



FROM AMERICA TO EUROPE: A DECOLONIAL HISTORY OF THE MAIN SQUARE OF MEXICO CITY¹

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ABSTRACT

Eurocentric historiography presents the Main Square as a Spanish creation transferred to America as the center of an urban model of the colonial city based on orthogonality and ordering. Urban models with large and centralized squares are found in diverse cultures in different historical periods. However, Amerindian peoples' experiences in developing their architecture and urban projects and their permanence from the colonial era are rarely mentioned. The formation of the Mexico City Main Square is presented from the permanence of both the elements of the center of Mexico-Tenochtitlan, inserted in a long Mesoamerican urban tradition, and Castilian transformations constituted of previous Iberian experiences in a proposal for transcultural and transdisciplinary urban reading. It demonstrates that the Mexican Main Square model contributed to urban changes in Europe from Valladolid Main Square in the 16th century.

Keywords: Main Square. History of America. Urbanism. Decoloniality.

RESUMO

A historiografia eurocêntrica apresenta a Praça Maior como uma criação espanhola transferida para a América como centro de um modelo urbano de cidade colonial baseado na ortogonalidade e no ordenamento. Modelos urbanos com praças grandes e centralizadas são encontrados em diversas culturas em diferentes períodos históricos, mas raramente mencionam-se as experiências dos povos ameríndios no desenvolvimento de suas arquiteturas e de seus projetos urbanos, bem como suas permanências a partir da colonização. Em uma proposta de leitura urbana transcultural e transdisciplinar, apresenta-se a formação da Praça Maior da Cidade do México, tanto pela permanência dos elementos do centro de México-Tenochtitlan, os quais estão inseridos em uma longa tradição urbana mesoamericana, quanto pelas transformações castelhanas, constituídas por experiências ibéricas anteriores. Demonstra-se, assim, que o modelo da Praça Maior mexicana contribuiu com mudanças urbanas na Europa a partir da Praça Maior de Valladolid no século XVI.

Palavras-chave: Praça Maior. História da América. Urbanismo. Decolonialidade.

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INTRODUCTION

The historiography about America produced, for centuries, a narrative that promoted the silencing of the native peoples and the erasure of their knowledge, disregarding their histories, their diversity and minimizing their impact on other Western cultures.

In the 20th century, the intellectual upheavals of postcolonial thought, subaltern studies, cultural studies, among others, arose, from which emerged initiatives that deconstructed Eurocentric discourses and made possible new research approaches in the history of America. Authors such as Eduardo O’Gorman, Miguel León-Portilla and Serge Gruzinski, for example, have transformed Latin American studies, despite the recent critical reviews their works have undergone, especially in the historiographic aspect of Indigenous History².

This article highlights the contributions of decolonial studies as an epistemic option in Latin America to the universalist history imposed by the strategies of silencing the knowledge of peoples subordinated by the colonial system. The speeches used to maintain power, violently instituted in America, constituted official narratives that covered up reality (RIVERA CUSICANQUI, 2010).

As defined by Aníbal Quijano (2007), this situation is the result of coloniality, that is, a system of exploitation and subordination of America based on the creation of identities through racial categorization (coloniality of power)³, building a universal history centered on European protagonism (DUSSEL, 2005). In this way, the indigenous people were sentenced to the condition of vanquished and their original identities and cultures were understood as discontinued by the

contact with European culture, considered dominant in the process of miscegenation.

Within this perspective, the formation of Main Square in Mexico City is presented based on the preservation of elements from its predecessor, Mexico-Tenochtitlan, and the insertion of Spanish elements from urban practices in the Iberian Peninsula.

The arguments are built on a documentary research on the formation of the squares in Mexico and Valladolid. From the transdisciplinary and transcultural approach, it demonstrates the American origin of the Main Square and the subsequent transference of this urban model and its monumental image of power to Europe, through Spain. Transdisciplinarity is understood according to Nelson Maldonado-Torres’ (2016) finding that it is necessary, through decolonial consciousness, to interrupt the rigid ontological colonial bases of segregation and build approximations between different areas and the production of knowledge. The decolonial attitude, according to Walter Mignolo (2008), proposes the deconstruction of the hierarchy of knowledge, thus making room for the rescue of Amerindian knowledge. Transculturality, a concept created by Fernando Ortiz (1978) in the 1940s, is approached by the re-elaboration made by Angel Rama (2008), that is, as a creative, dynamic and original experience, without denying, however, the conflicts caused by these cultural contacts.

Mexico City’s Main Square reveals a long Amerindian urban and cultural trajectory, often erased from traditional historiography, in contact with previous peninsular experiences, revealing, as Setha Low (1995) points out, the cultural tensions of conquest and resistance.

² Cf. NAVARRETE LINARES, 2016; Cf. SANTOS, 2014; Cf. SANTOS, 2005.

³ Other authors work with derivations of the term, such as the coloniality of knowledge and being (LANDER, 2005)

THE MESOAMERICAN ROOTS

Mexico-Tenochtitlan, part of present-day Mexico City, was founded around 1325 on an island in Lake Texcoco by the Mexica people. The project of this city, or *altepetl*⁴, followed cosmological precepts common to the peoples of Mesoamerica⁵, conceiving space in the vertical (sky, Earth and underworld) and horizontal (center and four directions of the Earth) dimensions linked to the concept. The design of cities and the layout of buildings were guided by these conceptions and spatial demarcations were used to mark calendars (SANTOS, 2009). In the Pre-Classic Period (2500 BC-200 AD), what Michael Smith called “Mesoamerican planning principles” were configured:

These include types of building (temple-pyramids, royal palaces, and ballcourts⁶), formal open spaces (plazas), and a spatial dichotomy between a central area (the epicenter) that contains most of the civic architecture arranged with a planned configuration, and surrounding residential zones that exhibit little or no planning in their arrangement (SMITH, 2017, p. 177).

