

Cathedral and Episcopal Palace as seen from Antigua's city hall. This Cathedral, the second to occupy the site, was severely damaged in the earthquake of 1773, but one of the chapels has been restored and is in use today.

Ethnohistory and Archaeology in Colonial Antigua, Guatemala

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with contributions by

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INTRODUCTION

The visitor to modern Antigua, Guatemala, receives the impression that he is stepping back into the Colonial period. The ruins left by the fateful earthquake of 1773, the Colonial-style homes, and the cobblestone streets testify to the physical grandeur of Antigua's past. Many cultural elements, less visible than the ruins but equally significant, developed during the important formative sixteenth century are evident today. Anthropological interest in the process of the transplantation of the Spanish culture to the New World and its accommodation to the indigenous population prompted me to establish a program for research in which the methods of ethnohistory, archaeology, and ethnography could be combined to provide a total, unified picture of the origin and growth of the Colonial urban society of Antigua.* At this point in our research we can only discuss some preliminary results of the studies underway and suggest the areas in which our future work will be concentrated.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

What kind of image does the anthropologist receive of Antigua from the chronicles and documents? Although one finds a very complicated picture of a developing city, the main lines of this development are clearly visible. When Pedro de Alvarado invaded Guatemala in 1524-1525, he

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Antigua and Volcán de Agua. The first Spanish capital, Ciudad Vieja, was located about three miles from Antigua on the northwest slope of this volcano, at an altitude of 5000 feet.



Temple 3 in Plaza A at Iximché. Situated at an altitude of 2260 meters, this center was the capital and court of the Cakchiquel nation. Pedro de Alvarado established his first headquarters here.

established his first capital at Iximché, the Maya Cakchiquel Indian political-religious center near present-day Tecpan. A short time later he moved the provincial capital to the valley of Panchoy in a place now known as Ciudad Vieja. The year 1541, which saw Alvarado's death, also saw the end of his city. A mud slide caused by heavy rains in September of that year buried part of the

city and some of its inhabitants. Several months later the survivors founded a new city, not too distant from the old, and they employed the services of the Italian architect, Juan Bautista Antonelli to plan the new provincial capital, Santiago de los Caballeros, now known as Antigua.

For the previous fifteen years the Spaniards had been busy pacifying the countryside, and by



Map of Antigua, 1773. The city had expanded beyond the original plan, particularly in the northeast and western sections and had approximately 15,000 inhabitants.

MAP COURTESY OF THE DURAN FAMILY, ANTIGUA.



Dr. Reina (left) and Father O'Flaherty studying a microfilm document from the archives in Seville.

the time Antonelli was laying out the grid pattern of the new city, most of highland Guatemala had come under Spanish control. The conquistadores then laid down their swords and picked up, not their plowshares, but their *repartimientos* (land and Indians granted in trust for use by the colonists). Not all the conquistadores shared equally in the profits of war; some were left penniless, some went off to Peru, while others received the potentially profitable tracts of land for exploitation. An aristocracy, in fact if not in title, came into existence. Those who succeeded in getting and holding on to *repartimientos* formed the upper class of a developing society centered in Antigua. When the *Audiencia* was established there in 1548,



The Church of Las Capuchinas Convent, finished in 1736. Most of the impressive churches in Antigua are in similar condition, open to the sky, but with the sturdy walls still standing.

the officials of this administrative body brought in members of the Spanish educated class. Craftsmen also came from Spain to build the new city and finally a labor force was created from the Indian population through the *encomienda* system by which native labor was assigned by Royal decree.

When the first Audiencia of Central America was established in 1543, it was located at Gracias a Dios in Honduras, founded a few years before. But Gracias a Dios was inconveniently located and in 1548 the royal officials moved to Santiago. The capital of the province of Guatemala now became an important city of New Spain. The needs of the developing capital required certain innovations. Antigua was relatively isolated in the highlands of Guatemala; Atlantic trade with Spain was constant but slow. Traffic with the mother country had to pass through Vera Cruz in Mexico and Puerto Caballos in Honduras. Clothing, cooking utensils, furniture, and other necessary articles could have been supplied by Spain but only with great delay, uncertainty, and considerable cost. As a consequence of slow communication and increased demands, much material now had to be made by local industry. Thus Spanish technology was diffused and an innovative force in the arts and the crafts created.

