



ICOMOS-SRI LANKA

Architectural Documentation of  
**Oratorian - Influenced  
Missionary Churches**  
in Sri Lanka





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Documented by

**Archt. Sagara Jayasinghe**  
Jnt. Secretary, ICOMOS (Sri Lanka)

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# Architectural Documentation of **Oratorian - Influenced Missionary Churches** in Sri Lanka

## **The Background**

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The Indian Oratorian Mission in Sri Lanka commenced during the time of Dutch persecution by the members of the Oratory of Goa in 1687. In mission history of the world, this Indian Congregation of Oratorian is considered the first indigenous religious order founded in a mission country while being the only Asian missionary order, that supplied missionaries to another Asian country. The origin of the network of Oratorian-Influenced Missionary Churches in Sri Lanka seems to have been influenced by their innovative missionary methods and its development can be characterized as hands-on architectural solutions in response to very difficult political and economic conditions and certain aspects of Oriental religious practices and environmental conditions of the Island.

The churches originated by Oratorian Missionaries reflected unique architectural styles and characteristics and those structures ranged from small chapels built in clay to larger churches built in stone. In view of the architectural typology of the larger churches, the established model was generally characterised by the introduction of two rows of wooden pillars to its nave to support the heavy timber roof construction. Therefore, it is observed that the Oratorian-Influenced church architecture in Sri Lanka has marked its unique identity in the evolution of religious architecture in the country.

## **The Objectives**

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The main objective of this project was to document and explore the architectural significance and cultural value as well as the current condition and state of preservation of surviving Oratorian-Influenced church buildings scattered in Northern region in Sri Lanka.

The practical significance of this project will be the provision of a base document to plan the conservation of these churches to prolong the religious function of this invaluable heritage. Moreover, this documentation can be extended beyond its use as a preliminary tool for conservation as it can be used to communicate the architectural significance and cultural reference of last surviving Oratorian-influenced church buildings in Sri Lanka.

Under this documentation project 10 numbers of church buildings, scattered in old Oratorian mission stations in Kalpitiya, Mannar, Jaffna and their suburbs has been systematically documented according to their geographical locations/ architectural character/ causes of damage and decay.

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## Locations

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# St. Joseph's Church Kanthankulam

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01. Ref. No  
ADOC17/MN/02

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02. Geographical Location  
Kanthankulam,  
Mannar District

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03. Architectural significance /  
Condition & state of preservation

Most of the details of architectural interest lie in its nave and two aisles. The aisles that evolved within this church facilitated the placement of two symmetrical arches on either side of the triumphal arch to make a passage to the lateral chancels.

The wall behind the altar has an elaborated masonry retable decorated with local motifs. Overall structure is in a very dilapidated state due to lack of maintenance during last decades.

A temporary structure has been erected at the entrance.

