Source: Liwanag, Demeterio, and Fernandez, Jr. 2020.

The Our Lady of the Assumption Cathedral (OLAC) is the seat of the Diocese of Maasin located in the center of Maasin City (marked with “M” in Figure 1), the provincial capital of Southern Leyte. OLAC is one of the seven existing Filipino–Spanish<sup>5</sup> churches of the Diocese of Maasin, which were built from the early part of the eighteenth century to the late part of the nineteenth century. The other six Filipino–Spanish churches are located in Baybay City, Ilongos, and Matalom, Leyte as well as in Malitbog and San Juan, Southern Leyte. OLAC is the third largest and third oldest among the seven existing Filipino–Spanish churches of this diocese.

In terms of design, the OLAC has a cruciform structure. Measured from the outside, its façade is about 12 meters wide (without the adjoining baptistery and bell tower) and about 13.5 meters high from the ground to the tip of its pediment. The length of the nave is about 58.5 meters, including the sacristy behind the main altar. The length of the transept is about 27 meters, with a width of about 12.5 meters. Its stone and mortar bell tower, located at the right side of the façade, has a height of about 24 meters, with a base diameter of about 4 meters. Its baptistery, located at the left side of the façade, has a width of about 5 meters and a length of about 7.5 meters. It is fitted with a mechanical clock that, unfortunately, is no

longer functional since the 1970s. The height of the baptistery is equal to the height of the first level of the bell tower, which is about 8.5 meters. Figure 2 presents the floor plan of the OLAC along with an illustration of its façade.

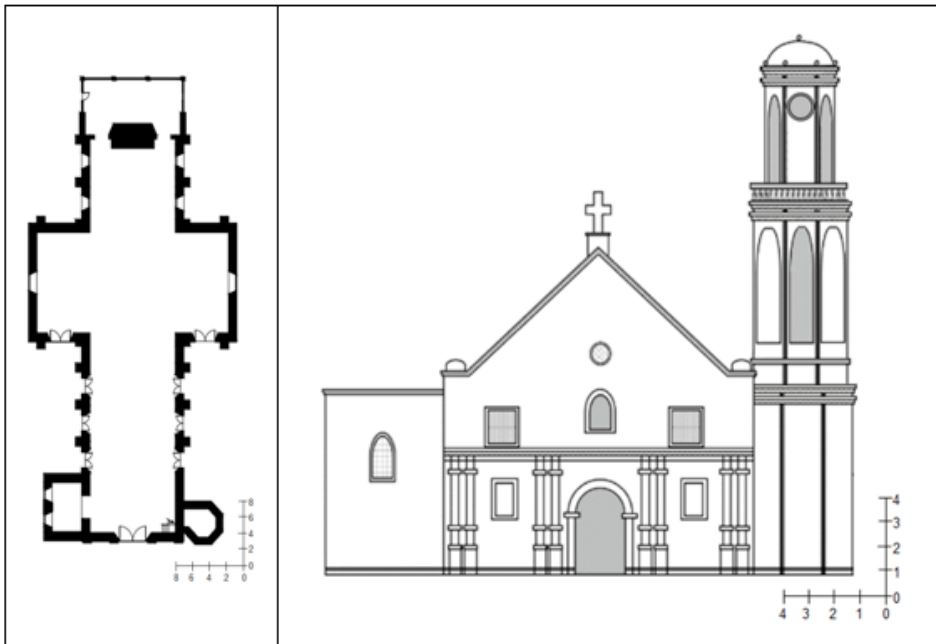


Figure 2. Floor plan and façade of the OLAC. Source: Liwanag, Demeterio, and Fernandez, Jr. 2020.

Cut coral stones, mortar, and presumably rubble compose the load-bearing walls of the OLAC. Buttresses also surround these walls. According to Felipe Redondo's 1886 work, *Breve reseña de lo que fue y de lo que es la Diócesis de Cebu*, the original roofing of the Cathedral was made of brick tiles. Galvanized iron sheets might have been used to reroof the structure after a fire damaged it in the early 1880s. The current roof consists of modern galvanized iron sheets, which have been stamped to look like brick tiles. The bell tower is also made of the same cut coral stones and mortar, which make up the load-bearing walls, along with some rubble and mortar interior.

At the point where the nave and transept intersect is an interior dome made of wood and galvanized iron sheets. Externally, this is covered by a pyramid, which measures about 20 meters by 20 meters, and is currently roofed with the same stamped galvanized iron sheets, as previously mentioned. This enormous pyramid is supported by the same load-bearing walls of the OLAC. The interior dome, as well as the barrel vault-style ceiling of the nave and the transept, are covered with paintings. Among the seven heritage churches of the Diocese of Maasin, only the OLAC has this kind of artistically decorated ceiling.

Figure 3 shows how a fortification, which originally measured about 320 meters, circumscribed the OLAC.

