Juan Luis Burke Roco

University of Maryland,
College Park

Classicism at the Empire's Fringes: Trans-Atlantic and Mediterranean Architecture of the Sixteenth Century in Extremadura, New Spain, and Sardinia

The Reception of Classical Architecture in the Provincial Realms of the Spanish Monarchy

Architectural theory and practice have generally been shaped by the trends and sways that take place in major urban centers, which are usually the sites of innovations in architectural practice. This was true during Emperor Charles V's reign (1516-1556), where, in Spain, the most important towns, those that hosted the itinerant royal court and those that were seats of religious and economic power, such as Toledo, Seville, Valladolid, Segovia, or Santiago, or university cities, like Salamanca or Alcalá de Henares, shaped the monarchy's architectural tastes. Unsurprisingly, these were the places where architectural treatises were first translated and diffused to a learned public. Turning away from those urban centers, this essay will discuss how architectural classicism was adopted at the fringes of Charles V's empire. Namely, the province of Extremadura in the southwest of the Iberian Peninsula, bordering Portugal; the central regions of New Spain (colonial Mexico); and the island of Sardinia, in the heart of the Mediterranean. The choice of these regions is not gratuitous. Their provincial and peripheral condition provide points of comparison, making them a relevant and valuable choice when investigating how architectural theories and practices traveled and were adopted in the early modern Spanish empire.

The discussion will first establish the circumstances under which classicism was adopted under Charles V's reign, highlighting the role he played in making classicism the architectural choice of the nascent

global Spanish empire. It will then briefly explain how classicism arrived and was adopted in these three provincial regions of the empire, thereby drawing a series of conclusions based on their comparison. The objective is to decenter the usual urban seats of power as protagonists of the early modern Spanish empire's architectural history, revealing instead the context in which architecture served to fulfill local and global political and social agendas, in the provincial realms of the Spanish Empire.

Extremadura is a landlocked region of Spain that, despite its relative proximity to the centers of power in Castile, was relegated and economically under-developed during the early modern era. Across the Atlantic, the central regions of New Spain were undergoing an intense process of Spanish coloni-zation during Charles V's era, and it is relevant to point out that Extremaduran migrants played a relevant role in New Spain's colonization[1]. On the other fringe of the empire, the island of Sardinia, which was incorporated into the Spanish monarchy in the late fifteenth century, was the object of important political, social, and cultural influences from Aragon and Castile, which shaped its archi-tectural traditions in the early modern era. These three regions, all under different but also similar situations, will receive and integrate architectural classicism in distinct ways, revealing the mechanisms by which architectural ideas and theories traveled during the sixteenth century in the Hispanic Trans-Atlantic and Mediterranean spheres. Further, the essay sheds light on the reasons for adopting a novel architectural language that connected people, institutions, and geographies across Charles V's monarchy.

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[1] See Chapters V and VI in Altman's book for further info on the migration of Extremeños to the New World in the sixteenth century. I. ALTMAN, *Emigrants and Society: Extremadura and Spanish America in the Sixteenth Century*, University of Califor-nia Press, Berkeley, 1989, pp. 165 and ss.

Charles V's rule played a fundamental role in placing the classical or *all'antica* vocabulary as a relevant means for expressing the power of empire. Charles was known, after all, for having carefully articulated his imperial figure in the visual arts (the most notorious examples of his royal image were crafted by Titian in several portraits), and his interest in architecture as part of his empire's image has also been corroborated[2]. Charles V's reign thus witnessed the emergence of classicism as the architectural language that would represent the Spanish Monarchy globally. Between 1533, when the works at his palace at Granada commenced, and by the latter half of the century, during Charles' reign, architectural classicism had reached Extremadura, New Spain, and southern Italy alike. Charles V played a critical role in enthroning classicism as the choice architectural language for his empire – even though the continuator of this project will be his son, King Philip II[3]. However, it was Charles who recognized classicism's associations with images of imperial power and began promoting an architectural building campaign for his monarchy[4].

Nonetheless, the road to the adoption of classicism was far from straightforward. The first quarter of the sixteenth century was characterized by what Nieto

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[2] W. Eisler, *The Impact of the Emperor Charles V upon the Italian Visual Culture 1529-1533*, in «Arte Lombarda», Nuova Serie, no. 65 (2), 1983, p. 94.

