

Arequipa (Peru)

No 1016

Identification

<i>Nomination</i>	Historic Centre of the City of Arequipa
<i>Location</i>	Province of Arequipa
<i>State Party</i>	Peru
<i>Date</i>	20 July 1999

Justification by State Party

The Historic Centre of Arequipa was built in white and pink volcanic rock (known locally as *sillar*) and represents an expression of the creative talent of its people, shown in the robust walls, the extensive use of archways and vaults as a structural system, the magnificence of its courtyards and open spaces, and the intricate Baroque decoration of its facades. The Baroque texture is crowned with friezes, flanking the gargoyles with the figures of pumas or mythical characters. The architecture of Arequipa is an integration of European and native characteristics, seen in the admirable work of former Spanish masters, *criollo* and Indian masons, and innumerable master builders still at work today. They have formed a school that has been crucial throughout the region, and also influential in Andean valleys such as the Colca and Condesuyos and reaching the highlands of Puno.

The unique local distinctiveness of the city is the result of the challenges of circumstances and its historical background. The prior existence of an indigenous people with their own culture, developed from Puquina, Collagua, Lupaca and Inca influences, a process of conquest and evangelization, as well as the spectacular natural environment and the frequent earthquakes, have all been vital elements in defining the identity of Arequipa. The city is a product of the resistance of its population to the tremors of the earth and an ability to take advantage of crises. An entire city of over 49 blocks was built in the 17th and 18th centuries, forming a uniform ensemble in carved stone and crowned with vaults and domes. The city rests in the foothills of three volcanoes giving it a magnificent setting of snow-peaked mountains.

The qualitative criteria include originality, representativity, traditionality, regional influence, location, privileged geography, urban layout and design, materials, building and decorative systems, and the fact that they are a product of a rich social and cultural *mestizaje*.

[**Note** The State Party does not make any proposals in the nomination dossier concerning the criteria under which it

considers this property should be inscribed on the World Heritage List.]

Category of property

In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *group of buildings*.

History and Description

History

Arequipa was founded on 15 August 1540 by a handful of Spanish *conquistadores*. The site was in a valley that had been intensively farmed by pre-Hispanic communities, a fact that has contributed to the topography of the place. The layout of an indigenous hamlet has survived close to the Historic Centre in the district of San Lázaro.

Major earthquakes have marked the key moments of change in the development of Arequipa architecture. It is thus possible to identify five periods of development: the foundation period as a village (1540–82), the period of Baroque splendour (1582–1784), the introduction of Rococo and Neo-Classicism (1784–1868), modern empiricism and Neo-Classical fashion (1868–1960), and contemporary design. The city underwent its principal development in the era of the viceroyalty and it was an important economic centre in the southern Andes. Its role in the history of the Peruvian Republic was, and continues to be, crucial. The Historic Centre has been a centre of popular civic rebellions and demonstrations, as well as being the birthplace of many outstanding intellectual, political, and religious figures in the country.

The first buildings in Arequipa were constructed using adobe and stone, with roofs of straw, sticks, or mud. Some of these still exist in the old district of San Lázaro. Later building materials were brick and straw, still found in some examples in the Convent of Santa Catalina. The natural disaster of 1582 caused a major change in favour of anti-seismic construction, introducing a systematic use of *sillar*, a pink or pearl-coloured volcanic stone that was freely available. Earlier this material had only been used in the doorways of the main church and in a handful of dwellings. Being soft, light, thermic, and resistant, it now provided a solution to the problems caused by earth tremors, as well as being pleasing aesthetically.

Description

The nomination of the Historic Centre of Arequipa consists of 49 original blocks of the Spanish layout (excluding three blocks adjacent to the *Mercado San Camilo* not considered to be adequate because of their style). In addition there are 24 blocks from the colonial period and the 19th century. A buffer zone has been indicated, consisting of the surrounding areas of more recent construction.

