The Plaza Mayor and the Shaping of Baroque Madrid

*The Plaza Mayor and the Shaping of Baroque Madrid* examines the transformation of Madrid from a secondary market town to the capital of the worldwide Spanish Habsburg empire. Focusing on the planning and building of Madrid’s principal public monument, the Plaza Mayor, it is based on an analysis of archival documents, architectural drawings, and the surviving built fabric of the city itself. Jesús Escobar demonstrates how the shaping of the city square and its environs reflects the bureaucratic nature of government in Madrid, chosen in 1561 to serve as capital of Spain. He also examines the careful planning of the city, with particular regard to the necessities of housing and public works that accompanied its new status as capital. The process reveals the sophistication of town planning in late-sixteenth-century Spain and forces a reconsideration of Spanish urbanism within the contexts of contemporary European and Spanish colonial developments.

Jesús Escobar is Associate Professor of Art History at Fairfield University. A Fulbright Fellow and Chester Dale Fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, he is a scholar of Baroque architecture.
Juan López de Hoyos, Arms of Madrid, folio 1 recto of *Declaración y Armas de Madrid* (Madrid: Pierres Cosin, 1569). (Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid, R 12870; photo, Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid.)
The Plaza Mayor and the Shaping of Baroque Madrid

Jesús Escobar

Fairfield University
For My Parents
# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Illustrations</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>xvii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Note on the Sources</td>
<td>xxiii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviations</td>
<td>xxv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Madrid, Town and Court</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Architecture and Bureaucracy</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Sixteenth-Century Initiatives</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 The Panadería and Its Impact</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Seventeenth-Century Reforms</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 The Plaza Mayor of Madrid as Political Symbol</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epilogue</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A: Regulations for Urban Reforms in Madrid, 1591</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B: Property Ownership and Residents of the Plaza Mayor in 1618</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C: The Plaza Mayor, 1630–1830</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONTENTS

viii
List of Illustrations

1 Madrid, Plaza Mayor, view of the northern range from the southeast. page 2
2 Juan de la Corte, View of the Plaza Mayor of Madrid in 1623, 1630s. Oil on canvas. 3
3 Map of the Plaza Mayor of Madrid and its environs. 10
4 Plaza Mayor, view through portico along the southern range to the Calle Imperial. 11
5 Plaza Mayor, Madrid, detail of windows along the eastern range. 12
6 Plaza Mayor, Madrid, municipal building in the southern range. 13
7 Juan Gómez de Mora, Elevation drawing of the house of Juan Gómez de Arratia along the Calle Nueva, 1619. Pen and color washes on paper. 15
8 Anton van den Wyngaerde, Panoramic view of Madrid, c. 1562. Pen and color washes on paper. 18
9 Artist unknown, Portrait of Philip II, from Lodovico Guicciardini, Descrittione di tutti i Paezi Bassi (Antwerp: Christofano Plantino, 1581). 22
10 Pedro Peret after Juan de Herrera, Bird’s-eye view of the Monastery of El Escorial, from Las Estampas de la Fábrica de San Lorenzo el Real de El Escorial (Madrid, 1583–9). 23
11 Jan Cornelisz Vermeyen, L’Aqueduct de Segovie and Le Chasteau de Madrid, 1536. Etching. 27
12 Wyngaerde, Sketch of the Monastery of San Jerónimo, from a study for a view of Madrid. Pen on paper. 29
13 Map of Madrid in 1535.
14 Anton van den Wyngaerde, Study for a view of Madrid, c. 1562. Pen on paper.
15 Anton van den Wyngaerde, Study for a view of Madrid, detail of Plaza de San Salvador.
16 Plaza de la Villa, Madrid.
17 Artist unknown, Map of hunting grounds in the vicinity of Madrid, detail, 1560s. Pen on paper.
18 Map of the Arrabal de Santa Cruz.
20 Anton van den Wyngaerde, Panoramic view of Madrid, detail of southern limits of Madrid within the walls and the Arrabal de Santa Cruz beyond.
21 Chinchón, Plaza Mayor, early sixteenth century.
23 Anton van den Wyngaerde, Panoramic view of Medina del Campo, detail with market square, 1565. Pen and color washes on paper.
24 Juan Gómez de Mora workshop, Elevation and section for window and upper-story residence in the Plaza Mayor, 1632. Pen and color washes on paper.
25 Juan Gómez de Mora, Plan of the ground-level shop of Jusepe de la Cueva in the Plaza Mayor, 1618. Pen on paper.
26 Anton van den Wyngaerde, Study for a view of Madrid, detail of Casa del Campo, c. 1562. Pen on paper.
27 Jehan Lhermite, El Pardo, from Le Passetemps, folio 98. Pen and color washes on paper.
28 Artist unknown, View of the royal retreat and gardens of Aranjuez, c. 1620.
29 Anton van den Wyngaerde, Panoramic view of the royal retreat and forest at Valsaín, detail, 1562. Pen and color washes on paper.
30 Map of Madrid: Growth between 1535 and 1600.
31 “De Wit” map of Madrid, c. 1650s. Etching.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

