



The Silent Sentinel: San Pablo Apostol de Cabagan Church Reveals 300 Years of Secrets of the Philippines

James Edward Cleland

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San Pablo Church has been the sentinel protecting the people of the Cagayan Valley throughout all of the tumultuous and sanguinary history of the Philippines. As one of the oldest churches in the entire Philippines archipelago it has faithfully served its people for close to three hundred years going back to the days of the Spanish friars. Now it lies in a near ruinous state watching silently as other more-celebrated Philippine churches undergo highly-publicized renovations. Despite crushing poverty the people of the Cagayan Valley have begun the monumental process of rebuilding their church-certainly the largest from the Spanish colonial days and one of the most significant in terms of the establishment of Catholicism in all of Asia. This reconstruction has been guided by a handful of dedicated priests, concerned parishioners, and friends from all provinces of the Philippines as well as all corners of the world. James E. Cleland has set out to justify a complete renovation of this landmark church which currently enjoys no assistance from any governmental or private agency. Parallels are drawn with successful American restoration efforts. The Silent Sentinel reveals a three-hundred year history of this historic adobe-and-stone church: the forced migrations of its people, droughts, earthquakes, epidemics, and vicious typhoons, fighting between the people and the Spanish, a violent war for independence, the Second World War with the painful occupation of the Imperial Japanese Army. It has lived to see the early days of freedom as the Philippines became a sovereign nation. This book, as well, alerts the reader to the remarkable story of the design of San Pablo Church- the unique architectural innovations used by the Spanish friars and their Filipino craftsmen-which justifies a complete and faithful renovation in and of itself.

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