

# The Rhetoric of Authority in New Spain: The Casa de Montejo in Mérida, Yucatán

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## Article abstract

Depuis les années 1940, la façade de la Casa de Montejo située à Mérida, dans le Yucatán au Mexique, est considérée comme un des tout premiers exemples d'architecture résidentielle de style plateresque en Amérique hispanique. Commandé par le premier gouverneur de la péninsule, Francisco de Montejo, cet édifice colonial a pourtant été relativement peu étudié et la plupart des recherches antérieures qui en font la mention l'identifient comme un monument à la mémoire de la conquête des Mayas du Yucatan par les Espagnols, en négligeant l'importance du style plateresque. Comme l'art plateresque a souvent été associé à des aspirations nobles et civiques en Espagne, il semble que ce soit précisément la notion d'autorité alors associée à ce style qui expliquerait pourquoi la famille Montejo l'a choisi au moment où l'Amérique hispanique du milieu du 16<sup>e</sup> siècle vivait une crise, alors que l'institutionnalisation du gouvernement du vice-roi affaiblissait systématiquement l'autorité de gouverneurs tels que Montejo. Dans cette perspective, la façade se présente comme un espace liminal que Montejo utilise afin de faire reconnaître sa juridiction et son autonomie face à une grande menace. Par cette construction, Montejo s'attribuait une autorité qui s'affirmait comme distincte du jeune gouvernement du vice-roi, mais toujours en lien avec la monarchie. Au bout du compte, ses efforts pour conforter son autonomie ont contribué à sa chute politique, qui a pour ainsi dire coïncidé avec l'achèvement de la construction du palais et de ses ornements plateresques en 1550. La Casa de Montejo témoigne par excellence des ambitions politiques d'un gouverneur colonial et doit être considérée à la lumière des troubles sociopolitiques qui caractérisent cette période en Amérique hispanique.

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# The Rhetoric of Authority in New Spain: The Casa de Montejo in Mérida, Yucatán

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## Résumé

Depuis les années 1940, la façade de la Casa de Montejo située à Mérida, dans le Yucatán au Mexique, est considérée comme un des tout premiers exemples d'architecture résidentielle de style plateresque en Amérique hispanique. Commandé par le premier gouverneur de la péninsule, Francisco de Montejo, cet édifice colonial a pourtant été relativement peu étudié et la plupart des recherches antérieures qui en font la mention l'identifient comme un monument à la mémoire de la conquête des Mayas du Yucatan par les Espagnols, en négligeant l'importance du style plateresque. Comme l'art plateresque a souvent été associé à des aspirations nobles et civiques en Espagne, il semble que ce soit précisément la notion d'autorité alors associée à ce style qui expliquerait pourquoi la famille Montejo l'a choisi au moment où l'Amérique hispanique du milieu du 16<sup>e</sup> siècle vivait une crise, alors que l'institutionnalisation du gouvernement du vice-roi affaiblissait systématiquement l'autorité de gouverneurs tels que Montejo. Dans cette perspective, la façade se présente comme un espace liminal que Montejo utilise afin de faire reconnaître sa juridiction et son autonomie face à une grande menace. Par cette construction, Montejo s'attribuait une autorité qui s'affirmait comme distincte du jeune gouvernement du vice-roi, mais toujours en lien avec la monarchie. Au bout du compte, ses efforts pour conforter son autonomie ont contribué à sa chute politique, qui a pour ainsi dire coïncidé avec l'achèvement de la construction du palais et de ses ornements plateresques en 1550. La Casa de Montejo témoigne par excellence des ambitions politiques d'un gouverneur colonial et doit être considérée à la lumière des troubles sociopolitiques qui caractérisent cette période en Amérique hispanique.

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Commissioned by Francisco de Montejo, the first *adelantado* (governor) of Yucatán, the facade of the Casa de Montejo (ca. 1542–49) is the most dynamic sixteenth-century residential facade extant in Latin America (fig. 1). Curiously, this Renaissance facade was not constructed in a thriving viceregal urban centre of New Spain, but in Mérida, the new provincial capital of the peninsula, on the unsettled and remote Yucatecan frontier. In spite of its art-historical importance as both an early Spanish Yucatecan monument and the most ornate residential facade in Hispanic America, there have been few detailed studies of the palace and its facade.<sup>1</sup> The majority of the studies that have been done suggest that the facade is a monument to the Spanish conquest of Yucatán's Maya peoples, marking the completion of a fourteen-year struggle to establish Spanish dominion there.<sup>2</sup> It is carved with numerous conquest images, which were undoubtedly meant to honour the Montejo family's military accomplishments in Yucatán. However, these images are outnumbered by other forms of imagery, including those that indicate dynastic importance and political authority, images that have not been discussed with any frequency in analyses of the Casa de Montejo. The facade uses the Plateresque style, a Renaissance style that in its mature form infused Roman architectural forms with dense surface detailing.<sup>3</sup> The Plateresque was frequently associated with noble and civic aspirations in Spain, and it appears that the Montejo family chose it not only because it could effectively convey concepts of conquest, but also because they understood it as a means to shore up dynastic continuity and political authority at a moment of crisis in mid-sixteenth-century Hispanic America, when the quasi-feudal authority of the conquering governors, Montejo prominent among them, was



Figure 1. Casa de Montejo, Mérida, Yucatán, ca. 1542–49 (Photo: author).

being diminished systematically by the institutionalization of the viceregal government.<sup>4</sup> The facade, then, was a liminal space used by Montejo to declare his jurisdiction and autonomy in the face of a great threat. In constructing the facade, with its numerous inscriptions, large coats of arms, armed halberdiers, and tamed “wild men,” Montejo proclaimed an authority that was independent of the emergent viceregal government but still accountable to monarchy. In the end, his efforts to secure autonomy contributed to his political fall, which virtually coincided with the completion of the palace and its Plateresque decorations in 1550.<sup>5</sup> The Casa de Montejo stands as a testament to the political ambitions of one colonial governor, and it must be seen in the context of the political and social unrest that characterized this moment in Hispanic America.