x
32 Pedro Teixeira, *Topographia de la Villa de Madrid*, 1656. 56
33 Teixeira, *Topographia de la Villa de Madrid*, detail of royal arms and dedication, 1656. 59
34 Antonio and Diego Sillero, Plan of the Luján chapel in the Church of San Pedro, Madrid, 1587. Pen on paper. 78
35 Alcalá de Henares, Calle Mayor, detail of a *sopportal*, or covered portico, mid-sixteenth century. 87
36 Juan de Valencia, Plan of the Plaza del Arrabal, detail of northern limit and the *manzana*. 88
37 Proposed location of Francisco de Sotomayor's Panadería in the Plaza Mayor, c. 1565. 91
38 Juan de Valencia, Plan for reform of the Plaza del Arrabal, 1581. Pen on paper. 96
39 Juan de Valencia, Plan for reform of the Plaza del Arrabal, detail of new *manzana*. 97
41 Artist unknown, *View of the Plaza Mayor of Madrid*, c. 1620. Oil on canvas. 105
42 Calle de la Cebadería, Valladolid, detail of porticoes. 106
43 Arch of the Cuchilleros and the Cava de San Miguel, Madrid. 108
44 Map of the Plaza Mayor in December 1586. 110
45 Panadería, facade, view from a southwestern balcony of the Plaza Mayor. 116
46 Panadería, detail of façade with 1992 mural program by Carlos Franco. 117
47 Map of Madrid in 1600, with reforms proposed by the Committee of Public Works in June 1590. 120
48 Monastery of El Escorial, Basilica, façade. 123
49 Juan Gómez de Mora workshop, Plan of the Plaza Mayor of Madrid, detail of the Panadería, c. 1625. 130
50 Panadería, ground-level arcade. 131
51 Juan de la Corte, *View of the Plaza Mayor of Madrid in 1623*, detail of the Panadería. 132

*LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS*

*xi*
52 Artist unknown, *View of the Plaza Mayor of Madrid*, detail of the Panadería.

53 Sebastiano Serlio, Elevation of a courtyard from the Chateau de Fountainbleau, from the Seventh Book on Architecture in *Tutte l’Opere di Architettura* (Venice: Francesco de’ Franceschi, 1600).

54 Naples, Palazzo Reale, façade by Domenico Fontana, begun 1599.

55 Granada, Palacio de la Chancellería, façade by Francisco del Castillo, 1584–7.


58 Photograph of the Plaza Mayor of Madrid with a garden in its center, late nineteenth century.

59 Francisco de Mora, Plan for reform of the Puerta de Guadalajara and Platería, 1597. Pen on paper.

60 Palencia, Calle Mayor, detail of porticoes.

61 Juan Gómez de Mora, Plan of the houses of Juan de Arce and Francisco Moreno at the intersection of Calle de Santiago and the Platería, 1613. Pen on paper.

62 Juan Gómez de Mora, Drawing of single-bay house elevation along the Platería, 1614. Pen and color washes on paper.

63 Reconstruction of Juan Gómez de Mora’s plan for the Plaza Mayor in September 1617.

64 Artist unknown, Drawing of a viewing stand for the Plaza Mayor, 1725.

65 Reconstruction of the Calle de Toledo entry to the Plaza Mayor in 1617.

66 Juan Gómez de Mora, Plan of the main story of the Carnicería, 1618.
67 Reconstruction of proposals for the reform of the Plaza Mayor by Juan Gómez de Mora, January 1620. 167

68 Juan Gómez de Mora, Plan of weigh house along the Calle de las Postas, 1620. 168

69 Juan Gómez de Mora, Plan of the Calle Nueva between the Puerta de Guadalajara and the Plaza Mayor, 1620. 170

70 Plan of manzana number 193, from the Planimetría General de Madrid of 1762. 172

71 Juan Gómez de Mora, Drawing of Calle Nueva houses along the westernmost edge of the cloth merchants range, 1620. Pen and color washes on paper. 173

72 Alcalá de Henares, detail of balcony, early seventeenth century. 174

73 Juan Gómez de Mora, Plan and elevation of the house of Catalina de Reynosa along the Calle de Santiago, 1619. Pen on paper. 175

74 Calle Imperial, Madrid, detail of pilasters along street adjacent to the Plaza Mayor. 176

75 Artist unknown, Place Mayor des Combats de Taureaux, detail of the Carte du Government de la Cour d'Espagne, early eighteenth century. Etching. 176