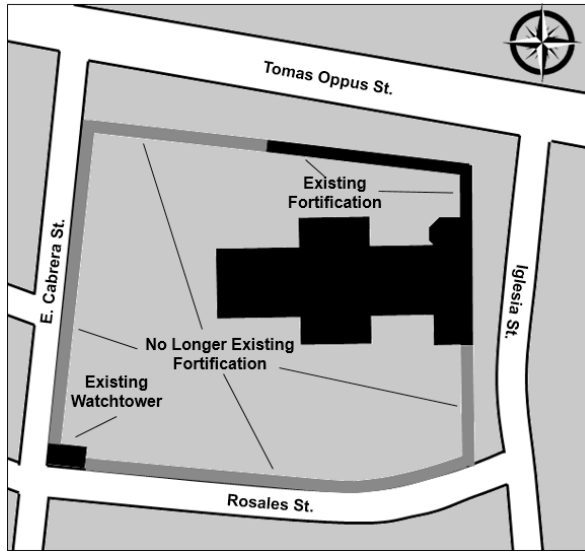


Figure 3. Positions of the fortification and watch tower in relation to the Maasin Cathedral complex.  
 Source: Liwanag, Demeterio, and Fernandez, Jr. 2020.

However, of the original length of the fortification, only about 60 meters is left. Most of these are hidden in between some neighborhood structures and some buildings of Saint Joseph College, a diocesan educational institution. The original fortification could have enclosed about 8,000 square meters of the Cathedral's complex. More than half of this Cathedral complex is now occupied by the same diocesan college, and the remaining segment of this wall is about 5 meters high. A watchtower, measuring about 7 meters by 7 meters and about 5 meters high, remains at the southwest corner of the said fortification.

In 1983, the National Historical Institute (NHI) of the Republic of the Philippines at that time placed a historical marker on the two-century-old OLAC. Figure 4 presents an illustration of the said historical maker with its mandated text in the Filipino language.

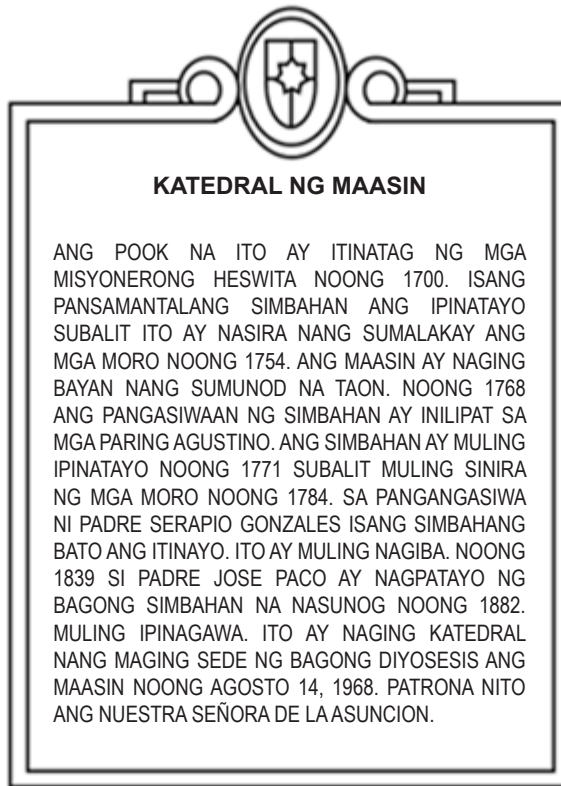


Figure 4. Illustration of the 1983 NHI historical marker placed on the OLAC<sup>6</sup>. Source: Liwanag, Demeterio, and Fernandez, Jr. 2020.

The NHI is the 1972 forerunner of the present National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP) formed in 2010. The NHCP's current categorization of historical markers is shown in Figure 5.

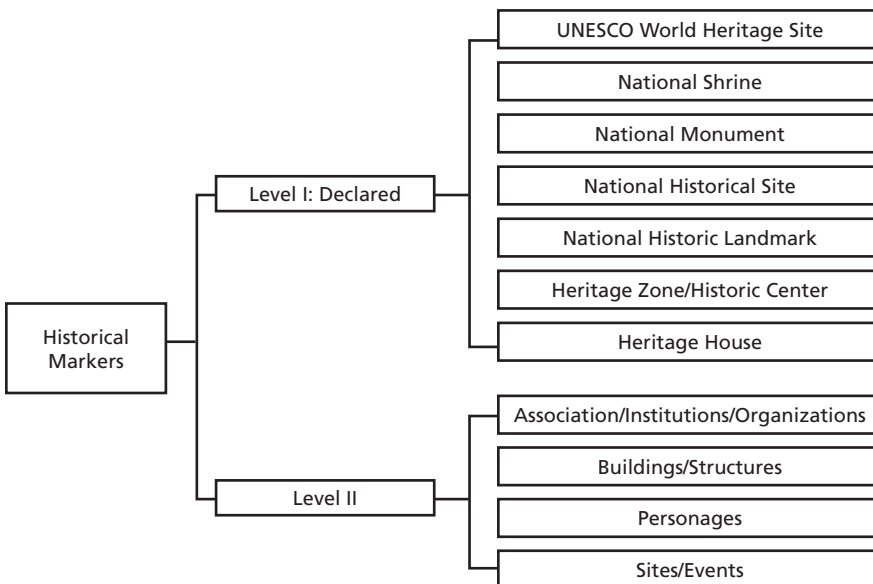


Figure 5. The NHCP's current categorization of historical markers. Source: National Historical Commission of the Philippines 2020.