[3] F. Checa, A. Morales J., and V. Nieto, *Arquitectura del Renacimiento en España. 1488-1599*, Manuales de Arte, Cátedra, Madrid, 2009, p. 99.

[4] Checa points to 1537 as a key year in which Charles takes the decision to provide the monarchy's architectural works with a sense of professionalization and decorum. Although Checa recognizes that eclecticism is the norm among architectural works around those years, the key architects employed by the monarchy at that time, such as Alonso de Covarrubias, Luis and Gaspar de Vega, or Francisco de Villalpando, will consider Classicism as their chief architectural orientation. See: F. Checa, *Felipe II: Mecenas del Arte*, Madrid, Editorial Nerea, 1992, p. 32.

et al. termed «indefinición estilística», or stylistic indetermination, a period marked by a series of differing architectural vocabularies coexisting in the architectural culture of the era. The Mudéjar and Flemish elements, together with the ubiquitous and persisting Gothic, freely coexisted and became imbricated with other styles, sometimes merging in what historians will later label as Plateresque[5]. But a pivotal point in the adoption of classical architecture as part of the imperial image during Charles' reign, came with the appointment of two prominent master builders, Alonso de Covarrubias and Luis de Vega, to oversee the *Obras Reales* or Royal Works in 1533, followed by the creation of the *Juntas de Obras y Bosques* or the Committees of Works and Parks in 1545. The decision to create these royal offices led to the first attempts at defining a royal architectural identity[6]. The creation of the Royal Works was accompanied by the eventual decisions to remodel the Alcázar de Toledo, the Alcázar de Madrid, and the design of the Palace of Granada in the heart of the Nasrid fortress of Alhambra, whose design began in 1526[7]. The symbolic power of inserting an Italianate palace that closely followed the latest mannerist fashions cannot be overstated[8].

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[5] Even before Charles' tenure, architecture and interior decoration works carried out during the reign of the Catholic Monarchs, hybridity in Spanish architecture was the norm, with works manifesting Mudéjar traits that merged with proto-renaissance ones, as in in the chapterhouse at Toledo cathedral, or the College of San Ildefonso, at Alcalá de Henares. Later, when Charles is crowned, Plateresque works will become common. Examples are found in the gate of San Esteban and at the gate of Ramos, both at the new cathedral of Salamanca carried out during the 1520s or the famous façade of the University of Salamanca (1529).

[6] F. CHECA, *Felipe II: Mecenas del Arte,* Editorial Nerea, Madrid, 1992, pp. 32–33.

[7] E. ROSENTHAL, *The Palace of Charles V in Granada,* Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J., 1985, pp. 3-7.

[8] *Ivi*, pp. xv-xvi, 3-4.

This landmark became the motif of the Spanish Monarchy's adoption of classical language. From then on, the path taken by classicism in the empire differed depending on various local circumstances, as will be seen in the three case studies to follow.

Extremadura

The Province of Extremadura, in southwestern Spain, is crisscrossed by mountainous ranges and valleys of low tree groves of oaks and olive fields, which coexist with livestock grazing land (an antique farmland system called *dehesa*, in Spanish). The province acquired its present borders sometime in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries through a long process of delimiting and establishing political boundaries during the Spanish medieval era[9]. It will be until the first decades of the sixteenth century that Extremadura will start to be considered a unified province[10]. Its very name, with the particle *extrema*, points to its border condition, both with Portugal to the west and, during the medieval period, with the fluctuating borders with the Islamic kingdoms to the south[11]. Its condition as a border-land, its geographic remoteness, and its landlocked situation hindered it from being part of important trade routes or from developing urban centers with wealthy local economies or influential political power. Since its remote past, Extremadura has been an impoverished province where a small elite reaped most of the benefits from the region's livestock

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[9] G. MARTÍNEZ DÍEZ, *Extremadura: Origen del nombre y Formación de las Dos Provincias*, «Anuario de la Facultad de Derecho. Universidad de Extremadura», no. 2, 1983, pp. 82-84.

[10] M.A. LADERO QUESADA, *Las Regiones Históricas y Su Articulación Política En La Corona de Castilla Durante La Baja Edad Media*, «En La España Medieval», no. 15, 1992, pp. 237-239.

[11] Á. RODRÍGUEZ SÁNCHEZ, *Introducción a la Historia de Extremadura*, «Boletín AEPE», VIII, no. 15, October 1976, pp. 66-68.

farming and agricultural industries[12].