# St. Joseph's Church Kanthankulam

## 04. Photographic Study / Exterior



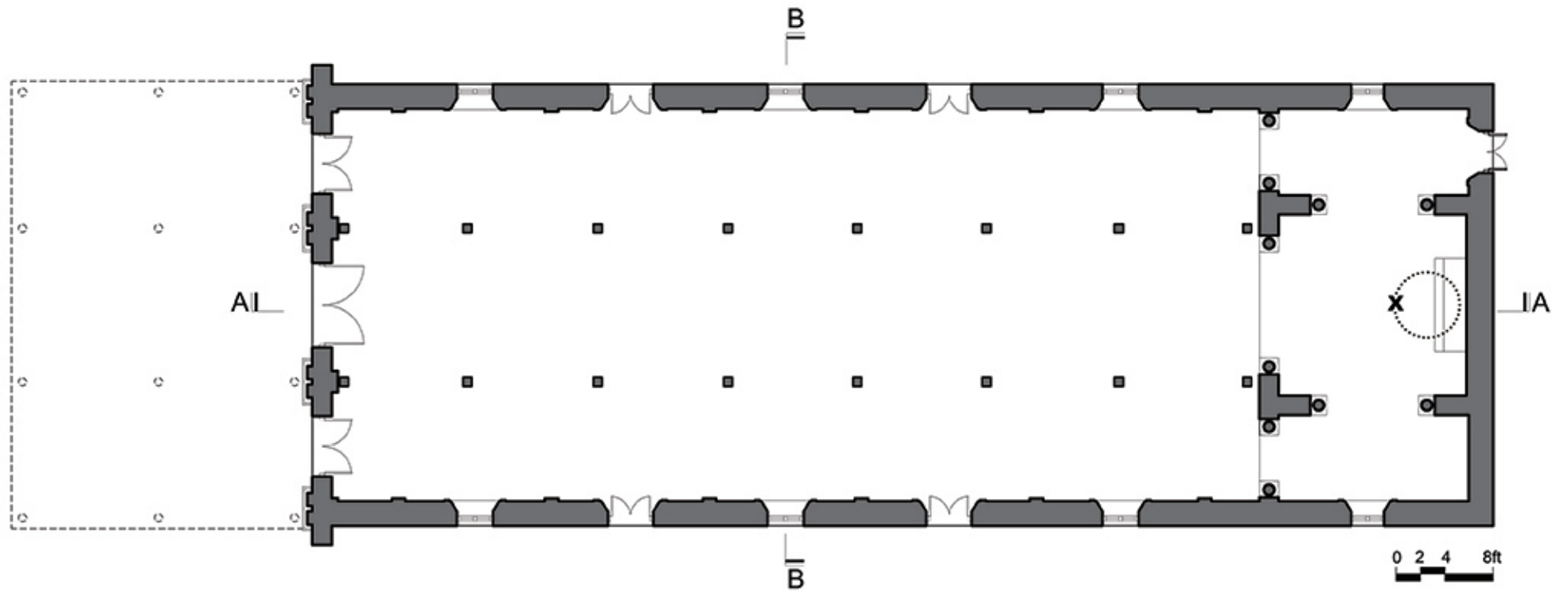
# St. Joseph's Church Kanthankulam

## 05. Photographic Study / Interior



# St. Joseph's Church Kanthankulam

## 06. Architectural Measured Drawings

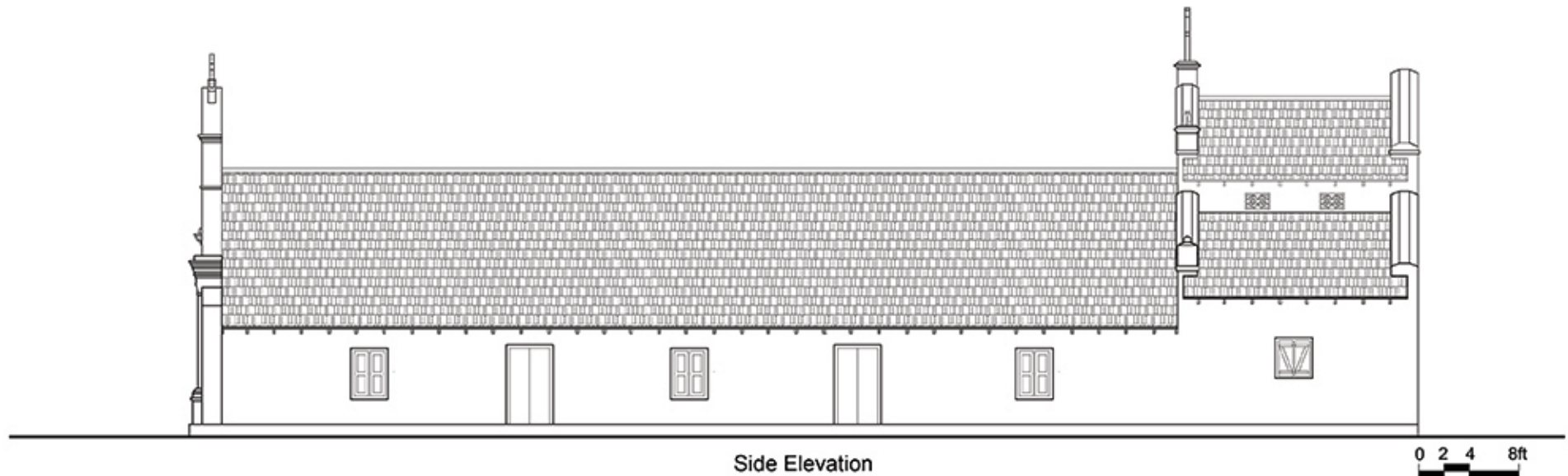
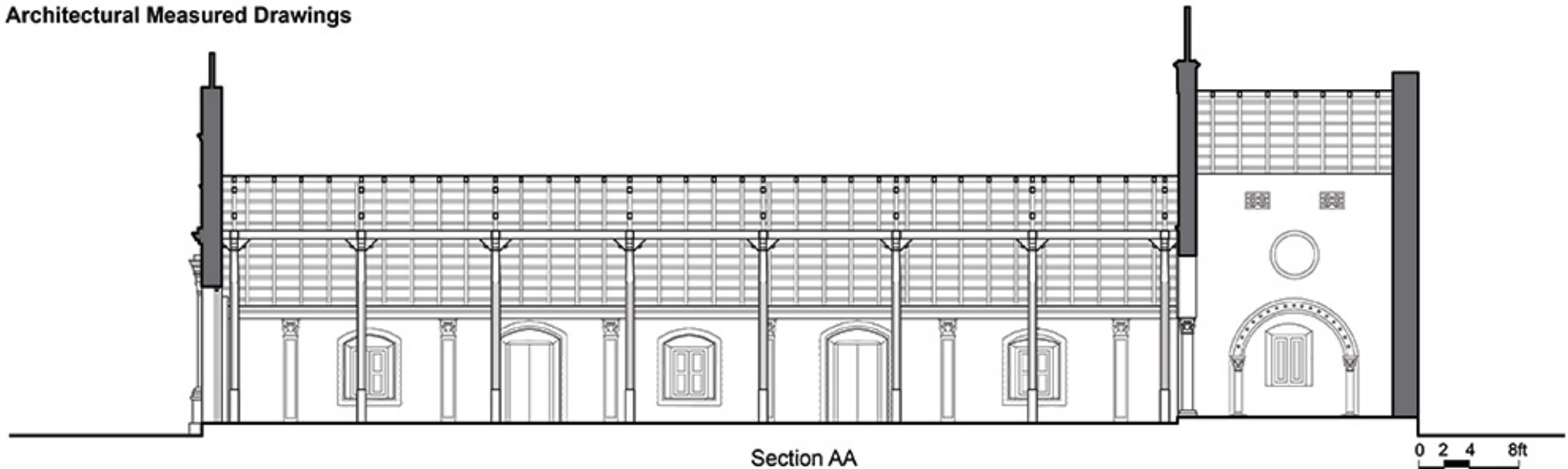