Based on Figure 5, the 1983 NHI historical marker installed at the OLAC is, therefore, classified as a Level II marker for buildings and structures. At present, the historical marker on the OLAC is one of only five Level II markers for buildings and structures throughout Leyte and Southern Leyte. The other four were installed on the following premises: 1) the Tanauan Church in 1949 (although its façade was heavily altered), 2) the Palo Cathedral in 1954 (although the Filipino–Spanish structure of stone and mortar was replaced with reinforced concrete structure), 3) the Palo Convent also in 1954 (now in ruins), and 4) the Hilongos Church in 1994 (although the whole church was re-oriented, transforming its old façade into one of the end walls of the transept). Therefore, the OLAC is the most preserved structure among the five edifices throughout the entire provinces of Leyte and Southern Leyte with Level II markers for buildings and structures.

While pursuing a bigger research project entitled “Cataloguing and Baselineing the Seven Filipino-Spanish Churches of the Diocese of Maasin,” which was funded by the National Commission on Culture and the Arts of the Republic of the Philippines, the authors of this research brief were able to detect errors in the OLAC’s 1983 NHI historical marker. Hence, the current paper was written to thoroughly present these errors, trace their possible causes, and propose a more historically acceptable text, which can be useful for the NHCP officials in rectifying the OLAC’s valuable historical marker.

To attain these three goals, this paper is divided into two substantive sections. The first substantive section systematically points out the errors found in the 1983 NHI historical marker and attempts to trace the textual source of such errors. The second substantive section of this research brief ventures to propose a more historically acceptable text for the rectification of the said historical marker.

## Critique of the 1983 NHI historical marker

The incorrect portions of the text on the 1983 NHI historical marker are found in the sixth, seventh, and eighth sentences: “*Sa pangasiwa ni Padre Serapio Gonzales, isang simbahang bato ang itinayo. Ito ay muling nagiba. Noong 1839, si Padre Jose Paco ay nagpatayo ng bagong simbahan na nasunog noong 1882*” (“Under the administration of Father Serapio Gonzales, a stone church was built. This was destroyed again. In 1839, Father Jose Paco built a new church that burned down in 1882”). This paper’s critique specifically focuses on these three sentences.

Prior to the authors’ closer look at the OLAC’s 1983 NHI historical marker, they had already examined a text that mentioned the names of Fathers Serapio Gonzales and Jose Paco, namely, Raymundo Bañas’ 1937 book, *Brief historical sketches of Philippine Catholic churches*. In that work, the church that would later become the OLAC was featured as the old church of “Maasin on the Western coast of Leyte.” Here, Father Serapio Gonzales was said to be the priest who started the construction of this church, and Father Jose Paco was said to be the priest who finished the construction from 1839 to about 1851–53, as the duration of the final

phase of the construction was said to be 13 years. Bañas also mentioned a folklore attributed to Father Paco: while the final phase of the construction was initiated by the said priest, he lost his eyesight but persisted in directing the completion of the said church. Bañas wrote: “not long after the inauguration of the church, Father Paco’s sight, pronounced incurable by the doctors, returned to normal. This was a marvel to the inhabitants, occasioned much surprise among them” (1937, 88–89).

The anecdote mentioned by Bañas about Father Paco was both dramatic and charming. However, the main author of this paper, a native of Maasin City who grew up in a house just a few meters away from the OLAC and studied for over a decade in a college beside it, never heard of this lore from the older people of Maasin City. This prompted the authors to dig deeper into the identities of Fathers Gonzales and Paco. As Bañas mentioned, a third priest, Father Victoriano Garcia, as well as two governors, Enrique Fajardo and Pedro Covez Mondejar, were the ones responsible for establishing a parochial school for Maasin. Hence, their names were also included in the authors’ documentary probe.

Using the Google Books option, a cursory search of the names of the three priests on the Google search engine led the authors to Elviro Pérez’s 1901 book, *Catálogo bio-bibliográfico de los religiosos Agustinos de la Provincia del Santísimo Nombre de Jesús de las Islas Filipinas desde Fundación Hasta Nuestros Días*. Electronic copies of this book are available online from the Biblioteca Digital Hispanica and the Digital Collection of the Miguel de Benavides Library and Archives. A separate cursory search of the names of the two governors on the same Google engine option led the authors to Ramon Gonzalez Fernandez and Federico Moreno y Jerez’s 1875 book, *Manual del viajero en Filipinas*, and Eladio Zamora’s 1901 book, *Las corporaciones religiosas en Filipinas*. Electronic copies of this book are available online from the University of Michigan’s Southeast Asian Collection.

Pérez’s book contains a comprehensive listing of the Augustinian fathers who worked in the Philippines. In this book, Father Serapio Gonzalez (last letter spelled with “z” instead of “s”) was listed as being born in Spain in 1839 and died in Jaro, Iloilo, in 1893. He was said to have worked in the churches of Tubungan, Maasin, Leon, and Santa Barbara in 1863, 1867, 1879, and 1888, respectively. He was indeed credited for having built a church in Maasin as well as a convent and another church in Leon. Incidentally, that work also mentioned Father Jose Paco, who was born in 1805 in Spain and died in 1864 in Maasin (last letter spelled with “m” instead of “n”). He was said to have worked in the church of Maasin from 1832 up to 1864 and was indeed credited for having built a magnificent stone church in the said town. Another priest, identified as Father Vitoriano Garcia (spelled without a “c”) who was born in 1839 in Spain and died in 1880 in Leon, was said to have worked in the churches of Tubungan, Maasin, and Leon in 1865, 1873, and 1879, respectively. He was officially credited for having founded several schools, instead of just one school, in Maasin (Pérez 1901).