The Mesoamerican peoples configured an urbanistic tradition that created a spatial hierarchy based on their social hierarchy, ennobling the central area based on its large square with multiple functions (political, social, religious and commercial) and the buildings of power that surrounded it.

Mexico-Tenochtitlan’s main building, the Great Temple, represented the axis mundi, the place where

all spatial, horizontal and vertical dimensions met. According to Eduardo Matos Moctezuma (2015), it is likely that in its initial period, the Great Temple had a square and a market in its surroundings. With the growth of the city, the great sacred precinct, which housed dozens of buildings, demarcated an area of about 400 meters on a side, from which four causeways emerged (Tepeyacac, Iztapalapa, Tlacopan and path to the port of Texcoco) that divided the city in four parts: Moyotlan, Teopan ou Zoquiapan, Atzacualco and Cuepopan. To the south of the site, as per the west-facing map, assigned to Hernán Cortés (Figure 1), there was a large square between the palaces of the Mexica rulers, identified as “Platea”⁷. In this location, there are some constructions that may have been of commercial use, due to its location close to the Royal Canal where ships with goods circulated (Figure 2).

A NEW EPICENTER

After the fall of the cities of Mexico-Tenochtitlan and Mexico-Tlatelolco⁸ by the action of hundreds of Castilians and thousands of allied indigenous people, Cortés commissioned Alonso García Bravo to carry out the project for the Spanish city in the center of the old Tenochtitlan, which had a layout of approximately 1100 by 910 meters (MIER TERÁN Y ROCHA, 2005). García Bravo had participated in the construction of Panama City in 1519 with Pedrarias Dávila (or Pedro Arias de Ávila), to whom the royal ordinances that determined the division of lots, the construction of streets, the central square, administrative buildings and the church, and the residences close to the square would be reserved for the noblest Spanish citizens (KINSBRUNER, 2005).

⁴ Nahuatl term that originally designates an autonomous political-administrative unit formed by semi-independent subdivisions based on kinship, territoriality, common property, division of labor and social stratification (LOCKHART, 1992).

⁵ The concept of Mesoamerica was created by Paul Kirchhoff (1960) in 1943, based on a series of common characteristics of the peoples found there that determined a cultural macro-region. This concept has undergone revisions, but it was an important starting point for the study of the region.

⁶ Place to practice the Pelota Game, a ritual activity.

⁷ Latin word derived from Greek and from which plaza or square originates. In the image, it appears on the central left side.

⁸ Founded in 1337, from a division of Mexico-Tenochtitlan, but incorporated into this one in 1473.

Figure 1: Hernán Cortés (assigned). Map of Tenochtitlan (detail), 1524. Courtesy of the Newberry Library, Chicago, United States (Ayer 655.51. C8 1524b).