76 Juan Gómez de Mora workshop, Section drawing of upper-story residence in the Plaza Mayor, detail of balcony. 178

77 Teodoro de Ardemans, Section of viewing stand built into Plaza Mayor portico, from Gobierno politico de las Fabricas (Madrid: Francisco del Hierro, 1719). 179

78 Miguel Gómez de Mora, Plan of the Plaza Mayor with seating arrangement notations, 1626. 180

79 Manuel de Robles, Plan of the Plaza Mayor with names of vendors, c. 1625. Pen on paper. 181

80 Juan Gómez de Mora, Plan of the Plaza Mayor with market arrangement, c. 1625. Pen and color washes on paper. 182

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS xiii
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

81 Juan Gómez de Mora workshop, Plan of the Plaza Mayor market, detail of northern stalls and weigh stations.
82 Juan Gómez de Mora workshop, Plan of the Plaza Mayor market, detail of southern fruit and vegetable stands.
83 Juan van der Hamen y León, Still-Life with Sweets, 1622. Oil on canvas.
84 Map of Madrid in 1665, with lines indicating the reforms for ceremonial routes proposed in September 1620.
85 Manuel de Robles (?), Sketch of the Plaza Mayor with viewing stands and stage, 1625. Pen on paper.
86 Juan Gómez de Mora, Plan and elevation of stage in the Plaza Mayor for a Corpus Christi celebration, 1644. Pen on paper.
87 Juan Gómez de Mora, Elevation of stage in the Plaza Mayor for a Corpus Christi celebration, detail of stage and mobile scenery.
88 Artist unknown, Plan of the Plaza Mayor of Mexico City, 1596. Pen on paper.
89 Valladolid, Plaza Mayor, view of eastern range.
90 Sabioneta, view of street leading to piazza before Santa Maria Assunta.
91 Miguel Gómez de Mora, Elevation drawing of the Carnicería range of the Plaza Mayor, 1626. Pen on paper.
92 Reconstruction of the Carnicería range of the Plaza Mayor.
93 Bologna, Piazza Maggiore, Portico dei Banchi, begun by Giacomo Barozzi da Vignola, 1565.
94 Aveline, Turin, Ville capitale de Piemont, et Residence du Duc Savoye, 1692.
95 Giovanni Francesco Bordino, Plan of Rome as a Star-Shaped City, from De rebus praeclaris gestis a Sisto V (Rome, 1588).
96 Paris, Place des Vosges (Royale), detail of royal pavilion.
97 Place des Vosges, detail of buildings along the northern range.


100 Córdoba, Plaza de la Corredora, view of northeastern range.

101 Plaza de la Corredora, detail of portico and house elevations.

102 Salamanca, Plaza Mayor and Ayuntamiento, built by Alberto Churriguera and Andrés García de Quiñones, 1729–88.

103 Francisco Domingo de Belbalet, Fortification of Lima, 1682.

104 Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, View of Lima, from the manuscript, *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno*, 1612–16.

105 Pedro de Teixeira, *Topographia de la Villa de Madrid*, detail of the Plaza Mayor and environs.


108 Juan Gómez de Mora workshop, Plan of the Plaza Mayor of Madrid with stage in southwest corner for an *auto de fé*, 1632. Pen on paper.

109 Juan Gómez de Mora workshop, Plan of a stage for an *auto de fé* in the Plaza Mayor, 1632. Pen on paper.

110 Calle del Infierno, arch at the entry from the Calle Mayor.

111 Juan Gómez de Mora, Plan of the Plaza Mayor of Madrid, with four appended façade elevations, 1636. Pen on parchment and paper.

112 Juan Gómez de Mora, Plan of the Plaza Mayor of Madrid, detail of underside of the northern range.

*List of Illustrations*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illustration Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>113</td>
<td>Martín Fison, Designs for a clock and moon dial for the towers of the Panadería, 1625. Pen on paper.</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>114</td>
<td>Artist unknown, <em>View of the Plaza Mayor of Madrid during a bullfight</em>, before 1672. Oil on canvas.</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>115</td>
<td>Panadería, detail of city arms along arcade.</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>116</td>
<td>José Villareal, Plan of a new staircase for the Panadería, 1654.</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>117</td>
<td>Juan García de Gonzalo, Plan of a project for rebuilding the Panadería, 1672.</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118</td>
<td>Panadería, Madrid, detail of western tower and turret.</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>119</td>
<td>Miguel Pérez, Proposal for an enclosure at the Calle de Toledo entry to the Plaza Mayor, 1679. Pen with color washes on paper.</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td>Francisco Rizzi, <em>Auto de Fé in the Plaza Mayor of Madrid in 1680</em>, 1683. Oil on canvas.</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>121</td>
<td>Artist unknown, View of the Plaza Mayor in ruins, 1790. Etching.</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>122</td>
<td>Francisco Hernández, Luis Pons, and Juan de Villanueva, Plan for market arrangement in the Plaza Mayor, 1800.</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123</td>
<td>Artist unknown, Design for a market stall in the Plaza Mayor, 1800.</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS**  

xvi
Acknowledgments

The genesis of this book is in my father’s hometown of Valle de Guadalupe, Michoacán. There, at the age of nine, I walked in a nocturnal procession of an image of Mexico’s patron saint, the Virgin of Guadalupe. With a candle in hand, I accompanied my grandmother along the streets of the town staring in wonder at the houses we passed. Some were decorated with ephemeral chapels for the occasion; others stood illuminated for all to appreciate. Just as the procession had begun, it ended amid crowds gathered in la plaza.

