Typological Analysis of Mission San Xavier del Bac

The main building is composed of fired adobe bricks set in lime mortar. The exterior walls are painted white stucco. Two octagonal lime plastered towers topped with belfries flank the main facade (fig. 1), being only the one on the left side with a dome and lantern. An unusual feature present in the Pimería Alta region is the balcony protruding from above the entrance portal, as well as the two smaller flanking balconies at the second level of each tower. It is suggested that the central balcony may have been used as a place from which to address a gathering in the forecourt below and say mass to large groups of people. The portal on the main facade (south elevation) is surrounded by a sculpted frontispiece.

The floor plan is a Latin cruciform covered by five shallow domes or bóvedas. Two large domes are over the transept, while the side chapels are covered with smaller domes (fig. 2). The fifth dome is located over the sacristy. The thrust from each dome is received by both lateral arches and the exterior walls. The total interior length is approximately 99 foot from the entrance to the rear of the sanctuary (Messina, 2005).

The interior of the mission is richly decorated with painted relief sculpture, wall paintings and statuary. The main altarpiece or retablo mayor has an octagonal design (Fraser-Giffords, 2007 p.300). It is built as its sides were swung forward as if on hinges with angles close to 45 degrees (fig. 3).

The mission property includes the main church, mortuary chapel, dormitory, patio, garden, and convento.

REFERENCES
