

GUATEMALAN CATHEDRAL ARCHIVES

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The Archivo de la Curia in Guatemala City is a very rich depository, but because of limited accessibility scholars have not been able to utilize the resource adequately. From 1959–1960 I was fortunate to use the collection under a Smith–Mundt Student Exchange grant. A second opportunity arrived in August of 1977 to revisit the archive (1). These visits provide the basis for a survey of the contents of the collection and some practical advice to scholars who may be interested in utilizing this depository.

The depository is located in the *palacio arzobispal* next to the cathedral. It consists of two small rooms, one of which houses colonial documents and the other contains national period sources. Near the depository, another room is available for the researcher. On my first visit to the collection, permission was granted to work in the depository rooms, but present policy requires the investigator to use the office room for consultation of documents. This means that the researcher will request the desired documents which the archivist will bring to him/her in the research office.

Since research no longer is permitted in the depository rooms, indexes and guides are indispensable to facilitate the search for desired materials. The collection is very well organized and certain sections of the collection contain their own index. Even where no index is available for a specific section, the material is chronologically filed so that it is very convenient to utilize. For instance, the largest collection containing marriage records covers the period from 1670–1977. All the *tomos* are arranged in chronological order and therefore the researcher can quickly select the needed *tomo(s)*. In the case where sections are indexed, the investigador will find a very convenient system for locating needed documents. Such was the case for my research on the church and state from 1871 to 1885. An example of an index

entry in this area reads as follows: “Doc. No. 427, August 16, 1871—Copia de un oficio al Presidente Provisorio, acerca de la expulsión de los PP. Jesuítas del país”. Unfortunately, not all sections are indexed, but even those that are, do not always carry such detailed annotations as the one cited.

In view of the fact that El Salvador until 1842 belonged to the diocese of Guatemala, the collection also houses documents from that republic. On the other hand, the area of Peten was under the ecclesiastical administration of the bishop of Yucatán until 1863, when it became part of the archdiocese of Guatemala. Lastly, it must be borne in mind that Guatemala remained intact as an archdiocese until 1921 when the diocese of Quetzaltenango was formed. This fact makes the collection a central gathering place for Guatemalan Church records to that date.

The following resume will give the reader some idea as to both the size of the depository and the type of contents. In the section devoted specifically to colonial topics, the following bear mentioning: twenty–six *tomos* on religious congregations 44 *legajos* of parish records; Church records treating clerical licenses and dispensations; royal decrees (1539–1821); 63 vols. of *diezmo* records (1675–1820); four *legajos* of *limpieza de sangre* (1780–1807); census records of 285 pueblos (1803–1813); two volumes of pontificals (1595); one volume of records covering chaplaincies, convents, ecclesiastical courts, slaves, last wills and testaments, correspondence, ecclesiastical statutes, *confradías*, civil government affairs, Church inventories and clerical census data (1620–1821) and several *tomos* of *actas capitulares*, which currently are closed to the public with the exception of *tomos* one and five. The *actas* are the official minutes of the ecclesiastical cabildo. The first *tomo* treats the founding of Antigua and the fifth one, the transfer of the colonial headquarters from Antigua to Guatemala City.

In the national section can be found the Larrazábal collection which consists of 68 tomos of ecclesiastical and civil edicts from 1808 to 1848. In addition there are 10 *tomos* of vicar reports from various pueblos from 1844–1854. The most interesting and significant collection for this period is the official and private correspondence collection, which is very well indexed and consists of 298 *legajos* from 1821 to 1913.

A third category includes documents relating to both the colonial and national era. Here can be located 17 volumes of seminary census data for the year 1600 to 1807 as well as other seminary records for the period from 1740 to 1853. Other collections are 57 *tomos* of pastoral visits (1670–1916) and 143 *legajos* of confirmation records. The largest collection records. The largest collection is the 601 *legajos* of marriage records (1670–1977).

In addition there are a few miscellaneous items such as a collection of rare books containing baptismal, marriage and burial records for the colonial era. A most interesting work is a handwritten biography of an early 19th century nun. The handwriting is a work of art.

During my 1977 visit, I also noted a collection of colonial musical compositions. The archivist indicated that this was a recent find and was in the process of being identified and indexed. It will eventually be housed in the music depository section of the Archivo de la Curia (2).

During the late 1960's Mario Cardinal Casariego adopted needed tighter security measures, including the prohibition against microfilming, photographing and xeroxing. Such was not the policy of his predecessor, Archbishop Mariano Rossell y Arellano, whose hope was to have the entire collection microfilmed for better preservation. To implement the tighter security policy the cardinal appointed Agustín Estrada Monroy as archivist. It is a non-salaried position and this fact can cause inconveniences to the researcher since the archivist is not always in the archive at the appointed hours. It is recommended that a person desiring to utilize the collection first contact Mr. Estrada Monroy at the following address: 2a Calle 7–74, zona 9, Guatemala. His telephone number is 31–53–80. At the same time a letter of introduction to the cardinal can help in expediting matters.