The Extremaduran elite invested in lavish architecture, and the people's entrenched piousness gave the province a generous amount of religious architecture[13]. The way that classical architecture is introduced in Extremadura is documented in buildings, both civic and religious, remodeled, adapted, or expanded in the sixteenth century. The introduction of the renaissance tradition in Extremadura was slowed by the long and rich Gothic craftsmanship present in the region[14]. As elsewhere in Castile and Aragon, the Gothic architectural culture ran so deep that the change of vocabulary into classicism is protracted and hybridized with Gothic, Mudéjar, or Plateresque elements. To this effect, the presence of architectural treatises in Extremadura, as elsewhere in the Iberian Peninsula, helped to promote the architectural vocabularies of classicism[15].

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[12] Rodríguez Sánchez, *Introducción a la Historia de Extremadura,* cit., pp. 67-70.

[13] *Ivi,* p. 69; M. del Mar Lozano Bartolozzi, *Urbanismo Histórico de Cáceres*, «Boletín AEPE», n.d., pp. 58-59.

[14] F. Sanz Fernández, *La influencia de los tratados de montea y cortes de piedra en la arquitectura extremeña del Renacimiento*, «Boletín de Arte», no. 30–31, 2010, pp. 123–145, <https://doi.org/10.24310/BoLArte.2010.v0i30-31.4368>; F.M. Sánchez Lomba, *Arquitectura del Renacimiento en Extremadura*, «Norba: Revista de arte», no. 8, 1988, pp. 71-76.

[15] Vitruvius, for starters, had enjoyed popularity since the fifteenth century in Spain. The printing of Diego de Sagredo's *Medidas del Romano* (1526) and of Serlio's *Third and Fourth Books on Architecture*, translated by Francisco de Villalpando into Spanish in 1552, during Charles V's reign, will enhance classicism's popularity in the Iberian Peninsula too. Later, the translation of Vitruvius by Lázaro de Velasco (1564) and Miguel Urrea's translation (1582), followed by other treatises and their translations throughout the second half of the sixteenth century, cemented the desire, particularly by the civic and religious elite, of adopting a classical vocabulary. See: F. Marías, *Vitruvius Edition of 1582 by Miguel de Urrea in Spanish*, in *Architectura - Les Livres d'Architecture*, 2012, <http://architectura.cesr.univ-tours.fr/traite/Notice/Urrea1582.asp?param=en>; F.J. Pizarro

A period of economic boom and demographic growth in Extremadura coincided with the turn of the sixteenth century and ended in the 1560s; this period will see intensified construction activities in the province[16]. Works at the new Plasencia Cathedral are evocative of that moment, namely the main façade by Juan de Álava and Gil de Hontañón (*ca.* 1558) (fig. 1), and the lateral façade by Diego de Siloé (*ca.* 1538-1548). Both are examples of a Plateresque-classical design articulated by a simple syntax of classical elements. Many years earlier, in the Monastery of Guadalupe, Alonso de Covarrubias (1488-1570), a famous architect from Toledo, anticipated the arrival of the *estilo romano* to Extremadura when he designed *ca.* 1537, a double Roman arched and pedimented interior gate. Richly ornamented with putti and floral motifs, the intrados of the arches are coffered, perhaps influenced by the engravings in Serlio's *Libro Tercero*, plates XVIIIv and XIXr of the Spanish edition.

The role played by the craftsmanship of local and itinerant stone cutter masters is of paramount importance in the adoption of classicism in Extremadura. There is a documented presence of talented stone cutters executing difficult stereotomy designs to build apses and additions to existing structures, such as attached chapels, gates, or new ornamented portals in façades of existing medieval structures throughout the province. An example is conical squinches built to adapt rectangular walls to circular or semicircular structures, as in the Santa María la

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GÓMEZ, P. MOGOLLÓN CANO-CORTÉS, *Los X Libros de Arquitectura de Marco Vitruvio Polión. Según la traducción Castellana de Lázaro de Velasco,* Cicón Ediciones, Cáceres, Spain, 1999, pp. 17-21.

[16] The period from the start of the sixteenth century until the 1560s, is also the period that Sanchez Lomba characterizes as that which constitutes the splendor of renaissance architecture in Extremadura. See: SÁNCHEZ LOMBA, *Arquitectura del Renacimiento en Extremadura*, cit., pp. 71-76.

