

Proposed Title

“The Place for Everyone: the Origins of the City Plaza in Spanish America”

Research Question

What are the historical origins of the colonial Latin America plaza? Where did Spaniards and get the idea to build their new cities centered on open, public spaces?

Explanation

The majority of Latin America’s colonial cities were built with a plaza at their center, or at port side. This seems unusual as the construction of plazas in Spain and Portugal was not known at the time except maybe in a couple of rare cases. I want to look at a number of possibilities for the plaza’s origins, whether it was the Roman’s garrison towns, the cities of other European nations, such as France or Germany, or if it was possibly even influenced by indigenous cities in the America’s most of which had plazas of some form. By looking at the research and primary sources on Renaissance urban planning in Europe and on some of the earliest cities in Latin America, such as Santo Domingo, Havana, and Vera Cruz, I hope to find out.

Primary Sources

Alvorado, Pedro de. *An Account of the Conquest of Guatemala in 1524*. New York: The Cortés Society, 1969.

Alvorado describes the original planning of the capital of Guatemala.

Collection of Rio de Janeiro Maps on Brazilbrazil.com <http://www.brazil.com/riomaps.html>

This give a good sense of the location and number of public squares in the early colonial city.

Fernandez de Oviedo y Valdez, Gonzalo. *Historia general de las Indias (1535-1547)*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959. [originally published in 1535]

Oviedo covers many urban topics regarding the Indians.

Las Casas, Bartolome de. *Destruction of the Indies*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2003.

Las Casas describes Indian cities during the conquest.

Latin American City Maps at the University of Chicago. <http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/latam-cities/>

Again, this is the raw information regarding the original plans and shapes of Spain’s colonial cities.

Secondary Sources

Foster, George M. *Culture and Conquest: the American Spanish Heritage*. New York: Viking, 1960.

Fraser, Valerie. *The Architecture of Conquest: Building in the Viceroyalty of Peru*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

Kubler, George. “Open-grid town plans in Europe and the Americas.” In R. Schaedel, J. Hardoy, and N. Kinzer, eds., *Urbanization in the Americas from its Beginnings to the Present*, 327-42. The Hague: Mouton: 1978.

Low, Setha M. *On the Plaza: The Politics of Public Space and Culture*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000.