The announced schedule for work in the depository is as follows: Monday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 12; and Monday through Friday 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. The exception is Thursday when the

depository is closed. Due to other commitments, the archivist is not always available during these times without prior appointment. Furthermore the work schedule is subject to change due to religious and civic holidays, as well as seasonal celebrations such as the Christmas holidays through January 6, the feast of the epiphany.

Although not part of the Archivo de la Curia, there is a useful but small depository of less than a hundred *legajos* or volumes in the rectory of the cathedral, known as the Archivo de la Parroquia de Sagrario (3). Permission to use the archive can be sought from Rev. Edgar J. Castro Pineda, who serves both in the capacity of rector of the cathedral and chancellor of the Archdiocese of Guatemala. He can be reached in the chancellor's office in the *palacio arzobispal* on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday from 9 a.m. to noon. One must submit a letter of introduction and an explanation of one's project. At the first meeting, an appointment to begin actual work in the archive can be made. Rev. Castro will also prove helpful in explaining the organization of the archive.

The documents in the collection are shelved in either large *legajos* or bound volumes according to subject matter and year. Each *legajos* or volume has a number by which it may be cited. The various classifications consist of *bautismos* (including both *españoles* and *gente ordinario*), *matrimonios*, *defunciones*, *entierros*, *padrones*, *archcofradía* and *ynventarios*. The time period covered ranges from the 17th century to the 19th and mainly concerns the daily life in the cathedral parish. Obviously some of the information in this collection is a duplication of what can be found in the Archivo de la Curia, such as vital statistics and inventories of cathedral property.

The parish archive can serve a variety of scholars. Genealogists will be interested in the *legajos* or volumes containing *bautismos*, *matrimonios*, and *defunciones*. Demographers may profitably utilize the *entierros* since the cause of death is often given in addition to other vital statistics. Particularly valuable in this respect is volume 14, *Libros de entierros de la parroquia rectoral de Sagrario desde el año de 1816 hasta el de 1870*. A word of caution, however, is in order since the judgment on the cause of death was not always rendered by an expert. Similarly art historians will find the *ynventarios*, as well as *archcofradía* volumes, helpful in shedding light on the artistic treasures of the Cathedral. Music historians will discover excel-

NOTES

lent information to supplement the music holdings of the Archivo Musical de la Catedral and the Museo de Arte Religioso in the same volumes. Especially valuable is tomo 13, *Ynventario de las alajas de Sacristia* (dated September 15, 1704) and tomo 63 which contains *archcofradia* documents from the second half of the 18th century. The versatility of the collection is attested to in the five large *archcofradia* volumes, which span more than two hundred years and illuminate topics such as ceremonial life and the organizations land holdings in Chiquimulilla.

Unfortunately no xerox copying services are available in the cathedral parish archive. However, permission can be obtained to do photographs.

In summation the Archivo de la Curia is extremely valuable not only for national Church history but also for many other aspects of Gutemalan history. In addition the cathedral parish archive can provide helpful sources for the study of cathedral activities and the people who worshipped there. Scholars utilizing these collections can expect great rewards for their efforts.

(1). Special recognition is in order for Dr. Arnulfo Martínez, director of the Division of Inter-American Affairs and International Education at Pan American University, who helped me obtain a grant from the committee on International Education of the Border States University Consortium on Latin America. At the same time a word of gratitude belongs to Mario Cardinal Casariego and the Archivist Agustín Estrada Monroy, whose help greatly facilitated my work. Last but not least, my graduate student, Armando Alonzo, deserves recognition for his help in surveying the collection.

(2). The reader who may wish to have more information on the music collection is advised to consult Robert Stevenson, *Renaissance and Baroque Musical Sources in the Americas*, (Washington: General Secretariat, Organization of the American States, 1970), 50-64. Unfortunately the section treating Guatemala is out of date due to recent finds. According to Alfred Lemmon, a doctoral candidate at Tulane University, who has utilized the collection recently, several items have changed since Mr. Stevenson wrote his description. First the location of the archive has changed and secondly the division of the Archivo Musical into more than one section. For instance, the 16th century volumes are now kept with the Museo del Arte Religioso whereas the other volumes are kept with Archivo Musical proper.

(3). Again I am very much indebted to Mr. Lemmon for this on the Archivo de la Parroquia del Sagrario.