Mayor church in Brozas, where a complicated squinch was built to adapt an addition to the main nave[17].

Related to the topic of stereotomy are the corner balconies found across Castile, very common in Extremadura, particularly in Cáceres and Trujillo. An example found in Brozas is distinctive for its conical, projected arch. Other examples of corner balconies are found at the Roco-Godoy Palace (fig. 2) and the Chávez Calderón Palace, whose corner balcony and main portal are outstanding. Both palaces are found in Cáceres. The corner balcony is, arguably, the most

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[17] Sanz Fernández, *La influencia de los tratados*, cit., p. 133.

fig. 2.
Cáceres, Extremadura, Spain,
the tower of Palacio
Roco-Godoy, (ca. 1563).
Photo by Jesusccastillo
(CC BY 3.0).

forceful example of local innovation and proof of how classical decorum had found an innovative way to display the magnificence of the Extremaduran local elite.

Indeed, in Cáceres and Trujillo, we find the most lavish and intricate examples of palatial urban residences of the region's ruling class. And it is in those two cities that we can admire the way classical architecture, or rather, a classical syntax employing columns, pilasters, entablatures, half arches, roun-dels, and more, will coexist with other stylistic vocabularies, whether of the deeply entrenched Gothic, Plateresque, or Mudéjar. Examples of the local palatial architecture abound, as with the Palace

of Ovando, a medieval structure that gets, *ca*.1519, a remodeled façade in which a round arch entry is flanked by a pair of elegant but simple pilasters that support an uncomplicated entablature. Relatedly, a similar syntax is seen at Cáceres' Episcopal Palace, remodeled toward the end of the sixteenth century. Also, in Cáceres, the Palace of Pereros is a massive cubical masonry fortress-like structure, whose massing stands in contrast to its refined but nevertheless imposing half arch entry built in the mid-sixteenth century[18], adorned with voussoirs that make up an over-scaled, finely rusticated frame around it. Other relevant portals are seen elsewhere in Cáceres, as at the Mayoralgo Palace, where flanking pairs of twin Gothic windows frame an oversized heraldic coat of arms. A special mention should go to the Italianate courtyards with finely and proportionate classical columns supporting half arches, as at the Pereros Palace (fig. 3), from the mid-sixteenth century, and the Toledo-Moctezuma Palace, built in the latter part of the sixteenth century. Finally, at Trujillo, the ostentatious Palace of Pizarro (built in its present form in the mid-sixteenth century), otherwise known as the Palace of the Conquest, given the Pizarro family's ties to the colonization and conquest of Perú, sits on a lot facing the town's main square. It boasts a series of vertically aligned Plateresque reliefs at the building's corner facing the plaza, which frame and highlight a balcony nestled on that same corner. Above the balcony, a self-aggrandizing, overblown coat of arms of the Pizarro family is a clear testament to the way classical vocabularies were employed to fulfill social and economic aspirational agendas.

In effect, by the 1550s, a classical vocabulary and its syntax were commonly used in Extremadura to fabricate an image of magnificence for a small elite, whether merchants or families tied to the coloni-

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[18] C. CALLEJO, *Cáceres Monumental,* Editorial Plus Ultra, Madrid, 1960, p. 110.

fig. 3.
Cáceres, Extremadura, Spain, Palace de Pereros (courtyard remodeled ca. 1561). Photo by Jesusccastillo (CC BY 3.0).

zation of the Americas, which extended over to the patronage of a body of religious architecture of outstanding craftsmanship, in one of the most impoverished regions of the Iberian Peninsula.

Central New Spain

Across the Atlantic, the expansive valley occupied today by Mexico City served as the backdrop to the fall of the Aztec or Mexica Empire. It was there, in 1521, that an army of thousands of Indigenous warriors, in alliance with a group of Spanish conquistadors, sieged and captured the city of Tenochtitlan, the capital of the Mexica Empire[19].

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[19] On the fundamental role played by Indigenous allies in the process of toppling the Mexica Empire, see: M. RESTALL, *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest,* Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003, pp. 44-63.