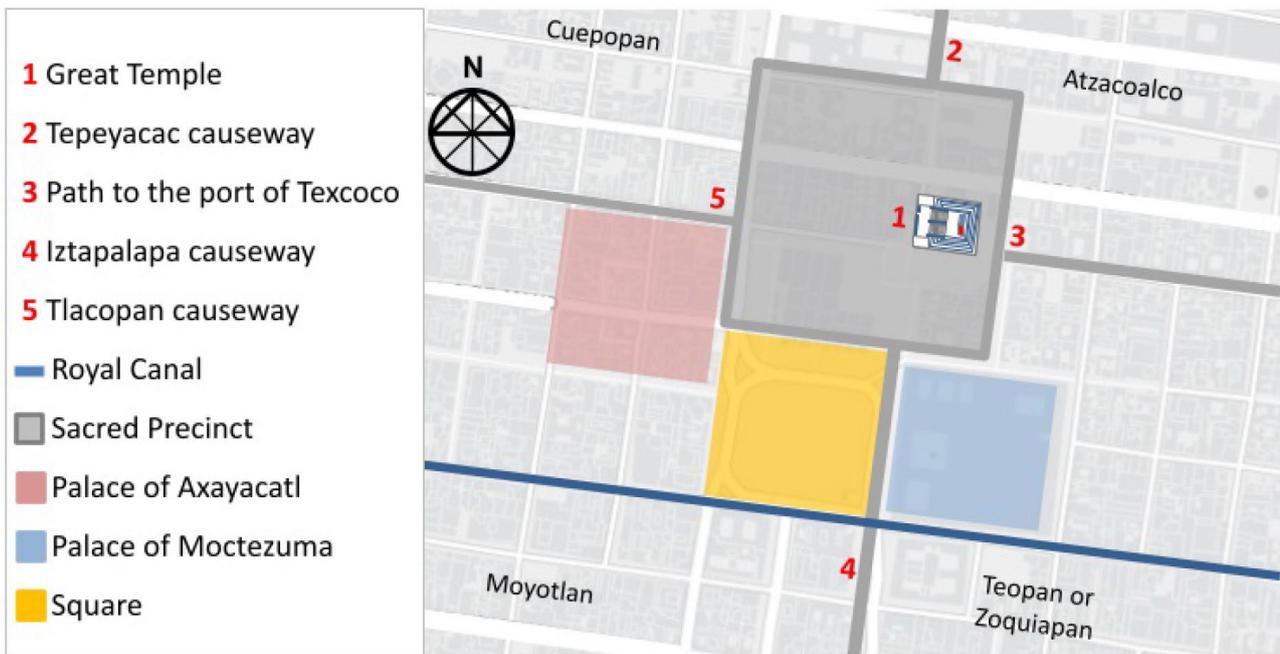
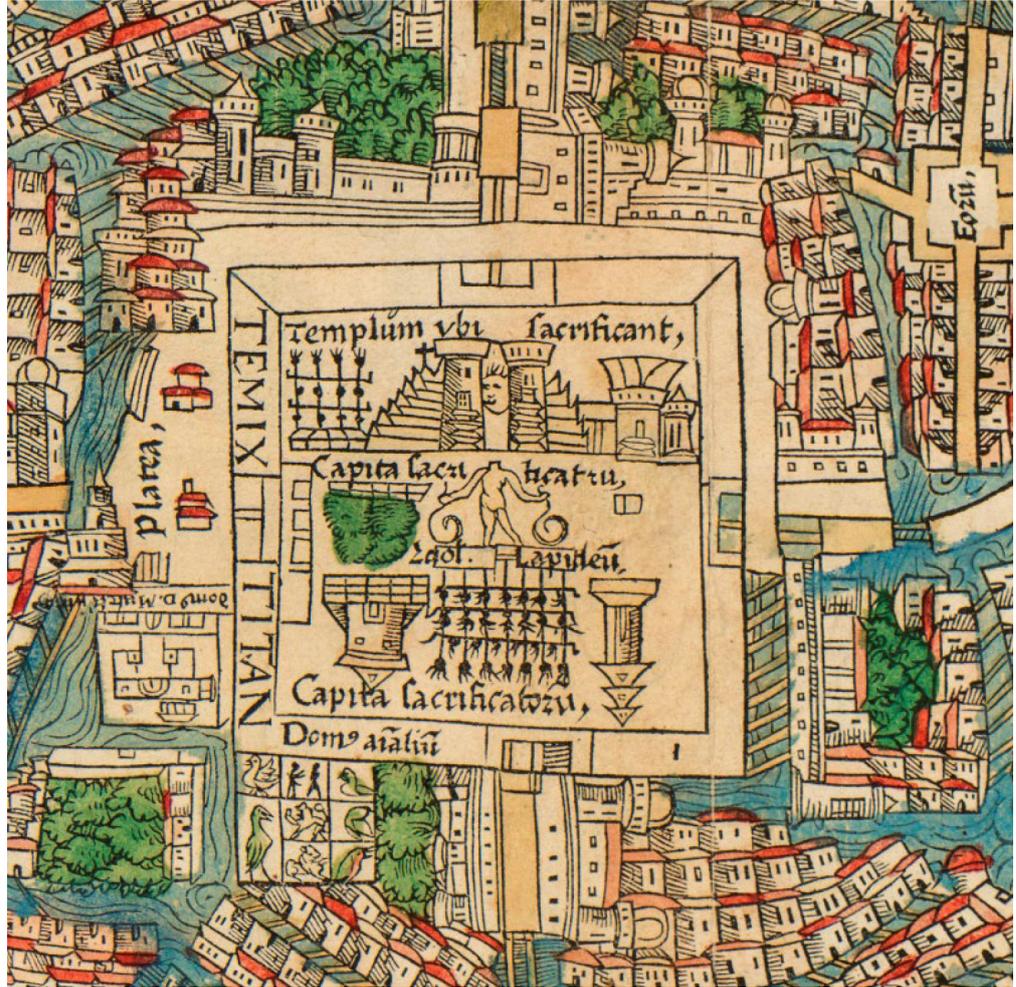


Figure 2: Layout of the central Mexico-Tenochtitlan area. Graphic layout by the author on the current map of Mexico City from the “Digital Public Innovation Agency – Mexico City’s Open Geographic Information System (SIGCDMX)”.



Figure 3: Alonso de Santa Cruz (assigned). Map of Mexico City (detail), c. 1550. Parchment, 75 x 114 cm. Courtesy of Uppsala University Library, Sweden.

In a symbolic act of ideological overlap, the ceremonial site was destroyed, but the stones from the temples were used in the new buildings. The main roads, the orthogonal structure, the location of the power buildings and the large square were maintained, which became the political stage of the colonial city⁹. In 1524, the first minutes of the municipal administration were recorded¹⁰, which was installed in the former Palace of Axayacatl, a building that also became the residence of Cortés and seat of the Viceroyalty of New Spain, from 1535. In 1532, the City Hall moved to the south of the square, where the Foundry House and the prison were also installed. In 1562, the viceroy took over the building on the east side, above the former Moctezuma Palace, now the National Palace. The

Main Church, to the north, was built between 1525 and 1532 on a provisional basis and 0 (Figure 3), facing west, presents a general view of the area, with an emphasis on the Main Church.

In April 1524, the properties around the square received an extension of land exclusively for the construction of portals (CIUDAD DE MEXICO, 1889) to create visual uniformity, which reveals a concern with urban aesthetics.

Commercial activities extended to practically the entire square: to the southwest, at the Portal of Merchants (on which Rodrigo de Albornoz's building was located); to the southeast, at the Portal of Flores (on which the

⁹ The name "Mexico City" only occurred from the 1530s onwards, and even after that, there are documents with names such as Temestítan, Tenxutiltan México, México Tenochtitlan (MUNDY, 2015).

¹⁰ Between 1521 and 1524, Hernán Cortés established a residence and administrative council in Coyoacán, but there are no preserved municipal minutes from that period.

Figure 4: Council of the Indies. Plan of the Main Square in Mexico, adjacent buildings and streets and the Canal Real, c.1562, pen drawing on paper, 46 x 65,5 cm. Ministry of culture and sports. General Archive of the Indies, Seville, Spain (AGI, MP-MEXICO, 3).