Fathers Gonzales/z, Paco, and Garcia proved to be actual priests and Augustinian fathers who worked in the church of Maasin/m, and were formally recognized as builders/founders of churches/schools. However, things did not add up perfectly. First, in Bañas' account, Father Serapio Gonzales/z was implied to be the older priest compared to Father Jose Paco. However, in Pérez's work, Father Paco was 34 years older than Father Gonzales/z. Second, in Pérez's account, all the three Augustinian priests worked in Maasin/m way beyond 1804, the year when the Augustinian fathers left Leyte and turned over the spiritual administration of the island to the Franciscan fathers and Filipino secular priests. Even in Bañas' work, Fathers Paco and Garcia were recorded to be working in Maasin/m way beyond 1804. Bañas, however, did not mention the years when Father Gonzales/z was supposed to be working in Maasin/m.

Third, Pérez's account mentioned unfamiliar towns, such as Tubungan, Leon, and Santa Barbara. In fact, there are, and there were, no such towns in Southern Leyte or in Leyte. When the authors checked Regalado Trota Jose's tabulation of parish priests per Philippine town from 1834 to 1898 in his four-volume work, *Curas de almas*, the names of Fathers Gonzales/s, Paco, and Garcia did not at all appear in the list under Maasin, Leyte (Jose 2008b).

Things only fell into place after the authors looked for the names of the governors Fajardo and Covez Mondejar in the respective works of Fernandez and Moreno y Jerez and of Zamora. According to Fernandez and Moreno y Jerez (1875), Enrique Fajardo was indeed a governor, but not of the province of Leyte. Instead, he was mentioned as the governor of the province of Iloilo; in the same work, Maasin was also mentioned as a municipality of Iloilo. According to Zamora, at the time of his writing, Covez Mondejar was already a mayor of Maasin located not in the province of Leyte, but in the province of Iloilo (Zamora 1901). Thus, the authors realized that the Maasin mentioned by Pérez and Jose is the Maasin of the province of Iloilo and not the Maasin of the province of Leyte. Things made sense finally. First, the Augustinian fathers did not leave the island of Panay in 1804. Second, there are actually towns named Tubungan, Leon, and Santa Barbara in the province of Iloilo, and these three towns are near Maasin of the same province. Moreover, when the authors of this paper looked at Jose's tabulation of parish priests per Philippine town, Fathers Paco and Garcia appeared in the list under Maasin in the province of Iloilo (Jose 2008a). However, Father Gonzales/z's name did not appear in such list, but it appeared in the lists under Tubungan, Leon, and Santa Barbara (2008a).

Evidently, Bañas got his data mixed up. He thought that Fathers Gonzales/z, Paco, and Garcia really worked and died in or near Maasin, Leyte, and did not suspect that there was another Maasin in the province of Iloilo. These two Maasins, although both Visayan towns and were both under the spiritual administration of the Augustinians for some time, are geographically situated about 280 kilometers apart. Although Bañas, who was born in 1894 and died in 1962, can be considered as a respectable intellectual for having produced cultural texts beyond the demands

of his profession as a public school teacher, such as his well cited 1924 book, *The music and theater of the Filipino people*, he simply was not a professionally trained historian. However, Fernandez and Moreno y Jerez's 1875, Pérez's 1901, Zamora's 1901, and Jose's (2008a; 2008b) works together made it very clear that Bañas' placement of Fathers Gonzales/z, Paco, and Garcia in Maasin of the province of Leyte and his identification of the years of their labors in the said town were incorrect. Table 1 compares the placements and dates related to these three priests according to Bañas, Pérez, and Jose.

**Table 1. Comparison of the placements and dates related to Fathers Serapio Gonzales/z, Jose Paco, and Vi(c)toriano in the works of Bañas, Pérez, and Jose**

Name of priest	According to Bañas (1937)		According to Pérez (1901)		According to Jose (2008a and 2008b)	
	Place	Year	Place	Year	Place	Year
Serapio Gonzales/z	Maasin, Leyte	Undated but before Paco	Maasin, Iloilo	Starting 1867	Not listed under Maasin, Iloilo but listed under Tubungan, Leon, and Santa Barbara, Iloilo	
Jose Paco	Maasin, Leyte	Around 1839	Maasin, Iloilo	1832–64	Maasin Iloilo	1839–64
Vi(c)toriano Garcia	Maasin, Leyte	Undated but after Paco	Maasin, Iloilo	From 1873	Maasin, Iloilo	1875 and 1877–79

The Filipino–Spanish church of Maasin, in the province of Iloilo, specifically known as Saint James the Greater Church (SJGC), is not as fortunate as the OLAC. It was unable to persist up to the present times as a Filipino–Spanish structure of stone and mortar. The Augustinian presence in the province of Iloilo started in the late sixteenth century and had been uninterrupted until the Spanish Revolution that erupted in 1896. Maasin, in the province of Iloilo, was established as a pueblo in 1755 (Cavada 1876). Hence, it would not be surprising that, by the late eighteenth century, an early version of the SJGC as a stone and mortar structure was already standing in this Iloilo town. This structure, however, was destroyed by an earthquake in 1787 (Saderra-Maso 1895). The site of SJGC is, after all, susceptible to tremors owing to its location just about 11 kilometers from the West Panay Fault. After that 1787 destruction, a church of probably lighter materials—or a smaller one of stone and mortar—was built by the priests and parishioners of SJGC. However, another more imposing version of the SJGC was definitely built in the early part of the nineteenth century. That should be the moment when Father Jose Paco came into the picture as he served SJGC from 1832 to 1864. Pérez described this version of the SJGC as a “magnificent church of stone and mortar” (1901, 430).