During this time not only were the Spaniards strengthening their political and economic hold on the countryside, but they were also pursuing the spiritual conquest of the people and their control over the province of Guatemala. In the decade following the foundation of the new city, friars of the Dominican, Franciscan, and Mercedarian orders established houses in the capital and *Doctrinas* (centers for evangelization) elsewhere in the province. The importance of the friars should not be underestimated, for besides bringing a new ideology to the Indians, in many cases they served as their defenders. The Dominicans especially were responsible for the abolition of Indian slavery and for the pacification of the province of Verapaz, which the Spaniards had tried unsuccessfully to subdue by force of arms. The monasteries in Antigua became schools for the Indians where they learned not only Christian doctrine but also Spanish civilized ways and technology. Indians were in the employ of the monks as well as of the craftsmen of the city. Consequently, the influence of the religious orders touched all levels of Guatemala society from the top administrator to the lowliest Indian. They, perhaps more than any other group, served as the middlemen in the transfer and accommodation of the spiritual as well of the material culture, and the principal center for this transfer was Antigua.



In the streets of Antigua the tinker shows his adeptness working with metals. Indian women in the nearby towns produce pottery without the wheel and weave with the hand loom.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

For the anthropologist, however, transfer is too simple a term. Complete or even partial replacement of cultural traditions is not easily effected, not even when the means are as forcible as conquest. Innovation does come initially from the conquest culture, but once immediate decisions

have been made and a framework for the new situation has been established, innovations tend to become conventionalized. Whether geographic isolation provided the pressure, or the expediency of institutionalizing economic and religious traditions set the tone (or a combination of both), life



Annette Weiner directed the crew of Antiguëños in digging and sorting the thousands of sherds found in the various pits. The courtyard of Las Capuchinas Convent served as laboratory for the team.



in Antigua quickly developed its own unique patterns that became a model for replication by subsequent generations.

What a laboratory Antigua would have provided a sixteenth century ethnographer! Imagine the opportunity to have stood in the central plaza

Indian families live today in the nave of the Church of Santo Domingo. Among these sixteenth century buildings, Mrs. Weiner conducted an intensive archaeological survey. The photographs on pages 25 and 26 illustrate the variety of artifacts that were uncovered.



and to have observed the construction of a city, to have seen the old Roman grid system spread out on the plain 5000 feet above sea level at the foot of the great Volcán de Agua, to have explored the influence that radiated into the city from the monasteries and convents that anchored its limits, to have watched the Indians travel down the steep mountain paths leaving their villages for their new role in, yet distinctively apart from, the hastily-forming Spanish city. Although documents describe these events and tell of the decisions made, the descriptions were not written from an anthropological point of reference, and therefore in order to understand the dynamics of the birth of this new city, another procedure in addition to the archival work is needed to help us interpret the behavioral dimensions that provided the cultural model for the centuries which followed.

Religious site. With this objective, we undertook archaeological excavations in Antigua in the summer of 1969. Although analysis of this material has only just begun, a preliminary survey of some of the excavations can help to illustrate the technology that existed in Antigua during the Colonial period.

We learn from the Acts of the Cabildo that in 1542 the municipal government assigned an area in the northeastern part of the city to the friars of the Order of Santo Domingo, and by the next year Friar Pedro de Angulo had petitioned the government for four additional building sites so that the Order could build the most magnificent edifice possible. In this, the Dominicans were completely successful, for according to the accounts of both historians and travelers, Santo

Domingo became the most extensive monastery in the city.

Sadly, the majesty of the great towers of Santo Domingo rising above the city and the brilliance of the elaborately decorated altars and chapels can now only be glimpsed through a line here and there in the documents. Although a series of earthquakes throughout the eighteenth century caused considerable damage to the religious structures, it was the earthquake of 1773 (the effects of which caused the capital itself to be moved to its present location, Guatemala City) which left Santo Domingo in ruins.