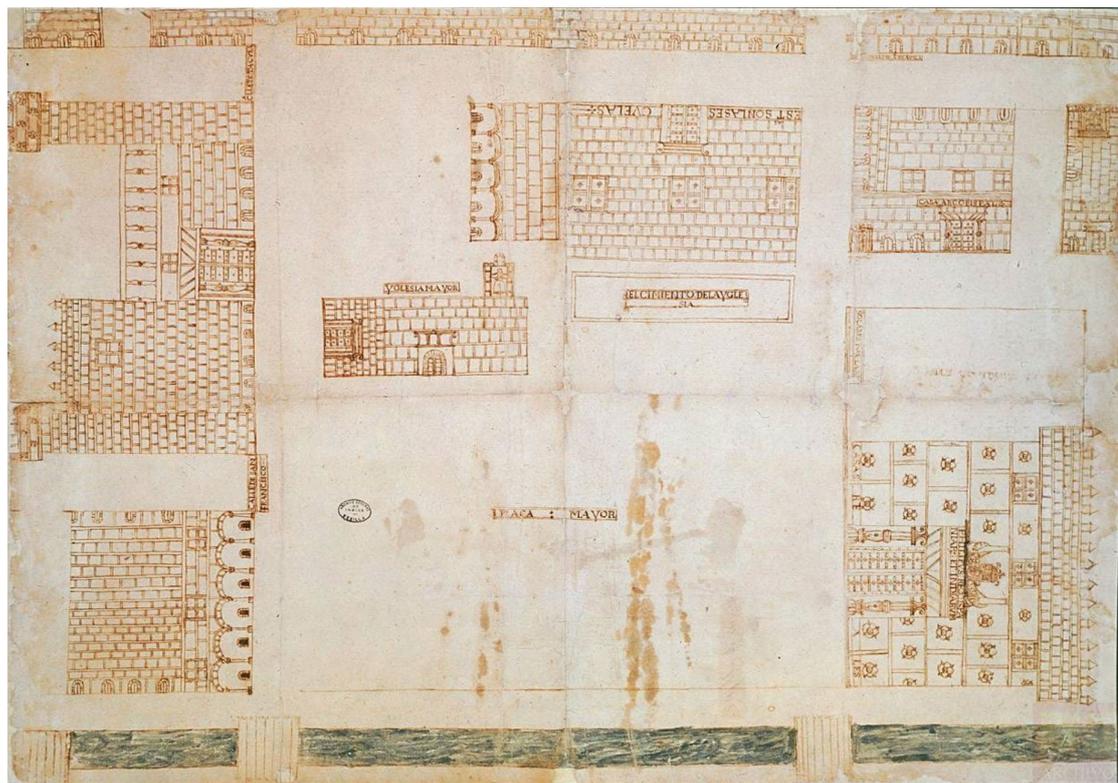
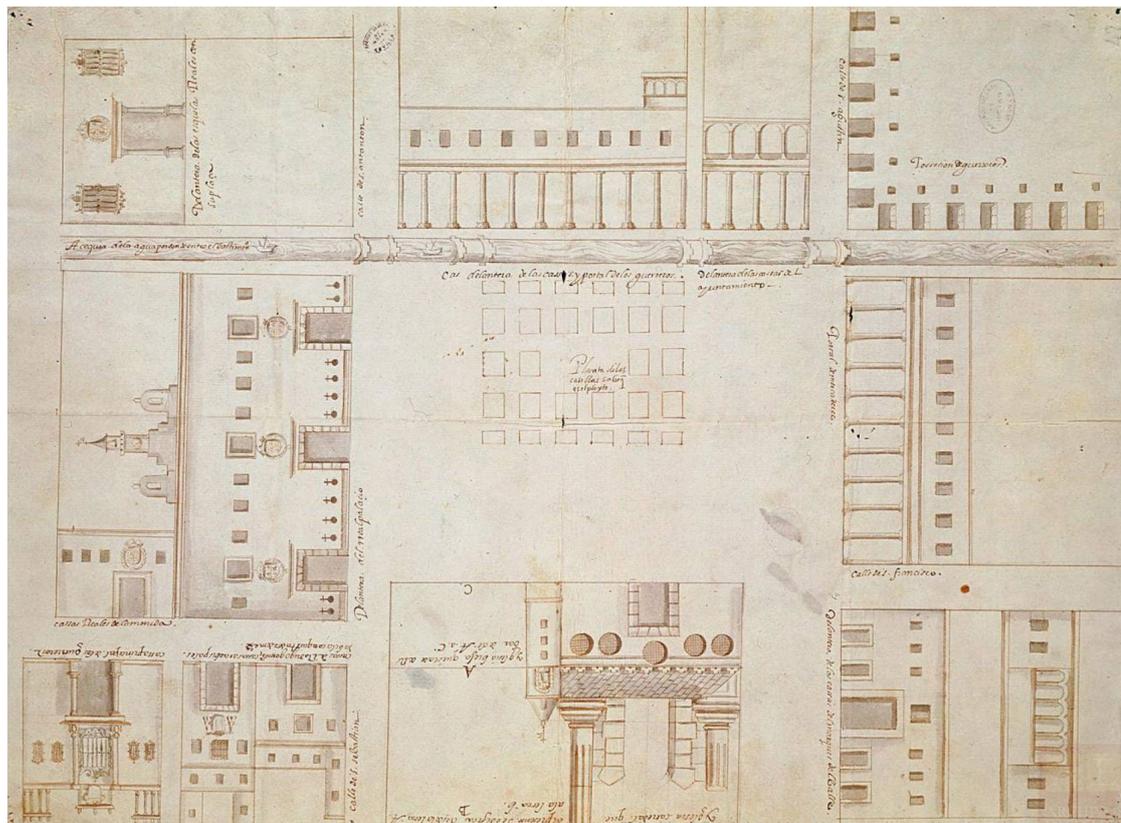


Figure 5: Council of the Indies. Plan of the Main Square in Mexico, adjacent buildings and streets, c.1596, pen drawing on paper, 42 x 56 cm. Ministry of culture and sports. General Archive of the Indies, Seville, Spain (AGI, MP-MEXICO, 47).



residence of Marina Flores Gutierrez de la Caballería and treasurer Alonso de Estrada was located); the Spanish merchants in the western area of the square, starting the Parián Market¹¹ and taking the indigenous market there to the Volador square¹² (LEÓN CAZARES, 1982; RUBIAL GARCÍA, 2012), in an attempt to exclude the Amerindian trade from the main stage of the city.