Ground Floor Plan



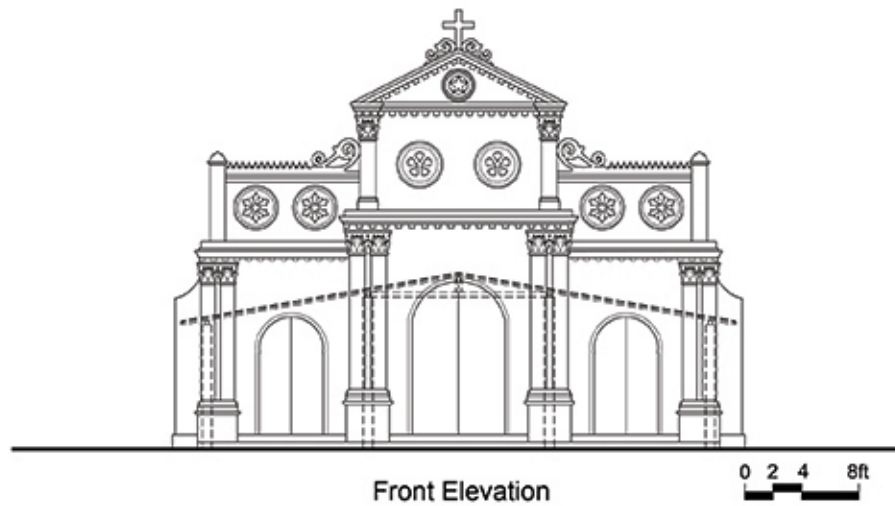
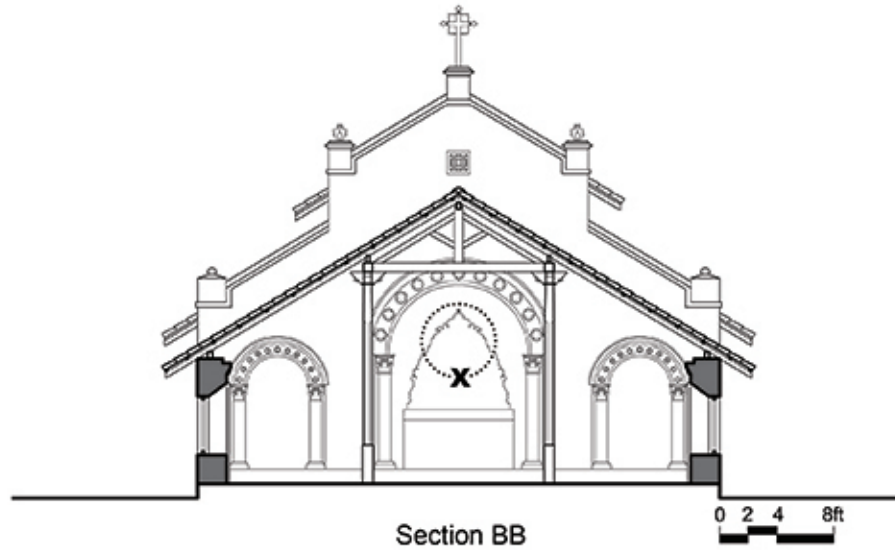
# St. Joseph's Church Kanthankulam

## 06. Architectural Measured Drawings



# St. Joseph's Church Kanthankulam

## 06. Architectural Measured Drawings



## 07. Significant Architectural Details