Today, only some walls and piles of stones remain, but many of these walls are still in use. Lower-class families of Ladino and Indian descent live amongst the ruins, probably much as they did after the earthquake, often incorporating a Dominican stone wall into part of their own house structure. On our first visit to this site, many of these people brought out pieces of religious sculpture and pottery they had found in the area. Our own subsequent surface collection produced a variety and abundance of sherds. The presence of these artifacts together with the fact that Santo Domingo was one of the earliest monasteries in Antigua suggested that this would be a most appropriate place to begin archaeological excavations.

In the interior side of one of the few remaining monastery walls, we discovered a narrow space 1.25 x 3.00 meters (about 4 x 10 feet). Although the original function of this small room remains unknown, pending further soil and architectural analysis, the top layer indicated that this had been a refuse pit. The surface was packed with trash



Carved stone face of a nun from the surface collection.



Grey and green glazed plate with a Dominican monograph in brown.

debris: stones and rocks from the convent walls, pieces of rusted metal and tin cans, and potsherds of green and yellow ware. It is interesting to note that this well-known Antigua-ware pottery was produced by at least six *fábricas* during the Colonial period; today, only one family has preserved this tradition.

The levels below 20 cm. of the trash pit produced examples of other ceramic types illustrating the mixture of locally produced and Spanish material. The monks had ordered ceramic ware for monastery use either from their own craftsmen or from native workers trained in the Spanish tradition. Plates and bowls were monogrammed with the letters "D" identifying Dominican use. (In excavations at the Franciscan Monastery nearby,

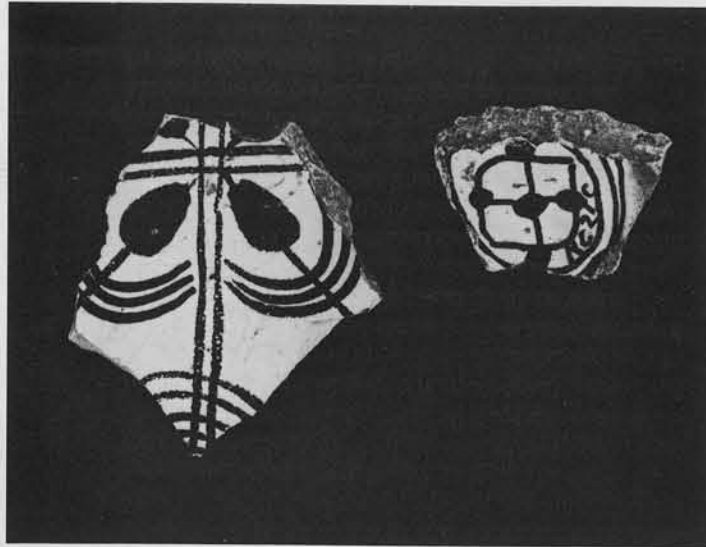
we found identical pottery painted with the letter "F".)

For a depth of 1.20 meters the trash pit at Santo Domingo continued to produce a vast amount of pottery from the Colonial period. In addition to the ceramics described, pieces of majolica were also found. Majolica is distinguishable from other pottery by the use of a lead glaze to which tin oxide has been added. This material is applied to the surface in the same manner as regular glaze, but the tin oxide produces an opaque covering.

