Inasmuch as the stated purpose of the volume is "to promote the cause of his [Margil's] beatification"—a procedure that has been renewed several times since his death in 1726—it is not surprising that the work is not entirely objective.

Father Margil's letters, with few exceptions, are brief and seem routine compared to the wealth of detail in the editor's notes. Many are the usual reports to civil and religious superiors; a few are expressions of reaffirmation of faith and humility, and of spiritual guidance. Notable exceptions are a letter that gives details of Lacandon Indian culture and one giving a perceptive report from Texas outlining problems on that expansive frontier.

Other biographies of Father Margil have been written, and many of the letters have been previously published. The present volume assembles them in chronological order and allows the reader to make judgments based on Father Margil's own words. However, the volume does not read smoothly as historical narrative.

Tucson, Arizona

Natalie Davis


In this brief sketch of the Marqués de Altamira, María del Carmen Velázquez makes available several descriptive documents remarkable for their abundance of information on the administration, economy, and geography of northern New Spain at mid-eighteenth century. Juan Rodríguez de Alburque served the crown as oidor of the audiencias of Guadalajara and Mexico, as Superintendente General de Reales Azogues, and finally as Auditor General de la Guerra (1742–1753). He acquired the title of Marqués de Altamira through marriage into the wealthy Sánchez de Tagle family which had extensive financial interests in Nueva Vizcaya and Nueva Galicia.

The documents reproduced here (primarily from the Archivo General de Indias) are *pareceres* of the Auditor de Guerra which prescribe various remedies for improving the political administration of Nueva Vizcaya, Texas, Sierra Corda, Nuevo León, and Coahuila and for effecting economic growth in those areas. Altamira's writings are exceptionally well-informed, based upon careful study of the reports of northern officials, presidio captains, and special visitors. Professor Velázquez characterizes Altamira as a loyal bureaucrat who envisioned his role as that of isolating problems and proposing solutions. Central to all of his proposals was the idea of ending the policy of segregating Indian communities from Spaniards. He strongly urged support for increased Spanish settlement in order to curtail Indian hostilities, to facilitate the gradual secularization of missions, and to allow for the abolition of presidios. All of these measures would end a tremendous drain on the royal treasury.

A primary contribution of the book is that it furnishes testimony to the goals and priorities as well as to the increasingly secular mentality of Bourbon administrators in the years before Charles III assumed power—a period which has not been well-studied.

S.M.D.