Eventually, the Spanish colonizers would affirm their political grip in the territories under Mexica rule and beyond. Efforts to convert the natives in religious and cultural terms and the building of infrastructure were some of the first colonizing prerogatives in the decades following the Mexica fall. These efforts were particularly intense in the centrally located basin of the Valley of Mexico; the valley of Puebla, where the eponymous city would be established; Puebla's fertile hinterland territories; the semi-tropical lands of present-day Morelos state; the mountainous regions of the present-day states of Mexico and Hidalgo; and the northwestern territories of the present-day state of Michoacán.

Those territories saw the most intense building activities by the Spaniards in the sixteenth century, and it is there that we see the process of reception and establishment of a Transatlantic classical architectural tradition. Undoubtedly, classicism became the representative style of Spanish hegemony by the century's end, but, as in the Iberian Peninsula, the adoption of classical vocabularies was by no means straightforward. In Tula, Hidalgo, for instance, we find an early testament to the reception of classicism in architecture. There, the Franciscan monastery's main façade, built, like many other missionary establishments, to convert the Native populations to Christianity, is dated *ca.* 1543-1554. It displays a low stone arch with reliefs of coffers with diamond points in its jambs and extrados. Framing the arch are flanking pilasters and an entablature, also in stone, all sculptural and not structural, with a fine circular pediment crowning the composition (fig. 4). Elsewhere, as in the Franciscan monasteries in the towns of Huejotzingo and Tecamachalco, both in the present-day state of Puebla or in Xochimilco, south of Mexico City, a more complicated ornamental and architectural landscape unfurled. The monasteries' layouts, the vaulting, the facades, sculptural ornamental reliefs, columns, and interior decoration are a convoluted but exciting mixture of Gothic,

fig. 4.
Tula, Hidalgo, Mexico,
cathedral portal (originally a
Franciscan missionary
convent, *ca.* 1543-1554).
Photo by Alejandro Linares
García (CC BY 3.0).

Plateresque, Mudéjar, and Tequitqui[20] vocabularies

[20] The term Tequitqui was coined by the scholar José Moreno Villa in 1942, to refer to a hybridization in sixteenth-century art, particularly sculpture, found mostly in the convents built in central New Spain during that era by Spanish missionaries and Indigenous builders and craftsmen. Tequitqui is a Nahuatl word, loosely translated as "vassal," since Moreno's idea was that the Native builders were vassals of the Spaniards, just like, in the case of Mudéjar art in Spain, Muslim craftsmen or Christian converts worked for Christian Spaniards, making Mudéjar art a type of "vassal" art. The term, however, also conveyed Tequitqui a sense of inferiority relative to European styles. In the 1970s, the philosopher Justino Fernández, retook the term Tequitqui,

and traditions. All three of those monastic complexes date from the mid-1550s, which proves the overlap and co-existence of architectural vocabularies from early in the colonization process[21].

Despite the presence of works that display hybridized ornamental solutions, classical architectural vocabularies were dominant overall in buildings of that period[22]. This is an important point, as it is an indication of how early and forcefully classicism becomes common across New Spain's early colonial landscape. Despite freely hybridized ornamental programs that borrowed from Plateresque, Tequitqui, and Gothic (particularly in vaulting solutions), a great number of mendicant monasteries employed Plateresque-classical lexicons in principal and lateral portals. Outstanding examples are the façade at the Augustinian monastery of Metztitlán, Hidalgo, from the mid-sixteenth century, or St Mary Magdalene church, part of the Augustinian monastery in Cuitzeo Michoacán (begun in 1550) (fig. 5). Meanwhile, the Franciscan monasteries in Tecali (*ca.* 1570s) and Zacatlán (*ca.*1562), both in Puebla state, display a more sober classicism in their church building's portals, which likely employed engravings from treatises as models for their configuration (fig. 6).

In urban environments, as in Mexico City and Puebla de los Ángeles, the two most prominent cities in New Spain, it also became clear how, by the latter

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claiming that Indigenous art had to be taken as equal in quality and importance to European art, and not be treated as a "vassal" of European styles, involving the notion of Tequitqui with the process of mestizaje. See: J. Moreno Villa, *La escultura colonial mexicana*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico City, 1978; J. Fernández, *Estética del Arte Mexicano,* UNAM, Mexico City, 1972.

[21] G. Kubler, *Arquitectura Mexicana del Siglo XVI*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico City, 2012, p. 473.