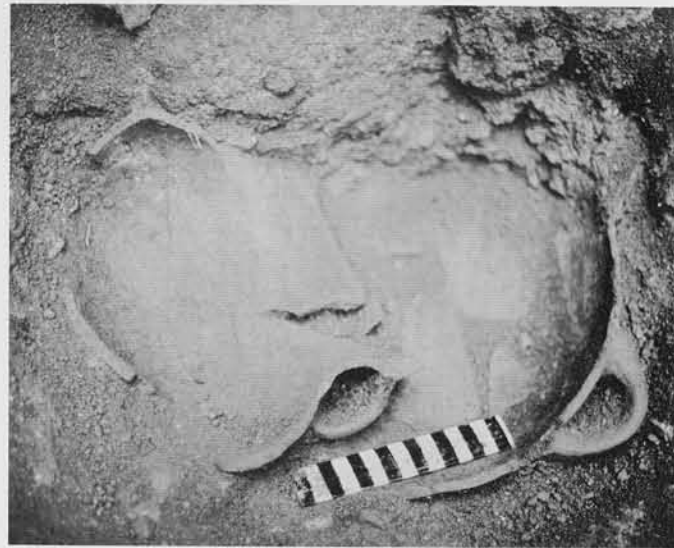
John M. Goggin, prior to his death in 1963, had undertaken an intensive study of Spanish majolica in Mexico and in the Caribbean. From Goggin's work it was apparent that our majolica



In the trash pit, a glazed grey jar and small cup were found along with fragments of a blue and white bowl.



An example of majolica pottery. "Puebla Polychrome" potsherds were found in the control pit outside the walls of Santo Domingo.

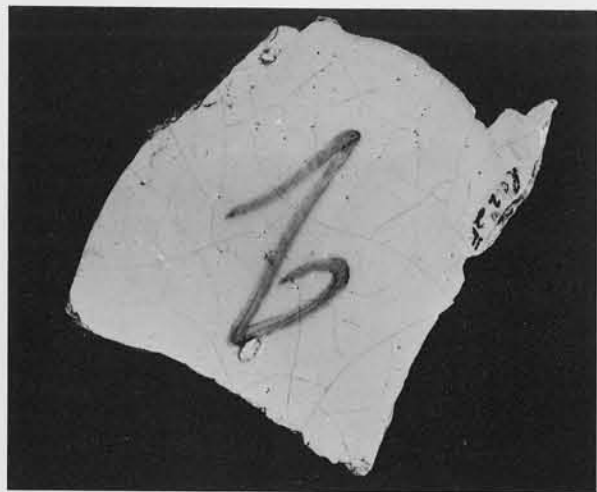


Mica-tempered pottery in situ at a depth of 2.2 meters.

samples had had a long and diversified history. According to Goggin, the technique of tin-enamelled ware was originally practiced in the eastern Mediterranean prior to the Christian era, where it became an important ceramic tradition. Its presence in Spain has been attributed to Moslem invaders who brought this technique from the Mediterranean. For five hundred years majolica was produced in Spain, and then in the sixteenth century, a new style of tin-enamelled ware was introduced from Italy. During the Renaissance Italian majolica potters had developed the use of elaborate styles and colors. It was this new technology in combination with the original Moorish influence that flourished among the potters of Talavera de la Reina, Spain. With the conquest of the New

World, Spanish majolica traveled and influenced yet another ceramic center. Puebla, a town southeast of Mexico City, became an important area for the production of this pottery, and sherds representative of Puebla Polychrome and Abó Polychrome (both examples of Spanish majolica manufactured in Puebla) were found in the Santo Domingo refuse pit.

In the hope of obtaining stratigraphic control of the pottery from the trash pit, we dug a test pit along the outside wall measuring approximately 2 x 4 meters. We continued excavation in twenty-centimeter levels, and in the third level potsherds of the monogrammed Dominican ware appeared. At a depth of 80 cm. the area was covered with a layer of *ripio* (building debris) which continued



Another example of majolica, obverse and reverse. A potter's mark is commonly found on this type of pottery.



In the Farrington site, one of the few walls left standing is an arched entranceway. The molded plaster decorations indicate the wealth and splendor of its seventeenth century builders, the Gálvez family.