When Father Gonzales/z started serving the SJGC in 1867, he built the *convento* of the said church. Pérez did not mention that Father Gonzales/z contributed anything to a rebuilding or repair of the structure of Father Paco's version of the SJGC (1901). It was most probably the Father Paco version of the SJGC that was occupied and damaged by the American soldiers during the Filipino–American

War (Rooker 1909). Shortly after, that damaged structure was destroyed by another earthquake in 1902 (Algue 1902). Thus, the current version of the SJGC is no longer a Filipino–Spanish structure of stone and mortar, but an American period structure of reinforced concrete.

When the researchers took a closer look at the 1983 NHI historical marker on the OLAC, they were horrified to see the names of Fathers Gonzales/z and Paco there. Once cast in iron, these errors can easily cause other writers and scholars to commit the same blunder. For example, Norma Alarcón (1991) mentioned Fathers Gonzales/z and Paco as the builders of OLAC in her 1991 book *Philippine architecture during the pre-Spanish and Spanish periods*. Benjamin Layug did the same thing in his 2007 book, *A Tourist guide to notable Philippine churches*. Moreover, numerous blogs in the Internet, such as “Ila-ilahon ta ang Maasin City” and “A Glimpse of Maasin City, Southern Leyte,” talk about the OLAC routinely committed the same errors (Arlu 2010; Hilotin 2014).

The authors of this paper are of the strong opinion that it was Bañas’ text that caused those who penned the text of the 1983 NHI marker on the OLAC to commit mistakes. Whereas the bibliography of Bañas contains standard period publications, his entries are very sparse. Furthermore, Bañas was not a professional historian. Such a strong opinion was based on two errors or peculiarities in Bañas’ text, which were replicated in the 1983 NHI marker. The first of these errors is related to how Bañas spelled the family name of Father Gonzales/z with an “s” at the end, while the more official listings of Pérez and Jose spelled this with a “z” at the end. Such incorrect manner of spelling found its way into the 1983 NHI marker. The second of these errors is related to how Bañas chronologically ordered Father Gonzales/s and Father Paco, in which he implied that the former was older than the latter. In the more accurate listing of Pérez, it was the other way around. Pérez’s mention of their birth years would imply that Father Paco was actually 34 years older than Father Gonzales/z, and his mention of their years in Maasin would imply that the former was there ahead of the latter by 35 years. Bañas’ incorrect way of chronologically arranging the two Augustinian priests also found its way into the 1983 NHI marker on the OLAC.

### **Proposed text for the revision of the OLAC NHI historical marker**

Before finally proposing an alternative text for the incorrect lines in the 1983 NHI marker for the OLAC, the authors of this paper believe that presenting a more solid and textually-based historical account of the OLAC is needed. According to Redondo (1886), the area that would eventually become Maasin City, located in the province of Southern Leyte, came under the administration of the Jesuits in 1737. In 1754, a Moro raid razed the settlement to the ground (Montero 1888). Maasin was simultaneously established both as a pueblo and a parish in 1755 (Cavada 1876; Redondo 1886). According to Agustin María de Castro’s 1954 book, entitled “Misioneros agustinos en el Extremo Oriente, 1565–1780,” when the Augustinians

took over the territory from the Jesuits in 1768, they did not see any church nor storage house. Instead, what they saw was a stone bastion with four cannons of medium caliber.

We estimate that the building of the OLAC took place sometime between 1771 and the 1780s. This is because 1771 is the year inscribed on an existing watchtower that used to be a part of the structure's massive fortification, and the 1780s marked the period wherein the Spanish colonial navy started to adapt Moro naval architecture in order to more effectively pursue the light and swift marauding Moro vessels, thus making the massive fortifications obsolete (Mallari 1989). This means that, if the OLAC were built later than the early part of the 1780s, the builders of the OLAC would not have bothered fortifying the whole OLAC complex. If we correctly assume that this heritage structure was built by the Augustinians, then the priest directly responsible for such project would be Padre Nicolas Yaquer, as he was the only Augustinian assigned to Maasin at that time. By the 1850s, Manuel Buzeta and Felipe Bravo's "Diccionario geográfico-estadístico-histórico de las Islas Filipinas" described the church that would become the OLAC as "well-constructed" (1850, 739). However, it was reported that a fire destroyed the structure, including its rectory, in the early 1880s (Redondo 1886). Then, in 1968, the fire-damaged structure was repaired and elevated into a cathedral for the newly created Diocese of Maasin.