The core of the historic town is the Plaza de Armas (Plaza Mayor) with its archways, the Municipality, and the Cathedral, the most important Neo-Classical religious building in the country, constructed in the mid 19th century on the ruins of an earlier Baroque church. At one corner of the plaza there are the church and cloisters of *La Compañía*, considered the most representative ensemble of

the Baroque *mestizo* period at the end of the 18th century. The Monasterio de Santa Catalina is a spectacular religious citadel, integrating architectural styles from the 16th to 19th centuries and having an area of 20,000m². The structures of the complex of San Francisco include a small square, the main church, the convent, and the cloisters of the third order, dating from the 18th century. The chapels and convents of Santo Domingo date from the 16th to 18th centuries, San Agustín, La Merced and the church of Santa Maria are from the 17th century; Santa Teresa and Santa Rosa are examples of 18th century architecture. In addition the 18th century Puente Real (now Puente Bolognesi) and Puente Grau are also built of *sillar*.

The Historic Centre contains some 500 *casonas*, of which over 250 are listed for protection. These were generally built in the 19th century on the sites of earlier colonial buildings destroyed in the 1868 earthquake. The *casonas* are characterized by semi-circular arches and vaulted roofs, generally made of *sillar* stone. *Sillar* structures have always been built with thick walls, in domestic buildings between 1m and 1.5m and in churches over 2m. With the use of lime mortar the walls acquired firm consistency, further increased by brick or *sillar*-stone vaults, justified by scarcity of wood. The heavy structures have been enhanced with ornamental designs in large thick rounded frames or deep protrusions and sculptures on flat surfaces. Light combines with such features to create a dynamism which alleviates the heaviness of the structure and makes it more interesting. The lateral doorway of the Iglesia de Santo Domingo (early 17th century), an allegory of the Final Judgement, is an example of such artistic expressions, typically found in all doorways of the city and the region.

The merit of Arequipa architecture is not limited to the grandeur of its religious monuments. It is also in the profusion of dignified *casonas*, characteristic well proportioned vernacular houses. The urban space penetrates the interior of the city blocks through large doorways and hallways into the courtyards, where the carvings of the facades are reproduced, thus accentuating spatial continuity. Doorways and windows are flanked with pillars and crowned with protruding pediments that blend with the large walls. The ornamental economy of the porches harmonizes with the shape of the vaults, the projecting cornices, and the carved corbels. Narrow window openings allow light to enter the semi-circular arches or vaulted roof spaces. Together with the monumental ensembles, streets, and squares the *casonas* ensure the harmony and integrity of the townscape and give the city an exceptional urban value.

The most important historic ensembles of Arequipa include the following:

- The convent of Santa Catalina

The citadel in which the convent is housed and the communal way of life there are somewhat unique in the Western Christian tradition, and there are hardly other convents of the same type. Founded in 1579, the convent is estimated to have housed some 56 black-veiled nuns, 18 white-veiled, 51 novices, and 200 maids and servants. The first phase of construction consisted of a gate building, three cloisters, the refectory, and a chapel, later supplemented with other buildings. The charm of this complex lies in its solidity and beauty, created in traditional building techniques. The domes and arched

roofs increase the inner spaces and make the buildings seem stronger. The main cloister is rectangular in shape and parallel to the nave of the church. It has rectangular pillars, half-pointed arches, and cross-shaped vaults. The convent houses numerous oil paintings from the Cusco School. This construction has been undertaken with such vernacular homogeneity that it is not possible to distinguish the different phases of building. In any case, there have been no great changes since the Colonial and Republican periods and the complex has preserved its authenticity as a testimony to a particular lifestyle. The convent represents an extraordinary degree of architectural purity, obtained by self-sufficiency and autonomy, in a static colonial system. The sense of shape, colour, and space has been highlighted through skilful restoration.

- The Plaza Mayor and the Cathedral

This public square is considered one of the most beautiful and imposing in Peru. The City Council has been in the plaza since the city was founded, and in addition there have been many other functions. Its archways have been rebuilt several times after earthquakes and its monuments have also suffered serious damage; fire destroyed the old cathedral in 1844 and an earthquake damaged La Compañía. In spite of this the plaza has remained the heart of the old town and the scene of many historic events. On three sides it has archways with granite pillars and brick vaults; the north-west side is occupied by the imposing 19th century Neo-Classical cathedral. This was built in *sillar* stone by the Arequipa master builder Lucas Poblete and completed in 1850. It has triangular windows and two pyramid-shaped bell towers in each of its blocks. The convent and church of San Agustín take up the west side of the plaza. Opposite the Cathedral is the Portal del Cabildo, earlier known as Los Escribanos. The architect Eduardo de Brugada designed the Neo-Renaissance archways in 1877; the second level was built in 1913–14 and rebuilt after earthquake damage in 1960. In the centre of the plaza there is a bronze fountain on three levels, built at the request of Viceroy Don José Antonio de Mendoza, Marquis of Villagarcía, in the mid 18th century.