In the Minutes of April 14, 1527, the city hall started to name the large square as the “*largest square in this city*”¹³ (CIUDAD DE MÉXICO, 1889, p. 129, translated by André Mascarenhas). Two plans of the Main Square, one from around 1562 (Figure 4) and the other from around 1596 (Figure 5), demonstrate a substantial alteration in the architecture around it: in the first, oriented to the north, an aspect of a medieval fortress; in the second, oriented to the south, a Renaissance style, where its complete occupation can be seen, including the University, which was first in the northwest corner.

In addition to being used for religious celebrations, bullfights, parties, official announcements, protocol parades, royal celebrations, local and imported markets and theaters, executions of sentences on the scaffold and gallows also took place in the square, installed next to the water supply (ALAMÁN, 1969; RUBIAL GARCÍA, 2012). Thus, demarcating the space as a place of communication of the new order and its justice, in an attempt to impose a Spanish way of life.

The image of the Plaza Mayor in Mexico City was registered by visitors and residents, such as Francisco Cervantes de Salazar who, in “Mexico en 1554”,

highlighted its extension, planning, the variety of foreign products sold on the market, as well as the architecture of the buildings around it, as exemplified by the dialogue between Zuazo and Alfaro in his work, although there was no mention of the indigenous people in that place:

Zuazo: We are already in the square. Say if you have ever seen another equal in grandeur and majesty.

Alfaro: I certainly don't remember any of them, nor do I believe that in both worlds there can be equals. My God! How flat and extensive! How happy! How it is adorned by the tall and superb buildings to the four winds! What a regularity! What a beauty! What distribution and order! Truly, if those front portals were removed, an entire army would fit in it!¹⁴. (CERVANTES DE SALAZAR, 2001, p. 26, translated by André Mascarenhas).

If, in Mexico-Tenochtitlan, the epicenter was the sacred place, the pre-existing Amerindian monumental square became the main point of the new city (Figure 6) with the permanence of the indigenous market in its center. Space that was later occupied by the Spaniards, with the establishment of Spanish institutions of power. The dimension of the square, currently called Constitution Square or, popularly, Zócalo, considering the roads that border it, is approximately 180 × 220 meters, which basically corresponds to the area of the Mexica square, considering that the southern part of the ceremonial site was a little ahead of the Cathedral. Alberto Nicolini (1997) attributed an even greater dimension to the square from the times of Cortés (240 x 350 meters), considering the area of the Main Church, Marquis Square and Minor Square.

¹¹ The name “Parián” derives from the Manila market, where many Filipino items and merchants came from. First, a wooden headquarters was built and, in 1703, its permanent headquarters was inaugurated, which would only be demolished in 1843.

¹² Volador is the name of a ritual performance performed by the Mexicas on a pole installed in an open space.

¹³ Original text: plaza mayor de esta Cibdad (sic).

¹⁴ Original text: Zuzo: Estamos ya en la plaza. Examina bien si has visto otra que le iguale en grandeza y majestad. Alfaro: Ciertamente que no recuerdo ninguna, ni creo que en ambos mundos pueda encontrarse igual. ¡Dios mío!, ¡cuán plana y extensa!, ¡qué alegre!, ¡qué adornada de altos y soberbios edificios, por todos cuatro vientos!, ¡qué regularidad!, ¡qué belleza!, ¡qué disposición y asiento! En verdad que si se quitasen de en medio aquellos portales de enfrente, podría caber en ella un ejército entero.

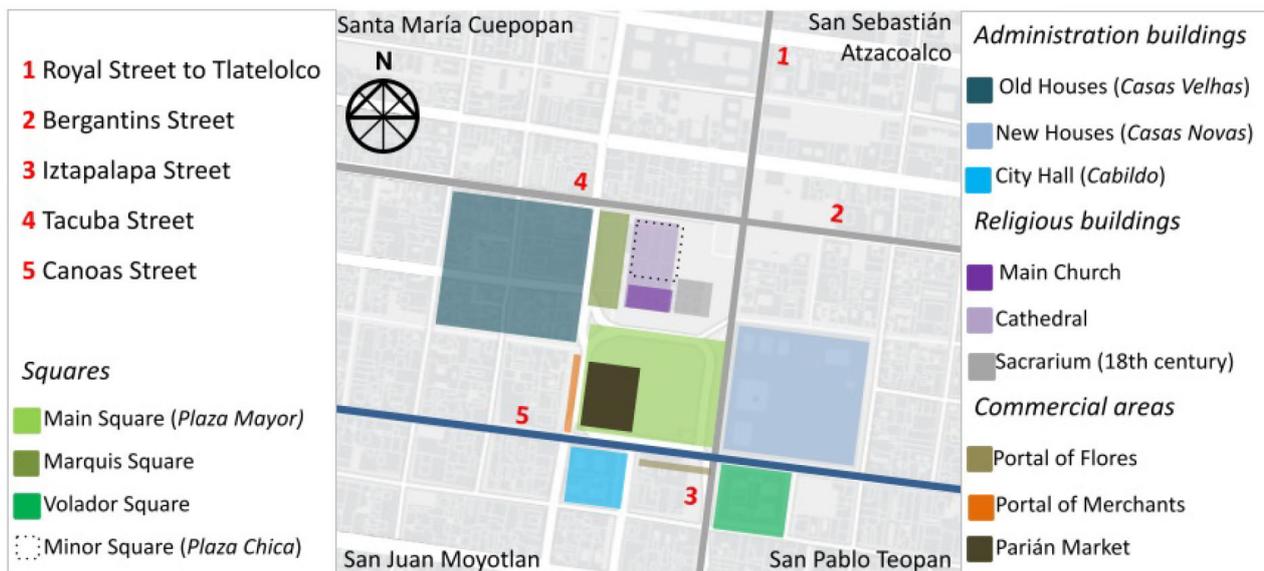


Figure 6: Layout of the central area of Mexico City in the first colonial period. Graphic layout of the author on the current map of Mexico City from the “Digital Public Innovation Agency – Mexico City’s Open Geographic Information System (SIGCDMX)”.