Obviously, rectifying the 1983 NHI marker for the OLAC will not just be a matter of erasing the names of Father Gonzales/z and Father Paco. Table 2 is a tool in undertaking a line by line analysis of the text found in the said marker.

**Table 2. Numbered lines of the original text of the 1983 NHI marker on the OLAC grounds together with their English translations**

Line number	Original line	English translation
1	<i>Katedral ng Maasin</i>	Cathedral of Maasin
2	<i>Ang pook na ito ay itinatag ng mga misyonerong Heswita noong 1700.</i>	This place was established by the Jesuit missionaries in 1700.
3	<i>Isang pansamantalang simbahan ang itinayo subalit ito ay nasira nang sumalakay ang mga Moro noong 1754.</i>	A temporary church was built, but it was destroyed by a Moro attack in 1754.
4	<i>Ang Maasin ay naging bayan nang sumunod na taon.</i>	Maasin became a town in the following year.
5	<i>Noong 1768 ang pangasiwaan ng simbahan ay inilipat sa mga paring Agustino.</i>	In 1768, the administration of the church was transferred to the Augustinian fathers.
6	<i>Ang simbahan ay muling ipinatayo noong 1771 subalit muling sinira ng mga Moro noong 1784.</i>	The church was rebuilt in 1771, but it was destroyed again by the Moro people in 1784.
7	<i>Sa pangasiwa ni Padre Serapio Gonzales isang simbahang bato ang itinayo.</i>	Under the administration of Father Serapio Gonzales, a stone church was built.
8	<i>Ito ay muling nagiba.</i>	This was destroyed again.
9	<i>Noong 1839 si Padre Jose Paco ay nagpatayo ng bagong simbahan na nasunog noong 1882.</i>	In 1839, Father Jose Paco built a new church that burned down in 1882.
10	<i>Muling ipinagawa.</i>	That church was rebuilt.
11	<i>Ito ay naging katedral nang maging sede ng bagong diyosesis ang Maasin noong Agosto 14, 1968.</i>	It became a cathedral when Maasin was chosen as the seat of a new diocese on August 14, 1968.
12	<i>Patrona nito ang Nuestra Señora de la Asuncion.</i>	Its patron saint is the Our Lady of the Assumption.

Line 1 in Table 2, “Cathedral of Maasin,” is just the title of the marker, so it should be retained as such. Line 2, “This place was established by the Jesuit missionaries in 1700,” does not contradict Redondo, because the author merely stated that, in 1737, Maasin was already listed as under the Jesuit Administration. In other words, even prior to 1737, the said town could have already been in existence. The local historian, Francisco Tantuico, in his 1980 book *Leyte towns: Histories and legends*, and the Jesuit scholar, Rene Javellana, in his 1991 book, *Wood & stone for God’s greater glory: Jesuit art & architecture in the Philippines*, both support the accuracy of this year (i.e., 1700). Hence, line 2 may be retained as such.

Line 3, “A temporary church was built, but it was destroyed by a Moro attack in 1754,” is acceptable and may be retained as such. It must be noted, however, that the actual existence and subsequent destruction of a church with a weaker structure were mere deductions. What is supported by historical documents is the burning of the Maasin settlement by a Moro attack in 1754 (Montero 1888, 302). Further, so as not to be offensive to the present Filipino Muslims, such an attack could be contextualized as part of the *pangayaw* practice of the pre-Hispanic Filipinos in general. The practice of pangayaw was more than just slave raiding, in the sense that it was necessary in building the reputations of emerging warrior leaders and in maintaining the standing of the existing raiding leaders (Scott 1992). Hence, another line may be inserted after Line 3: “Such an attack was part of the practice of *pangayaw*, which was ingrained in the culture of many pre-Hispanic Filipino communities.”

Line 4, “Maasin became a town in the following year,” is supported by historical documents and should be retained. Line 5, “In 1768, the administration of the church was transferred to the Augustinian fathers,” is also supported by historical documents and should also be retained.

Line 6, “The church was rebuilt in 1771, but it was destroyed again by the Moro people in 1784,” needs to be modified. The authors of this paper were unable to locate any historical document as to the year of the building of the stone and mortar church of Maasin. As already stated above, their estimate of the building of such church is between 1771 and the early part of the 1780s. As for the destruction of the stone and mortar church by the Moro people in 1784, the authors of this paper were not able to locate any historical documents supporting this. Based on the documents examined, such alleged destruction was concocted merely to accommodate the erroneous idea that Father Gonzales/z built a subsequent stone and mortar church. Hence, Line 6 may be modified as follows: “A stone church was built from the 1770s to the first half of the 1780s.”

Line 7, “Under the administration of Father Serapio Gonzales, a stone church was built,” should be omitted as this paper already presented evidence indicating that such priest was never assigned to Maasin, Leyte. Line 8, “This was destroyed again,” should also be omitted. The authors of this paper, again, were not able to locate any historical documents supporting this statement. It could be that such

alleged third destruction was assumed merely to accommodate the erroneous idea that Father Paco built a subsequent stone and mortar church. Meanwhile, Line 9, “In 1839, Father Jose Paco built a new church that burned down in 1882,” should be modified. This paper had already proven that such priest was also never assigned to Maasin, Leyte. However, the burning of this church in 1882 is supported by historical documents. Hence, line 9 may be simplified as follows: “This was damaged by a fire in 1882.”