- La Compañía

The large complex of the Temple of la Compañía is at the south-west corner of the main square. It began as a small prayer chapel in 1578. The first church was built in 1610; a larger construction was initiated in 1621 and completed around 1698. Based on a Latin cross, the form derived from the church of Il Gesù in Rome. The transept crossing of the church has a semi-circular dome to provide light to the presbytery and the transepts. The sacristy has a square plan and a dome and is decorated with mural paintings showing simple images of foliage, birds, and the four Evangelists. The ornamental main elevation has two main parts, containing the entrance and a tympanum. The representations are varied, including human figures with long plant-like tails, fantastic animals, masks with feathered foreheads, feline-shaped heads with human features, lions' heads, and birds with natural heads and abstract bodies. The lateral facade is elaborately decorated, including the figure of Saint James cutting off the heads of Moors, surrounded by mermaids and plants. La Compañía has a valuable collection of the best works of two Jesuit masters, Bernardo Bitti and Diego de la Puente, who had a

decisive influence on viceregal painting. The ensemble has cloisters built in the 18th century.

- Santo Domingo

This complex of the Dominican Order has been severely damaged by many earthquakes and little remains of the original buildings. Today on the site there is a three-nave church with a high choir, raised by a sillar-stone arch. The most important part of the building is its lateral facade with sculptured decoration dating from late 17th century, the oldest in Arequipa.

- La Merced

The Orden Militar de Nuestra Señora de la Merced is located south-east of the Plaza Mayor. Founded in 1548, it was the second order in the city. Here, too, earthquakes have damaged the buildings. The church is characterized by the fact that the dome is over the presbytery. There is an interesting archway, now blocked, which used to be the entrance to the convent. The most important feature of the convent is its huge chapter house, where one room is covered by a Gothic vault with beautiful ribs, reminding of the splendour of the early Arequipa.

- San Agustín

Although destroyed by the earthquake in 1868, the main facade of the church still remains. The foundation goes back to 1575 and is related to San Nicolás de Tolentino. At the sides of the church there are the remains of the main doorway of La Compañía. The facade has important early sculptural decoration with a unique composition in white and grey, giving depth and charm to the doorway. The old sacristy survived the 1868 earthquake and has remained the most notable of example of its type in the region.

- San Francisco

Facing one of the most beautiful small *plazuelas* of the city is the temple of San Francisco. The church has a rectangular plan, three naves, a crossing, and a presbytery. The convent was founded in 1552 but the construction took place some years later. This complex has also suffered from earthquakes and major changes have been made to the original structures. The fine choir of the church, carved in sillar stone, has been much admired. The carvings are some of the best works of the 17th century in Arequipa. The temple of the Third Order is located at the same square and was rebuilt after the 1784 earthquake.

Management and Protection

Legal status

The public spaces of the Historic Centre of Arequipa are the property of the Peruvian state and are managed by the Municipalidad Provincial de Arequipa. The convents and churches in the city centre are the property of the Catholic Church, managed by religious orders and the office of the Archbishop of Arequipa. The main *casonas*, classified as historical monuments, are the property of public and private institutions (ministries, government offices, banks, cultural and educational centres, and universities). Other *casonas* are the property of private individuals.

According to the 1972 Supreme Resolution 2900-71 ED and the 1977 Supreme Decree 012-77-IT/DS, the Peruvian

state has recognized the Monumental Zone of Arequipa and has designated a series of monuments and monumental urban spaces within this zone.

Management

The city of Arequipa has some 776,000 inhabitants and the Historic Centre around 20,000. About 150,000 people use the services of the centre area every day. The annual number of tourists is about 290,000, including some 74,000 foreigners (10% of the total visiting Peru). The city has an alarming level of pollution, mainly due to traffic and lack of smoke control. The road system of the area was seriously damaged as a result of El Niño. In addition, the place is in a seismic area (the Circle of Fire of the Pacific) and there is constant but low-intensity volcanic activity. The zone is connected to the national warning systems regarding natural disasters.