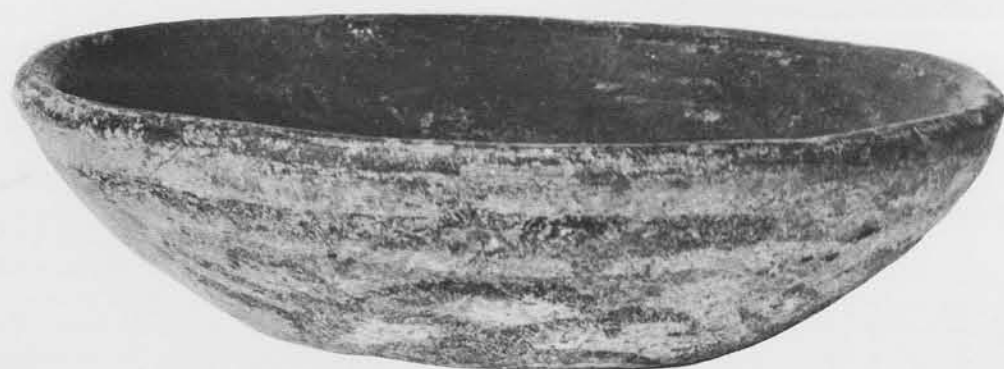
for an additional 64 cm. When the *ripio* had been cleared away, further digging produced great quantities of utilitarian redware and blackware pottery directly under a layer of charcoal. The next 30 cm. level was filled throughout with whole or nearly complete clay pots, flat plates, pieces of stone *manos* and clay bowls of various sizes and shapes.

Although analysis of this pottery has not yet begun, the superficial characteristics indicate that this was a special find. The pottery was very finely made and the shapes as well as the use of micaeous material all strongly suggest that this pottery is of another tradition, perhaps of a pre-Conquest period. The material collected in both pits at Santo Domingo, therefore, seems to give us a fairly good sequence of pottery produced in and imported to Antigua during a period of at least 400

years. Nowhere in the other fifteen test pits dug last summer, was there any evidence of this kind of ceramic.

Domestic Site. Last summer's field work did not, however, focus only on religious sites. It was felt that even an initial survey would not be complete without some comparative information from domestic areas. Therefore, in addition to three monastic buildings, Santo Domingo, San Francisco, and Las Capuchinas, several domestic sites were surveyed.

During the seventeenth century, the northern limits of the city became a very fashionable district in which to live. Beautiful homes were built along the Platerias Alameda de Santa Rosa. One of these palatial mansions was built by Bartolomé de Gálvez y Corral, a nobleman from Seville, Spain.



In the back patio of the Gálvez mansion, Dr. Reina uncovered many cajetas in one pit. These small bowls measure 15 cm. in diameter and are completely decorated on the bottom and sides with a deep red and brown color.



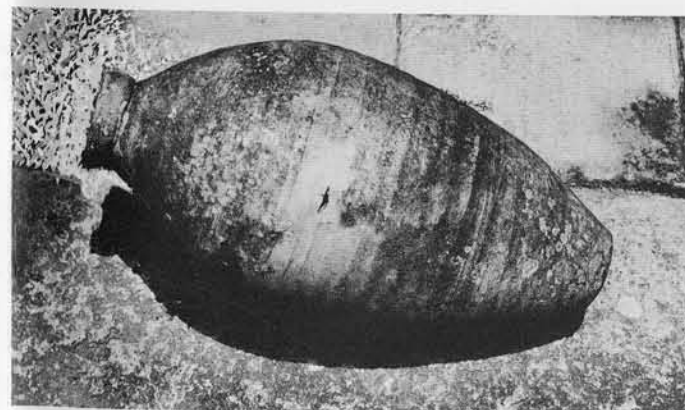
The Gálvez estate has long since crumbled, leaving only walls, doorways, and arches scattered about the property. With the permission of the present owner, Mr. Charles Farrington, we dug four test pits in the original kitchen and dining areas and located one pit along the most northern edge of the property away from any architectural remains.

Our hopes of finding artifacts that would reveal the elegant style of the seventeenth century elite class were dissipated when it became apparent that most of the pits within the interior of the house showed evidence of intrusion. (The present day folklore is that the lure of buried treasure had attracted many secret digging expeditions to the Gálvez mansion.)