In Valle de Guadalupe, life revolves around the plaza, or town square. With two stores, a small jail, and the town church in its perimeter, it is the place where the civic and the sacred meet. The role of Valle de Guadalupe’s plaza as the nucleus of a community is reenacted in countless towns and cities throughout the Spanish world. This book seeks to offer a contribution toward an understanding of that centrality by examining one of the most important of all Spanish city squares, the Plaza Mayor of Madrid.

Although my interest in public space evolves in part from childhood experiences in Mexico, it is informed more substantially by the study of Renaissance and Baroque architectural history. For this knowledge and the pursuit of it, I am indebted to many institutions and individuals. I owe my primary institutional debt to Princeton University. Princeton provided the initial funding for archival work in Spain when this project was a dissertation, and, years later, awarded a subvention from the Publications Committee of the Department of Art and Archaeology for a much-expanded book. Other research support came from a Fulbright Fellowship, a Chester Dale Fellowship from

xvii
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xix
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on the edge of Sacramento became transformed into a plaza. There, under the shade of a sycamore tree and in full public view of passersby, family members and friends gathered and shared stories of our loss for the length of three hot, summer days. I dedicate this book to the memory of my father and to my mother, Sara García Escobar, who continues to reside at that new plaza in the heart of California.

New York City, January 2003

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

xxi
A Note on the Sources

The primary materials for this study derive from the municipal and notarial archives of Madrid. All documents cited in the text have been transcribed as faithfully as possible. I have capitalized all proper names, employed modern punctuation conservatively, and omitted diacritical marks where they are not used. Additions to the original text are marked by square brackets, and omissions or difficult passages have been set off by angled brackets. Superscripted items are incorporated into the body of the text in square brackets. Unless noted, all translations are my own.

The archives consulted for this study employ distinct cataloguing methods for their particular holdings as is evident from the notes. The most common term for a file of documents is legajo, but the scholar interested in further work in Madrid should be aware of other terminology. Materials at the municipal archive, the Archivo de Villa de Madrid, are largely arranged by legajos. In contrast, the acts of the town council are bound in libros. As at the municipal archive, the Archivo Histórico Nacional in Madrid and the Archivo General de Simancas differentiate legajos from historically bound collections of documents, or libros. Documents in the Archivo Histórico de Protocolos Notariales de Madrid are largely arranged by year and by the name of the scribe in bound volumes called protocolos. The legajos of the Altamira Collection at the Instituto de Valencia de Don Juan in Madrid are organized by envíos, whereas documents from the same collection at the Biblioteca Francisco de Zabálburu in Madrid are kept in boxed files, or carpetas.
Where possible, I have provided page numbers and dates for documentary citations. When foliation is not available, I have used the abbreviation “n.p.” The abbreviation “no.” is reserved for loose documents that are numbered, although often not kept in order. In many instances, dates alone are given for documents filed in a legajo of otherwise unorganized documents. For briefs that are folded and written on both sides (recto and verso), I have numbered the pages individually (i.e., one folded sheet of paper is considered as two and is numbered 1r, 1v, 2r, and 2v).

Measurements from the documents are given in Castilian feet (pies), which are roughly equivalent to today’s American and English measures. The base unit of currency employed in documents is the maravedí, although the silver real was the good coin of early modern Spain. According to George Kubler in his Building the Escorial, a day laborer in the 1570s could earn 2 reales, or 68 maravedís a day. Allowing for fluctuation, the real equaled 34 maravedís, and a Spanish ducat was the equivalent of 375 maravedís.
# Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in the notes and figure captions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AEA</td>
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</tr>
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<tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>Clero Secular y Regular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Consejos Suprimidos</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>Archivo de la Contaduría</td>
</tr>
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<td>Biblioteca Francisco de Zabálburu, Madrid</td>
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<td>BNM</td>
<td>Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid</td>
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<tr>
<td>BSEAA</td>
<td><em>Boletín del Seminario de Estudios de Arte y Arqueología</em> (University of Valladolid)</td>
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ABBREVIATIONS

xxvi
THE PLAZA MAYOR AND THE SHAPING OF BAROQUE MADRID