The management of the Historic Centre is at present the responsibility of the Municipal Authority for the Historic Centre and Monumental Zone. A Management Council was established in June 1999, consisting of a multidisciplinary group of professionals and technicians. The authority has scanty resources but is contacting public and private organizations to stimulate interest and to raise funds. The first task will be the preparation of a master plan for the revitalization of the Historic Centre, to be made in collaboration with the *Instituto Nacional de Cultura*. It is expected that the plan will be completed by August 2000.

The master plan for the recovery of the Historic Centre is seen in terms of strategic planning principles and action planning. The authority is proposing to have a close relationship between the programme and its execution. The plan is intended to establish a basis for the coordination of the activities of municipal authorities, the public sector, the central government, and the private sector, as well as encouraging neighbourhood participation in the renovation of the physical structures and in finding solutions to the social problems. The recovery process should include actions such as conservation, planning control, heritage appreciation, and promotion, give the impulse for a selective property market, improve the living conditions of current residents, and strengthen public administration by appropriate regulations. It is proposed to promote feasible investment projects, to be carried out by means of formal agreements with the potential actors: the local authority, private investors, the inhabitants, international organizations, and the central government. Further projects include updating the survey of the urban area, preservation of the city's legacy, dealing with slums and with unregistered traders, improving road infrastructure, transportation, public spaces, landscaping, introducing basic services and environmental recovery, improving safety, generation of jobs and income, cultural development, and tourism.

Conservation and Authenticity

Conservation history

In the past, repair and maintenance of the buildings could be considered a tradition. This was also the result of the frequent seismic tremors. The earthquakes of 1958 and 1960 increased consciousness in professional circles about

safeguarding the historic structures of Arequipa. The Committee for the Rehabilitation and Development of Arequipa was created in 1958 as one of the first entities in the country interested in heritage conservation. This led to a movement that had repercussions in other parts of Peru as well. The church of Santo Domingo, the Convent of Santa Teresa, and the Palacio Goyeneche have since been restored. In 1970 attention was paid to the use of certain historic monuments, such as the Convent of Santa Catalina, for commercial purposes or tourism. Several other historic buildings have been restored and sold, and the restoration of colonial *casonas* and public ensembles has continued, although not without difficulties and financial limitations. Between the 1970s and 1999 there have been some twenty major restorations and some minor works.

During the present decade, the Historic Centre of Arequipa has been subject to considerable pressure, which has led to the modification of urban spaces even in the monumental area. The city has generally grown in a disordered manner from the centre outwards, so that the Historic Centre forms the heart of a star whose points are traced by the four principal roads: the Avenida Parra, the Avenida Alcides Carrion, the Avenida Mariscal Castilla, and the Avenida Ejército. The traffic is concentrated on these routes, which constitute the principal links to the city centre. However, the physical structure of the historic area is not compatible with the increasing density of public transport since the streets were designed for a different kind of traffic. As a result the centre is near to saturation, causing problems in the efficiency of transport service and increased deterioration of the environment.

Because the Historic Centre has been the city's principal commercial area, old buildings have undergone changes in use. Wealthier inhabitants have moved out and residential use has diminished in the centre area, where many dwellings are without basic services. It is estimated that some 35% of the inhabitants of the centre live in overcrowded and unhygienic conditions. Some structures of considerable monumental value have become slums. During the past decade the number of old mansions acquired by unregistered traders has doubled. In the streets of Octavio Muñoz Nájjar, La Merced, Alvarez Thomas, Palacio Viejo, and Consuelo many old houses of historic interest have been demolished and the sites have been left as parking lots. As a result of the foregoing, the Historic Centre has become less attractive to investment, which tends to be directed outside the central area. It is now vital to reverse this trend and balance the development.

Authenticity

The historic town of Arequipa has undergone many natural disasters and most of its buildings have been repaired and rebuilt numerous times. Nevertheless, the continuation of traditions and the use of local workmanship and materials, the volcanic sillar stone, have given the place an exceptionally coherent character, resulting from the integration of many factors. At the same time Arequipa is characterized by exceptionally fine sculptural work, of which authentic examples survive from the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. Similarly, much of the urban fabric still consists of the traditional vernacular buildings (*casonas*), which are part of the character and identity of the old city.