There were, however, places under floors or under wall foundations where undisturbed material was found. The assemblages from these strata included obsidian blades, *manos*, crudely made red clay animal figurines, utilitarian Chinautla pottery and painted *cajetas*. Many of the *cajetas* were found unbroken and two were found filled with pieces of charcoal, soil, and the skull bones of small birds or chickens. The Indian-type assemblages that were found beneath the construction of the house and in the pit which was dug away from the house seem to indicate that prior to the development of this wealthy suburb, Indians lived in the area. Also, archival documents allude to an Indian market one block further on the Platerias



After many generations, Antigua continues to be a pottery center of great importance in the market system of Guatemala.



Decorating the gardens of many Antigueño houses are Spanish olive and wine jars like the one pictured here. A great number of sherds from jars of this type were found in most of the excavations.

Alameda de Santa Rosa and to *barrios* settled by Indians.

The most significant aspect of this domestic site is the abundance of *cajetas* of a ware which Edwin M. Shook has named "Chinaulta Polychrome." Although we have found *cajetas* in the context of the Colonial time period, they have previously been found in pre-Conquest sites in the central and southern Highlands. The fact that the ceramic assemblages in Farrington's property are different from those of Santo Domingo, together with the fact that the northern edge of Antigua was originally an Indian *barrio* during the sixteenth century, seems to suggest the stability and continuity of Indian technology into the Colonial period.

CONCLUSION

The excavations in Antigua and the work in the Archivo de Indias in Seville have produced preliminary results by confronting us with the basic processes of a colonial society in its formative period. Many questions have been raised regarding selection, adoption, and adjustments of both Indian and Spanish culture elements. It is evident that in order to understand what took place in Antigua, every aspect of socio-cultural life must be studied. The immediate data point out the significant role of the Religious Order upon technology and the role of the markets and trading routes in the economic system of Antigua and in its relation with New Spain and the Iberian peninsula. These data also provide an orientation of the social class and ethnic distinction as a principle for the organization of an urban society.

Why is this relevant and important in the context of Guatemala today? From the early part of the century, archaeologists have exclusively concentrated their efforts in pre-hispanic sites for the understanding of Mayan cultures, while ethnographers have been studying contemporary villages and pueblos for the understanding of Guatemalan culture. The absence of ethnohistorical studies and historical archaeological research prevents us from furthering our understanding of the continuing processes of culture change through the centuries. Not only does the ethnographer need the ethnohistorical background for theoretical reasons, but archaeologists need a reality of recorded history for testing the criteria of classifications. In Antigua we have a complete laboratory which can take us from the pre-Colonial through the Colonial period into the present without measurable breakdowns. Antigua thus provides a reality seldom found by anthropologists who truly need in this way to understand man's accommodation to his environment as he develops a cultural system which will allow him predictability and survival.

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RUBEN E. REINA has been associated with the Anthropology Department and University Museum since 1957 and is presently Professor of Anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania and Curator of Latin American Ethnology in the Museum. His research has taken him from Argentina to Guatemala and more recently to Spain. His Law of the Saints, a study of a group of Maya Indians in Guatemala, is one of his many contributions to the ethnography of that country. Presently he is directing operations of the Hispanic American Research Project, sponsored by the American Philosophical Society and the University Museum.

ANNETTE WEINER received her B.A. from the University of Pennsylvania (1968) and is currently pursuing her doctoral studies in anthropology at Bryn Mawr College. Mrs. Weiner participated in the expedition to Antigua last summer and as co-director of the archaeological investigation, contributed the archaeological section in this article. She will continue her work in Antigua during the coming summer. The convent of Santo Domingo will be the subject of Mrs. Weiner's dissertation.

EDWARD O'FLAHERTY, S.J. received his M.A. in anthropology from the University of Pennsylvania (1964) and is currently a Ph.D. candidate in the University's Anthropology Department. Fr. O'Flaherty spent the academic year 1968-69 in Seville, Spain, pursuing ethnohistorical research at the Archives of the Indies. He is preparing his doctoral dissertation on the role of the Church in the development of 16th century Guatemala, and co-directing the ethnohistorical section of the Hispanic American Research Project.
