

The administrative machinery of the provincial government was more elaborate than would be expected in a frontier province so distant from Madrid. Simmons explores the organization and operation of government under the commandancy general and the intendancy system from 1776 to independence.

Perhaps this book's greatest service, in entering this obscure corner of history, is to point students toward a wealth of unexplored archival material, for those who might wish to piece together the minutiae of day-to-day government during New Mexico's last years as a province of Spain.

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*The Architecture of Antigua Guatemala, 1543-1773.* By VERLE LINCOLN ANNIS. Guatemala, 1968. University of San Carlos. Illustrations. Maps. Figures. Bibliography. Indices. Pp. 476. \$22.00. (Distributed in U. S. by Wittenborn and Company, New York and Kurt L. Schwartz, Beverly Hills.)

This book presents every surviving seventeenth- and eighteenth-century building in Antigua of any architectural interest in a *catalogue raisonné* divided into categories by function: government buildings, monasteries, convents, churches, schools, and houses. The text (English and Spanish) draws on long research in Guatemalan archives. Individual buildings are illustrated with the author's photographs—average in quality, but well above average in quantity—plus some 60 pages of his measured drawings: plans, elevations, and lavish spreads of doors, grilles, even nail-heads, surprising to find in a book today but familiar 50 years ago in books made not for scholars but for architects, to assist their eclectic plundering.

Despite his research, the author is reluctant to date buildings, mainly because of the many repairs and alterations after earthquakes. He holds that "Antigua's architecture becomes confused if treated by periods" and also rejects style, another means of ordering material unclassified chronologically. Pictures are preferred to words: "To reduce the text to a minimum . . . it was necessary to eliminate opinions, or quotes." The result is unhistorical, sometimes antihistorical. Buildings are described, but their forebears in Mexico and Spain are ignored, although relation with contemporary building in Chiapas is obviously close. Indeed, San Cristóbal de las Casas and Antigua are architecturally sisters or close cousins—country cousins.

It is not true that "the influence of Spain and the Indians was secondary to local physical conditions," for although builders could modify they could not substitute for the whole architectural vocabulary that was imported.

In general the text reads well, though neglect of recent publications makes it occasionally unclear or inaccurate. Threadbare errors from Sylvester Baxter's *Spanish Colonial Architecture in Mexico* (1901) are repeated as accepted facts. "Plateresque" is applied to works in no way plateresque, and "Early Franciscan" is still taken as an architectural style, that of defensible "fortress-churches." Some terms are ill-defined and therefore ill-applied: *ataurique*, for example, and *estípite* (not used for the standard inverted obelisk-column of Churrigueresque, but for the hypertrophied baluster-pilaster common in Antigua and rare elsewhere). Meaning is sometimes elusive. What are "low circular vaults"? Is a "two-storied choir" a choir-balcony? Is a "four-storied shrine" a *camarín*? If so, might it not be worth investigating how the *camarín* (rare in Spain outside Granada) came to Guatemala via Mexico (where it is even rarer)? Other curiosity-arousing items are presented without remark, such as astonishingly late *mudéjar* ceilings or Antonelli's grid town-plan of 1542, more advanced than anything then building in Europe. (Instead of comparing the latter with remodeled old cities such as Mexico or Cuzco, Annis might have more aptly suggested similarities with another new Spanish-American city, say Puebla.) There are also some strange judgments, such as repeating a Guatemalan claim that the façade of the Candelaria is "one of the finest examples of Baroque in the New World," "as good as anything in Spain." It becomes clear that the book was written by someone outside the art-historical "establishment." In fact, the author is an antiquarian trained as an architect. (That, needless to say, is no fault in itself.)

Still, one must buy or consult a book for what it is, not but for what it might be. Here we have generous pictorial documentation of a wonderful city plus limited historical data—limited because that is all there is in the archives—so solidly done that it can stand as a good foundation for future explanatory or interpretative studies. Annis' devotion to Antigua is everywhere evident: it produced this book, and it gave him the drive to help get Antigua declared a national monument—no mean feat in a Central American country.