Mexico City’s Main Square became a monumental space surrounded by palaces, portals and a cathedral, and an active space in all public spheres that communicates the social rules of the powers installed there. Although the central area was destined for the Spaniards, the indigenous people were present in the markets, in the constructions, in the works of cleaning the canals and even as landowners around the center¹⁵ (CIUDAD DE MÉXICO, 1889). The disregard of Amerindian aspects in the textual and iconographic descriptions of the center of Mexico City indicate the Eurocentric production of knowledge, promoting the “*hiding of a preexisting cultural identity*”¹⁶ (CASTRO-GÓMEZ, 2005, p. 81, translated by André Mascarenhas) and producing an alterity that continually suffers violence, including epistemic ones.

Urban models with a central square were not new to the Iberians, as will be seen below, but they also existed in Mesoamerica as an integral part of monumental centers of power.

IBERIAN BACKGROUND

As the territories of the Iberian Peninsula were taken over from Muslim Arabs by Christians, new cities emerged, some with orthogonal layout, built along the Camino de Santiago de Compostela (SÁNCHEZ DE CARMONA, 2013), such as Sanguesa (1104), Puente La Reina (1134) and Bribeñsa (1208). It is also worth mentioning the 13th century Aragonese cities, such as Mosqueruela, from 1262 and Villareal, from 1272, founded “*to repopulate the territory from a larger square, where the main streets crossed orthogonally, elongated by small landowners, who structured the surrounding space, both on their roads and on their land*”¹⁷ (BIELZA DE ORY, 2002, [s.p.], translated by André Mascarenhas). In the case of Spain, it is necessary to highlight the set of norms entitled “*Siete Partidas*”, by Alfonso X, “*Alfonso the Wise*”, which brings together compilations of 13th century laws and became a guide for cities formed from the model of military camp with definitions about their walls and about the presence of a market in a square

¹⁵ In the municipal act of April 28, 1525, when land was granted to Pedro Solís, the door of Juan Belasquez indian (or “*al indio Juan Belasquez*”, as MIER Y TERÁN ROCHA put it) is mentioned as one of its limits. p. 169), although the granting of its land was not mentioned in the previous minutes.

¹⁶ Original text: ocultamento de uma identidade cultural preexistente

¹⁷ Original text: para repoblar el territorio a partir de una plaza mayor, en la que se cruzaban ortogonalmente las calles principales, que alargadas por los “*quiñoneros*” estructuraban el espacio rural circundante, tanto en sus caminos como en su parcelario.

with porticoes (PAGE, 2008). It is important to add that, as stated by Manuel Sánchez de Carmona (1989), in the urban models of the High Middle Ages, there were different squares for the Church, for the market (inside or outside walls) and for the castle, with the municipal administrative headquarters being located in the market square, but not the church. At the end of the Reconquest process, Santa Fé also became a city in the orthogonal pattern, a configuration previously acquired as a military camp.

This history informs that the Iberian urbanistic practice in shaping a space with a main square that would guide the city's ordering predates Renaissance theories, just as occurred in the first Hispanic-American cities. Also considering the ancient occupations of the Romans, Muslims and of the Christian kingdoms, it is understood that these peoples contributed culturally to forging, materially and socially, the spaces of power of what would become Spain.

THE SQUARE OF VALLADOLID

Valladolid was founded in the 11th century¹⁸ and had significant political and legal prominence, being a royal residence, seat of Court meetings and drafting of laws. Since the 13th century, intense commercial activity has been developed in a square that has gained importance with the formation of a merchant district. In the 15th century, the Court decided to transfer the seat of the municipal council from Santa Maria Square (now University Square) to the then Market Square¹⁹, also attributing political functions to that space with irregular layout that became the political center of the city.

The portals on the facades of some buildings derive from the use of the horizontal beams of the constructions

to support the upper floors that advanced to the street, forming a covered space on the ground floor supported by columns, generally used for commerce (REBOLLO MATIAS, 1989).

On September 21, 1561, a fire of great proportions reached part of the city, including the Market Square. Francisco de Salamanca carried out the reconstruction project, who completed it in 1562 after corrections requested by Felipe II. The work continued for the following decades, being in charge of Salamanca until 1576, continued by his son Juan de Salamanca, from 1577 to 1585, and completed by Juan Herrera in 1592.

The reform enlarged the square, having with 85.5 x 128 meters taken by the center, being a quadrilateral whose dimensions varied from 85.5 to 89 meters and from 125.4 to 129 meters (REBOLLO MATIAS, 1989). The buildings around it were standardized, as well as the portals, while the nearby streets were expanded and, as far as possible, converged on the square (Figure 7). A new building for the city council was built opposite the Monastery of San Francisco (demolished in the 19th century), and 400 meters from the main square, the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption of Valladolid was built, the main religious building in the city, designed by Herrera and inaugurated in 1585.