Line 10, “That church was rebuilt,” should be modified. Instead of “rebuilt” the milder word “repaired” is more appropriate based on the historical facts presented. Such a line may be recast as follows: “It was immediately repaired by Filipino secular priests.” The mention of Filipino secular priests is important in highlighting their contributions to the maintenance, repair, and, in some cases, building of Filipino–Spanish churches. Line 11, “It became a cathedral when Maasin was chosen as the seat of a new diocese on August 14, 1968,” should be retained as such. Finally, Line 12, “Its patron saint is the Our Lady of the Assumption,” should also be retained as such.

Table 3 summarizes the proposed revisions of the 1983 NHI marker placed on the OLAC, along with their translations into the mandated Filipino language.

**Table 3. Summary of the proposed revisions for the 1983 NHI marker on the OLAC**

Line number	Original line	English translation	Proposed revision in English	Translation to the mandated Filipino language	Action done on the original line
3	<i>Isang pansamantalang simbahan ang itinayo subalit ito ay nasira nang sumalakay ang mga Moro noong 1754.</i>	A temporary church was built, but it was destroyed by a Moro attack in 1754.	A temporary church was built, but it was destroyed by a Moro attack in 1754. Such an attack was part of the practice of pangayaw, which was ingrained in the culture of many pre-Hispanic Filipino communities.	<i>Isang pansamantalang simbahan ang itinayo subalit ito ay nasira nang sumalakay ang mga Moro noong 1754. Ang pagsalakay na ito ay kabilang sa gawaing pangayaw na bahagi ng kultura ng maraming Pilipino bago dumating ang mga Espanyol.</i>	The original line is retained, but another line is inserted to make the original line inoffensive.
6	<i>Ang simbahan ay muling ipinatayo noong 1771 subalit muling sinira ng mga moro noong 1784.</i>	The church was rebuilt in 1771, but it was destroyed again by the Moro people in 1784.	A stone church was built from the 1770s up to the first half of the 1780s.	<i>Isang simbahang bato ang ipinatayo sa pagitan ng dekada 1770 at unang bahagi ng dekada 1780.</i>	The date of the building of a new church is modified, and the reference to another destruction by the Moro people is omitted.
7	Sa pangasiwa ni Padre Serapio Gonzales isang simbahang bato ang itinayo.	Under the administration of Father Serapio Gonzales, a stone church was built.			The original line is omitted.
8	<i>Ito ay muling nagiba.</i>	This was destroyed again.			The original line is omitted.



**Table 3. Summary of the proposed revisions for the 1983 NHI marker on the OLAC (Con't.)**

Line number	Original line	English translation	Proposed revision in English	Translation to the mandated Filipino language	Action done on the original line
9	<i>Noong 1839 si Padre Jose Paco ay nagpatayo ng bagong simbahan na nasunog noong 1882.</i>	In 1839, Father Jose Paco built a new church that burned down in 1882.	This was damaged by a fire in 1882.	<i>Ito ay nasunog noong 1882.</i>	The reference to Father Jose Paco is omitted, but the reference to the church's burning in 1882 is retained.
10	<i>Muling ipinagawa.</i>	That church was rebuilt.	It was immediately repaired by Filipino secular priests.	<i>Agaran itong inayos ng mga Pilipinong paring sekular.</i>	The reference to "rebuilding" is modified into "repairing," and the agency of Filipino secular priests was added.

The full suggested English language version of the revised 1983 NHI marker on the OLAC would, therefore, read as follows:

Cathedral of Maasin: This place was established by the Jesuit missionaries in 1700. A temporary church was built, but it was destroyed by a Moro attack in 1754. Such an attack was part of the practice of pangayaw, which was ingrained in the culture of many pre-Hispanic Filipino communities. Maasin became a town in the following year. In 1768, the administration of the church was transferred to the Augustinian fathers. A stone church was built from the 1770s up to the first half of the 1780s. This was damaged by a fire in 1882. It was immediately repaired by Filipino secular priests. It became a cathedral when Maasin was chosen as the seat of a new diocese on August 14, 1968. Its patron saint is the Our Lady of the Assumption.

In the mandated Filipino language, the revised text would be as follows:

Katedral ng Maasin: Ang pook na ito ay itinatag ng mga misyonerong Heswita noong 1700. Isang pansamantalang simbahan ang itinayo subalit ito ay nasira nang sumalakay ang mga Moro noong 1754. Ang pagsalakay na ito ay kabilang sa gawaing pangayaw na bahagi ng kultura ng maraming Pilipino bago dumating ang mga Espanyol. Ang Maasin ay naging bayan nang sumunod na taon. Noong 1768, ang pangasiwaan ng simbahan ay inilipat sa mga paring Agustino. Isang simbahang bato ang ipinatayo sa pagitan ng dekada 1770 at unang bahagi ng dekada 1780. Ito ay nasunog noong 1882. Agaran itong inayos ng mga Pilipinong paring sekular. Naging katedral ito nang maging sede ng bagong diyosesis ang Maasin noong Agosto 14, 1968. Patrona nito ang Nuestra Señora de la Asuncion.