[22] Kubler asserted that classical ornamentation was far more common than those solutions that incorporated Gothic and Tequitqui vocabularies. See: Kubler, *Arquitectura Mexicana*, cit., p. 494.

fig. 5.
Cuitzeo, Michoacán, Mexico,
St. Mary Magdalene,
Augustinian monastery
(construction began in 1550).
Photo by Juan Luis Burke.

part of the sixteenth century, classicism had become the norm for projecting a sense of magnificence through the palatial urban residences built by the conquistadors and a small urban elite of high-ranking clerics and Crown bureaucrats. The plan of Mexico City's Plaza Mayor, dated 1565, and housed at the *Archivo de Indias*, in Seville, provides us with an image of fortress-like residences built in rough masonry, with battlements crowning their facades. However, sometime between 1560-1570, judging by another plan of the Plaza Mayor in Mexico City from 1596, also kept at the *Archivo de Indias* and by the description given by Francisco Cervantes de Salazar, a Spanish scholar, in 1554, the façades of the buildings lining the Plaza Mayor: residences of conquistadors, the archbishop's palace, the viceroy's

fig. 6.
Zacatlán, Puebla, Mexico, portal of Franciscan monastery, (*ca.* 1562). Photo by Cessvilla (CC BY 4.0).

palace, and others, had acquired a renaissance appearance in terms of their classical ornamentation, stuccoed surfaces, and on account of their more balanced and symmetrical designs[23].

In nearby Puebla de los Ángeles (established in 1531), despite the great amount of destruction the city's historical buildings have suffered, a few fragments of classical architecture in civic buildings still exist. Outstanding among them is the palatial urban residence of the cathedral chapter's dean, Don Tomás de la Plaza, locally still known as *Casa del*

[23] F. Cervantes de Salazar, *México en 1554: Tres diálogos latinos de Francisco Cervantes de Salazar*, eds M. León-Portilla and J. García Icazbalceta, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas-UNAM, Mexico City, 2001, pp. 27-37 <http://www.histo ricas.unam.mx/publicaciones/publicadigital/libros/mexico1554/ mex1554.html>.

fig. 7.
Puebla, Mexico,
Casa del Deán (*ca.* 1570).
Photo by Juan Luis Burke.

Deán (built in the 1570s), which possesses a façade that is carefully proportioned and in which a linteled entry boasts a succinct entablature flanked by fluted, Doric, attached columns (fig. 7). A similar pattern is repeated in the upper story, where a balcony is also flanked by columns and is crowned by the de la Plaza family coat of arms. The Dean's House was carried out by Francisco Becerra (an Extremaduran master builder, which points to the architectural connections between the two regions). In sixteenth-century New Spain, we observe how, at some point between the 1550s to the 1570s, classicism is adopted as the representative orna-mental language of civic and religious decorum on behalf of the Spanish colonizers. While most of the extant sixteenth-century buildings were carried out

toward the end of or after Charles V's reign, it is evident that classical vocabularies in architecture became accepted as representative of Spanish decorum during his reign, and that his son, Philip II, embraced the promotion of classicism as the representative style of the Spanish Habsburg dynasty. By the century's end, the style had also been embraced across the Atlantic in New Spain.

Sardinia

In the Mediterranean, after the conquest of Sardinia by the Crown of Aragon in 1326, the island found itself tied politically and culturally to the eastern Iberian provinces of Catalonia, Valencia, and Aragon. The links established between the Crown of Aragón and Sardinia only deepened during the late medieval period in political, cultural, and economic terms. Towards the late fifteenth century, it became an important economic enclave for the Aragonese, a strategic trade point in the Mediterranean, and a rich source of natural resources[24]. The marriage between Ferdinand II and Johanna of Trastámara in 1479 resulted in the political union between the Crowns of Castile and Aragon, introducing, by extension, the Island of Sardinia into the possession of the nascent Spanish Kingdom. The reign of Ferdinand will represent an important development in the island's history, as the island's religious and civic institutions became modernized, following Aragonese models[25]. The Sardinian artistic and architectural spheres also became unavoidably imbricated with those of the Aragonese provinces. During Ferdinand's, and later Charles's reigns, the demand for artistic products

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[24] T. Dandelet, J.A. Marino, *Introduction*, in *Spain in Italy: Politics, Society, and Religion, 1500-1700,* Brill, Leiden-Boston, 2007, p. 1; F. Manconi, *The Kingdom of Sardinia: A Province in Balance Between Catalonia, Castile, and Italy*, in *Spain and Italy: Politics, Society, and Religion, 1500-1700,* Brill, Leiden-Boston, 2007, p. 45.