Valladolid's project is credited with the Renaissance ideals in relation to geometry, order, proportion, symmetry and uniformity, which, in the second half of the 16th century, had already found echoes in the Iberian Peninsula as well. In Spain, Diego de Sagredo wrote the first local treatise in 1526, entitled "Las medidas del romano", covering issues related to architecture and the city (ROJAS MIX, 2002), so that in 1561 discussions on Renaissance theories were already recurrent. It is important to note the discussion about the formation of the central square with regular

¹⁸ A primitive nucleus is mentioned in 1062 and the Council was already formed in 1095, when Count Pedro Ansúrez started the development of the village (FERNÁNDEZ DEL HOYO, 2013).

¹⁹ The municipal council met at the São Francisco Convent, built in the 13th century on the edge of the Market Square, and may also have occupied another building on the same square before the fire of 1561 (FERNÁNDEZ DEL HOYO, 2013).



Figure 7: Bentura Seco. Valladolid (detail), 1738, ink on paper, 110 x 80 cm. Courtesy of the Municipal Archives of Valladolid (sig. 20.01 – PL 90).

geometry linked, somehow, to the question of the orthogonal city. In this regard, Miguel Rojas-Mix (2002) and Lucía Mier y Terán Rocha (2005) raise the different theories on the urban reticular layout in America, including the influence of classical Renaissance theories, which are refuted, precisely because of the long previous tradition of using a central square and orthogonal schemes in the Iberian Peninsula itself²⁰. Practically, Vitruvian influences are not found so explicitly in the royal instructions until 1573, when the *Ordenanzas de descubrimientos, nueva población y pacificación de las Indias*, of Felipe II, appealed directly to Vitruvius, as Jay Kinsbruner

(2005) demonstrates in detail, with specific rules for the squares. Therefore, a dialogue between certain characteristics of Valladolid square and the Renaissance is admitted, but not the totality of its creation. First, because cities with a central square had already been developed in the Iberian Peninsula since the Middle Ages, then, because the Mexican square was already formed and widespread, even before the Renaissance arrived in America. In Mexico City, the Renaissance influence will be noticed, mainly, in the change of architecture around the square in the end of the 16th century, as can be seen in the comparison between Figures 4 and 5.

²⁰ The other theories addressed by the cited authors, in addition to the influence of the Renaissance, are: spontaneous urbanization, permanence of indigenous urbanization and continuity of peninsular and European urbanism. Mier y Terán Rocha also adds the theory of the conjunction of indigenous permanence with the continuity of Iberian urbanism, which we defend in this article.

Table 1: Characteristics of the main squares in Mesoamerica, Mexico-Tenochtitlan, Mexico City and Valladolid City. Prepared by the author.

Main Square Features	Mesoamerican tradition (since 200 AD)	Mexico-Tenochtitlan (until 1521)	Mexico City (project from 1522)	Valladolid (project from 1561)
Monumental space				
City epicenter				
Commercial area		(*)		
Religious center				symbolic
Political center		(**)		
Various ceremonies		(***)		
Monumental architecture				
Uniformity of buildings			partially	
Portals around the square			partially	

(*) Its location points to the hypothesis of having been a commercial center to supply the elites.

(**) The square was flanked by power buildings: governors' residences and the sacred place itself, becoming part of the complex.

(***) There are no records of ceremonies that took place at the site, but its monumental dimensions and strategic location allow this possibility.

The comparison between the central squares of the Mesoamerican tradition, of Mexico-Tenochtitlan, Mexico City and Valladolid (Table 1), informs that:

- elements of the Mesoamerican tradition remained in Mexico City, although some of them disappeared in Mexico-Tenochtitlan;
- in Mexico City, some important elements are incorporated into Iberian squares, albeit partially: the portals (except the Cathedral and the Viceroy Palace) and the uniformity of the buildings (to the south and west of the square, as shown in Figure 5);
- the great Mesoamerican differential is the monumentality of the center of power, including the square and the architectures around it;

- the main square has a commercial and ceremonial vocation in all traditions;
- in Valladolid, religious power appears symbolically in ceremonies, as the main church is far from the square.

In Madrid, which became the royal capital in 1561, the Main Square was built in the space of an old medieval market square with an irregular layout. Begun in the 1560s, it was only completed in 1622, although it opened in 1620, although the city celebrated its 400th anniversary in 2017, celebrating Juan Gómez de Mora's final project. Madrid's square (Figure 8) reached 94 x 129 meters (DEL RÍO LÓPEZ, 2016) and its configuration completely surrounded by architecture made it a large courtyard of the city, the court's stage