## Conclusion

This research article was able to prove that Fathers Gonzales/z and Jose, who were mentioned in the 1983 NHI historical marker on the OLAC, had never worked in Maasin, Leyte, but in Maasin, Iloilo. Their inclusion in the said marker could have been caused by Bañas' 1937 work, which erroneously referred to the two priests as two of the named builders/rebuilders of the church that would eventually become the OLAC. While it is possible that Bañas's 1937 errors and the NHI's 1983 errors happened independently from each other, we are inclined to believe that there is a causal relationship between them in that the NHI historical marker did not only err in placing Fathers Gonzales/z and Jose in Maasin, Leyte, but more so, replicated Bañas' mistake in spelling the name of Father Gonzales/z and in making the said priest appear older than Father Paco. Unfortunately, Bañas' errors left his rather clear fingerprint on the 1983 NHI historical marker. Hence, the names of Fathers Gonzales/z and Jose should be omitted from the said historical marker for the sake of historical accuracy.

However, by striking off their names from the same historical marker, the narrative in the said marker will also change. Hence, this research article proffered a revised text for the NHCP to consider and, perhaps, critique even further. In this article's proposed revised text, the names of the two Augustinian fathers were omitted, which led to the reduction of references to the number of destructions and rebuilding experienced by the OLAC. This research brief also took the opportunity of having a revised version to tone down the anti-Moro sentiment of the original 1983 NHI historical marker. This was achieved by contextualizing the 1754 Moro attack as part of the widely practiced *pangayaw* among pre-Hispanic Filipinos.

If this research brief's estimate, the structure that would eventually become the OLAC was constructed from the 1770s and the first half of the 1780s. As such, the Augustinian father credited for its building should be Father Yaquer (or Jacquis/Jacques), who served Maasin, Leyte from 1774 to 1785 (Pérez 1901). After some repeated search through Pérez's 1901 book, Father Yaquer seems to be the only Augustinian father who worked in the said locality.

If this research brief's assumption that the fire-damaged church of 1882 was immediately repaired by Filipino secular priests holds, then these priests can also be identified as Fathers Toribio Padilla and Felix Magno. Father Padilla served in Maasin from 1877 to 1879, and 1884; in fact, his name was embossed on a broken bell that was cast in a Binondo foundry in 1882 (Jose 2008b). Father Padilla was a notable Filipino writer and revolutionary, and he even has a street named after him in Cebu City. Meanwhile, Father Magno served in Maasin from 1885 to 1886 (2008b). It is important to mention in the revised historical marker that Filipino secular priests took part in the rebuilding of the church that would eventually become the OLAC. This is because Filipinos should be aware that fellow Filipino secular priests also contributed in the construction/reconstruction and

maintenance of our Filipino–Spanish churches. In fact, in the Diocese of Maasin, among the other six existing Filipino–Spanish churches, four were fully constructed under the supervision of these Filipino secular priests.

We hope that the NHCP, the Diocese of Maasin, and the Parish of the Our Lady of Assumption will immediately act on revising the 1983 NHI historical marker. The people of Maasin and the whole of Leyte and the Eastern Visayas Region deserve a corrected historical marker that contains accurate historical events regarding their beloved cathedral. Likewise, the people of Maasin and the whole of Iloilo deserve to reclaim the names of their great priests who built some of their churches. At the time of the submission of this article for publication, the Vicar General of the Diocese of Maasin, many of its priests, and the Chairman of the National Historical Commission of the Philippines have already been informed about the whole matter. The Chairman even informed one of the authors that the rectification process is already underway. In relation to this, the authors of this paper hope that, should the actual replacement of the cast iron marker happen, the original defective 1983 NHI historical marker on the OLAC should be housed in the planned Diocesan Museum of Maasin.

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> La Liga Filipina is a civic organization founded by José P. Rizal, a “Filipino polymath, nationalist and the most prominent advocate for reforms in the Philippines during the Spanish colonial era. He is considered the Philippines’ national hero” (Collections Online: British Museum 2020).
- <sup>2</sup> Manuel Bernabe y Hernandez (1890–1960) was a poet, linguist, and politician during the Spanish period. (N.a. 2010).
- <sup>3</sup> Patricio Mariano y Geronimo (1877–1935) was a playwright, poet, journalist, violinist, and painter (National Historical Commission of the Philippines 2012).
- <sup>4</sup> *Kalayaan* newspaper is the official publication of Katipunan, or the Philippine revolutionary society, in order to inspire more people to join their cause and take up arms against their colonial masters (Policarpio 2018).
- <sup>5</sup> Filipino–Spanish churches are ecclesiastical structures built during the Spanish period using stone, lime mortar, wood, and bricks.
- <sup>6</sup> Cathedral of Maasin: This place was established by the Jesuit missionaries in 1700. A temporary church was built, but it was destroyed by a Moro attack in 1754. Maasin became a town in the following year. In 1768, the administration of the church was transferred to the Augustinian fathers. The church was rebuilt in 1771, but it was destroyed again by the Moro people in 1784. Under the administration of Father Serapio Gonzales, a stone church was built. This was destroyed again. In 1839, Father Jose Paco built a new church that burned down in 1882. That church was rebuilt. It became a cathedral when Maasin was chosen as the seat of a new diocese on 14 August 1968. Its patron saint is the Our Lady of the Assumption (translated by authors).

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