[25] Manconi, *The Kingdom of Sardinia*, cit., pp. 47-50.

such as retables, the construction of family chapels, and a host of artistic objects, from paintings to jewelry, were in great demand on the island. That demand was satisfied by artists, artisans, and builders coming from the Iberian Peninsula, particularly from the Catalan-speaking regions[26]. In the field of construction, the Gothic architectural culture of the eastern Iberian Peninsula would play a critical role in shaping the architecture of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries on the island, particularly in the seaside cities, such as Cagliari, Sassari, and Oristano[27]. The Gothic building culture will be so deeply entrenched that classicism will not make an appearance in Sardinia until the latter part of the sixteenth century but will remain the secondary architectural language on the island until the mid-seventeenth century[28].

In effect, Sardinia was up to par with architectural innovations coming from the eastern Iberian Peninsula, particularly those from Catalonia, Valencia, and the Balearic Islands. A well-documented circulation of stone cutter masters or *picapedrers* traveled to and from Aragon, the Balearic Islands, and Sardinia, generating a strong tradition of late-Gothic, Aragonese-influenced architectural culture in the island[29]. In Sardinia, a period of mature vaulting techniques and craftsmanship is noted in the number of vaulting projects seen starting around the mid-sixteenth century. In effect, as Bermejo argues, architectural innovations seen in Sardinia during this era are linked to the shift in religious architecture from timber

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[26] E. BERMEJO MALUMBRES, *La catedral de Sassari y la arquitectura religiosa en Cerdeña entre los siglos XVI y XVIII*, Universidad de Zaragoza, Zaragoza, Spain, 2016, p. 25.

[27] F. SEGNI PULVIRENTI, *L'architettura religiosa gotico-catalana: i primi esempi*, in F. SEGNI PULVIRENTI, A. SARI, *Architettura Tardogotica e d'Influsso Rinascimentale*, Ilisso Edizioni, Nuoro, Sardinia, 1994, pp. 13-15.

[28] BERMEJO MALUMBRES, *La catedral de Sassari*, cit., pp. 35–36.

[29] *Ivi*, pp. 25-28.

roofs and ceilings to more permanent and modern stone vaulting solutions[30]. It is a question of adaptation and remodeling of existing structures, sometimes even additions to buildings, that will get stone vaultings that are dynamic in terms of adapting to spaces of different dimensions and proportions, functional, elegant, and long-lasting. The vaulting systems were, however, mostly Gothic in nature, but, as Ibáñez has argued for the case of Aragonese architecture of the early sixteenth century, the moldings of ribbed vaults adopted classical proportions and profiles and were therefore considered "classical"[31]. An example of mid-sixteenth-century Gothic construction in religious architecture is the Chiesa della Purissima in Cagliari. The church building, which was part of a female conventual complex, displays outstanding structural and spatial coherence, employing a single nave plan open and connected to lateral chapels to configure an open plan dynamic, while the plan is reminiscent of Girona cathedral, in Catalonia (fig. 8)[32].

However, *all'antica* architecture arrived in Sardinia after Charles V's reign. The first case of a classical vocabulary applied to the ornamental program on an entire building was the Gesù e Maria church (today Santa Caterina) in Sassari, built during King Philip II's *ca.*1579. The church was part of a Jesuit college, the first established by the Society of Jesus on the

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[30] *Ivi*, pp. 37-39.

[31] J. IBÁÑEZ FERNÁNDEZ, *La arquitectura en el reino de Aragón entre el Gótico y el Renacimiento: inercias, novedades y soluciones propias*, «Artigrama: Publicación de Historia del Arte de la Universidad de Zaragoza», no. 23 2008, pp. 39-95: 55-56. Ibáñez explains how architects like Hontañón tried to explain the classical aspect of ribbed vaulting as an anthropomorphic idea, as in the ribbed vaulting acting like a hand and fingers, following Vitruvius' ideas about architecture and the body.

[32] A. SARI, *I prodromi di un gusto nuovo e la continuità culturale: il Plateresco*, in F. SEGNI PULVIRENTI, A. SARI, *Architettura Tardogotica e d'Influsso Rinascimentale,* Ilisso Edizioni, Nuoro, Sardinia, 1994, p. 136.