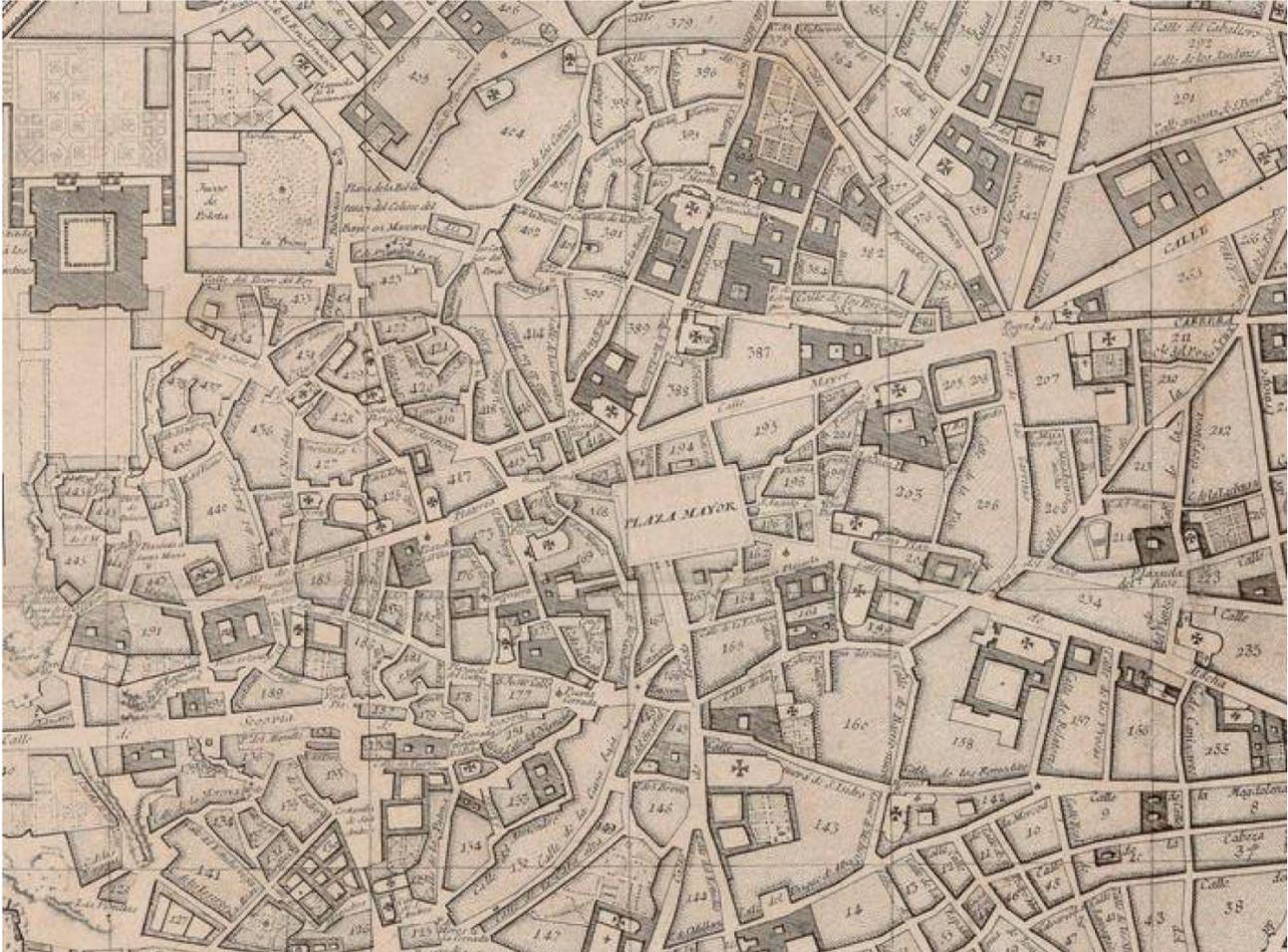


Figure 8: Tomás López de Vargas Machuca. Geometric plan of Madrid dedicated and presented to the king, our lord Carlos III, by the hands of the honorable lord Count of Floridablanca (detail), 1785, ink on paper, 68 x 98 cm. Courtesy of the National Library of France, Department of Maps and Plans (GE C-9301).

for official, civil, commercial and religious activities, although it did not contain within its perimeter any royal or religious building²¹. It is seen as a direct product of the experiences in Valladolid, despite both having Mexico City's Main Square as a predecessor.

Therefore, the original transcultural creation of the Mexican square is perceived as a fundamental space in the modern urban organization. This finding occurs when the urban experiences of native peoples are triggered, hidden by the colonality of power that

imposed the universalist and Eurocentric civilizational discourse. The decolonial attitude in the dimension of seeing proposes, as the Mexican art historian Joaquín Barriendos (2019, p. 42, translated by André Mascarenhas) points out “an inter-epistemic visual dialogue between visual regimes canonized by Eurocentric modernity and other visual cultures that were racialized and hierarchized by modernity/coloniality project²²”. It becomes necessary, therefore, to insert Amerindian epistemology into studies on the spaces of power created in America and to consider its transatlantic repercussions.

²¹ Regarding the Main Square in Madrid, see SALVAT, 2019.

²² Original text: um diálogo visual interepistêmico entre os regimes visuais canonizados pela modernidade eurocêntrica e as outras culturas visuais que foram racializadas e hierarquizadas pelo projeto da modernidade/colonialidade

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Squares are urban elements of different cultures over time (BENEVOLO, 2015), including Mesoamerican peoples, who established a constructive tradition of monumental spaces and buildings to serve a hierarchical and theocratic society. Mexico-Tenochtitlan, one of the largest cities in the world in the 16th century, was unique to the Castilians and its reformulation after 1521 initiated a symbolic process of overlapping powers.

Main Square concentrated all the identity disputes of the colonization and coloniality process in Mexico City. The urban Renaissance ideals of grandeur and spatial order, which reflected the social order, were already there beforehand and were informed to the Court through textual and iconographic materials, producing the image of this monumental center of power that did not exist in Europe. Valladolid had a close relationship with the Hispanic-American colonies, as it was the seat of the Valladolid debate (1550-1551), summoned by Carlos V to discuss colonial policy and the indigenous question, having as protagonists Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda and Bartolomé de Las Casas.

In Valladolid and Madrid, the grandeur of the square was sought as an image of modernity, as it already existed in Mexico City, but its sinuous medieval structure prevented an extension of this project. On both sides of the Atlantic, however, the main square was the stage for performances of social, political and religious rites that affirmed order and power.

The transdisciplinary and transcultural analysis in the formation of Main Square is based on critical thinking about traditional narratives and values cultures despised by the project of coloniality. Decolonial action involves cultural decolonization, as the concept of transmodernity by Enrique Dussel (2015) points out, who proposes cross-cutting critical intercultural dialogue as an instrument of freedom, seeking to deconstruct exclusionary universalities in favor of pluriversity.

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