The churches have a lively religious function because the people are extremely religious. Many of the *casonas*, on the other hand, have lost their original use as the residences of wealthy people and have been restored and adapted to administrative or cultural functions. Another question concerns the colour scheme. The white colour was mainly applied to the carved stone ornaments, used mainly in the archways and in parts of building elevations. The rest was generally plastered and painted. In the 1960s and 1970s the custom was to remove the plaster rendering, creating a false image of the architecture, as well as removing the necessary protective layers. Now attitudes have changed and the aim is now to maintain the original appearance of the buildings.

As a result of various pressures, such as commerce, traffic, and the lack of efficient maintenance policy, planning, and control, the centre city has suffered from overcrowding, slums, and traffic jams. This is causing serious hazards to the historic fabric and has already resulted in the loss of several buildings of historic value, as well as in the neglect and mismanagement of others.

Evaluation

Action by ICOMOS

An ICOMOS expert mission visited Arequipa in February 2000. ICOMOS also consulted its International Scientific Committee on Historic Towns and Villages.

Qualities

The city of Arequipa, which is located in a valley between the slopes of the Andes and the desert of Ilay-La-Joya, shows traces of the indigenous settlement and of the Spanish foundation of 1540. The geographical isolation of the town sustained the development of a singular regional culture, strongly influenced by the local conditions. The architecture contains examples of some of the best *mestizo* Baroque buildings, such as the portal of the Compañía de Jesús (1698) and the churches of Santo Domingo, La Merced, Santa Teresa, Santa Rosa, the Third Order of San Francisco, and others from the 18th century. The monastery of Santa Catalina de Siena, opened to the public about ten years ago, is an exceptional example of a "town inside a town" with its small houses and narrow alleys. The 18th century architecture of Arequipa represents a particular use of the volcanic stone of the region, to be seen in the residential houses of Tristán del Pozo, Moral, Iriberry, and de la Moneda. While the earthquakes of 1784 and 1868 caused damage to the buildings, they also initiated a new eras in classicistic styles of exceptional quality that were well integrated with the earlier Baroque. The arcaded Plaza de Armas (Plaza Mayor) with the Cathedral is an important example of the scenographic quality of the historic city.

Comparative analysis

Although the town is built on a grid pattern, cities with similar characteristics are rare. So far as the urban layout and design are concerned, most Spanish American cities have comparable features, such as Lima, where the main square forms the centre of a grid system and is located close to a river. Analogous building materials have been used in some Mediterranean cities, but the architecture is

quite different. However, the architectural forms and uniformity distinguish the plaza of Arequipa. Some influence has been noted with Seville and Extremadura, for instance in terms of spatial organization, but there are differences in the building system, materials, and particularly the innovative ornamentation of architectural surfaces. Arequipa, like Quito and more so than Lima, has preserved the essence of its Historic Centre with the vernacular fabric.

The ICOMOS comparative study of Latin American towns has identified the city of Arequipa as one of the most interesting examples of Latin American architecture and town planning, and certainly one that merits being recognized for its outstanding universal value.

ICOMOS recommendations for future action

Recognizing the initiatives already undertaken, ICOMOS supports the request by the authority for assistance to find resources for the development of proper conservation strategies.

Brief description

The Historic Centre of Arequipa, built in volcanic *sillar* rock, represents an integration of European and native characteristics, expressed in the admirable work of colonial masters and *criollo* and Indian masons, illustrated by its robust walls, archways and vaults, courtyards and open spaces, and the intricate Baroque decoration of its facades.

Recommendation

That the site be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of *criteria i and iv*:

Criterion i The ornamented architecture in the historic centre of Arequipa represents a masterpiece of the creative integration of European and native characteristics, crucial for the cultural expression of the entire region.

Criterion iv The historic centre of Arequipa is an outstanding example of a colonial settlement, challenged by the natural conditions, the indigenous influences, the process of conquest and evangelization, as well as the spectacular nature of its setting.

ICOMOS, September 2000