Classicism at the Empire's Fringes

JUAN LUIS BURKE ROCO

fig. 8.
Cagliari, Sardinia, Italy, Chiesa della Purissima (*ca.*1554). Photo by Sailko (CC BY 3.0).

island. The church possesses a plan that recalls the Roman Gesù: a wide central nave and two shorter lateral ones. The façade also recalls the Roman church, with a symmetrical design and a centralized main entry flanked by pairs of classical attached columns and a pediment. In the façade's upper story, a pedimented choir window is flanked by two pedimented, blind windows. The whole design is crowned by a circular pediment (fig. 9). The role that the Jesuit Order played in the introduction of classicism to the island was critical. As Porcu Gaias affirms, the Jesuits brought with them a cadre of treatises by the likes of Vitruvius, Serlio, Palladio, and Villalpando as well as Prado's Temple of Solomon's reconstruction, along with their innovative ideas regarding how classicism could serve as institutional

fig. 9.
Sassari, Sardinia, Italy, Gesù e Maria church (today, Santa Caterina, *ca.* 1579). Photo by Gianni Careddu (CC BY 3.0).

decorum[33]. At the Gesù e Maria church, however, the interior form and decoration are an eclectic mixture of Gothic in its simple diagonal-rib vaults, classical in its Roman arches, columns, and entablatures, and the drum-less dome recalls traces of Byzantine construction traditions.

In terms of civic architecture, a relevant case is found at the Manca di Usini Palace at Sassari. There, a local businessman and politician who had lived in Madrid, Jayme Manca, *ca.* 1577, remodeled his family's residence following classical lines, with its noteworthy rectangular linteled portal framed with a heavy entablature resting on rusticated pairs of flanking pilasters, the design of which recalls Serlio's

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[33] M. Porcu Gaias, *Sassari. Storia architettonica e urbanistica dalle origini al '600,* Ilisso Edizioni, Nuoro, Sardinia, 1996, pp. 142-143.

fig. 10.
Sassari, Sardinia, Italy, façade of the Manca di Usini Palace (*ca.*1577). Photo by Sailko (CC BY 3.0).

Libro Extraordinario (fig. 10).
In Sardinia, given the deeply entrenched links to Aragonese culture, which had a marked taste for late Gothic architecture, we observe how Sardinian architecture, despite the political links developed in the sixteenth century with the court in Castile, architecturally, classicism was slow to arrive relative to central and northern Italy. It was first adopted by the learned elites associated to Philip II's reign, and who wished to equate their tastes adopted by the elites elsewhere in Italy and the Iberian Peninsula, thereby displaying their social standing through the ornamentation of their residences and their patronage of religious architecture beginning in the late sixteenth and throughout the seventeenth centuries.

Concluding Remarks

Classicism in architecture was adopted by the Spanish Empire during Charles V's reign and reasserted during Philip II's as its flagship style given its potential to display magnificence, articulate political and religious decorum, and evoke a sense of empire. The architectural taste for renaissance-inspired vocabularies spread throughout the provincial realms of Extremadura, New Spain, and Sardinia toward the mid and the latter part of the sixteenth century and became an inherent part of the architectural cultures of Extremadura and New Spain by the century's end. Meanwhile, in Sardinia, given the strong links to the Crown of Aragon's architectural practices, deeply rooted in late-Gothic mannerisms and building technology, classicism will be slow to make a mark, only being considered as an alternative to Gothic vocabularies during the last stages of the century.

Across the Atlantic, in New Spain, classicism became, relatively soon, the choice architectural language that would be openly used to display the religious and political hegemony of the Spanish, effectively becoming an architectural language of colonization. In Extremadura, we see how classicism becomes, in ornamental form, the preferred vocabulary by the region's ruling class. While in the sphere of religious architecture, classicism coexisted freely with other vocabularies.

In all three regions, we find that architectural classicism was employed as a series of ornamental gestures to decorate façades and sometimes to produce stately interior spaces, particularly through arcaded courtyards. However, it must be stated that classical architecture in the provincial realms of the Empire in the sixteenth century is far from being a unified or coherent architectural tradition, in contrast to other regions of the Italian Peninsula, particularly in central and northern Italy. Instead, at the fringes of Charles V's empire, classicism becomes incorporated into the local building

practices mostly as a form of ornamental vocabulary to articulate urban decorum and to express links to the monarchy in a symbolic manner.