#### The Adelantado's Political Position

The political messages behind the Montejo facade are directly connected to Montejo's position as governor. His authority was bestowed upon him by King Charles V through his appointment as adelantado on 8 December 1526, and the rights of the appointment were outlined in his *capitulación* (capitulation or patent) of that year.<sup>6</sup> Montejo's *capitulación* stipulated the terms and conditions of his colonizing enterprise in Yucatán and outlined his powers as adelantado. It was a hereditary position granting Montejo direct authority to distribute houseplots, land, and *encomiendas* (large land estates), to appoint local public offices, and to initiate new colonizing endeavours.<sup>7</sup> As adelantado Montejo had absolute authority in Yucatán, and from time to time he moved to expand his power into other Central American territories as well. This was part of his plan to establish and control a large *adelantamiento*, or feudal estate. Among the territories of interest were Tabasco, Honduras, and Higueras, all of which were under his jurisdiction at one time or another in the mid-sixteenth century.<sup>8</sup> However, in his efforts to create this large feudal estate, Montejo found himself at odds with other colonizers and with viceregal entities, religious institutions, and indigenous groups, which resulted in negative consequences for him. Two things stand out in this regard: his brutality in Yucatán and his military action against an *audiencia* (court) representative in Tabasco.<sup>9</sup>

In late 1543 a group of Spanish colonizers under license from Montejo and under the command of the cousins Melchor and Alonso Pacheco departed from Mérida for the hinterlands of Yucatán. The group was charged with ensuring the pacification of the peninsula's northeastern regions. The Pachecos and their men executed a brutal campaign that left many Maya dead or mutilated.<sup>10</sup> This campaign was not well received by the governing bodies of Spanish America, despite the Pachecos' claims that their activities were sanctioned by the crown and that

the Maya were resisting Spanish authority by disobeying the *requerimiento* (requirement) found in the patent of Montejo, to whom they were subservient.<sup>11</sup> The *requerimiento* was a legal formula originally intended to protect Native Americans from abuses caused by the Spanish; it stipulated that colonizers were not to enslave or wage war against Native Americans as long as they pledged their allegiance to the Spanish crown and converted to Christianity. However, if the indigenous populations refused to comply with the *requerimiento*, then military action, under the guise of upholding Christian doctrine, could be taken as just, legal, and necessary, which is what the Pachecos claimed they did.<sup>12</sup> The actions of the Pachecos, and more particularly of their governor Montejo, were targeted quickly by certain religious officials who opposed the colonizers' cruel practices. Among them was Bartolomé de Las Casas, who later in his 1552 text *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* (*Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies*) would recount numerous examples of barbaric acts carried out by the colonizers against the American peoples.<sup>13</sup> Las Casas drew specific reference to Montejo, whom he identifies as a tyrant who held little regard for the ingenious peoples of Yucatán.<sup>14</sup> Both prior to and in his narrative, Las Casas declared that the brutal tactics of the colonizers were direct reflections of their commanders' orders, including those of Francisco de Montejo, and, therefore, the governors were ultimately responsible for these barbaric actions.

While Montejo was embroiled in a defense against these claims, he also found himself at odds with the Audiencia de los Confines, or the High Court of Guatemala, over territorial and economic control of the Mexican territory of Tabasco. From the outset of his rule of Tabasco, Montejo's authority had been questioned continuously by other individuals and by administrative bodies.<sup>15</sup> Now the Guatemalan court, under the leadership of Alonso López de Cerrato, sought to remove Montejo from Tabasco, charging him with mismanaging the administration of the territory (the *audiencia* itself stood to profit from the economic viability of the Tabascan province).<sup>16</sup> As part of his judicial actions, Cerrato sent an ambassador, Pedro Ramírez, to Mérida to revoke Montejo's control of Tabasco. Unsuccessful, Ramírez travelled to Tabasco, decreed an end to Montejo's authority there, and confiscated Montejo's *encomiendas*. In retaliation, Montejo returned to Tabasco with armed troops, seized the revenues from the royal coffers, and imprisoned the Guatemalan ambassador. Cerrato appealed Montejo's actions to the larger governing bodies of the Americas and to the monarchy, claiming that Montejo had defied not only him but also, more importantly, the *audiencia*, which was a manifestation of the king's government. Montejo later returned all the funds he had confiscated, but his seizure of the royal coffers stood as a grievous offense against the king. Simply put, Montejo had challenged the authority of the viceregal government and had stolen from

the sovereign imperial state. He had pitted himself against two very important institutions in Hispanic America, the monastic orders and the viceregal government in the form of the *audiencia*, and each was ideologically aligned with the monarchy. All this greatly affected his political fortunes. These issues must be addressed if we are to understand the Casa de Montejo's facade.

### The Facade of the Casa de Montejo and Its Location

The colonization of Yucatán was a prolonged affair; beginning in 1528, it was not “complete” until 6 January 1542, when the provincial capital, Mérida, was founded upon the abandoned Mayan site of Tihó (or T’ho).<sup>17</sup> The decision to erect Spanish Mérida on the foundations of Tihó was driven by both ideological and practical concerns. The founding of Mérida was intended to signify the establishment of a new religious and socio-political order in the new lands. In its physical form, this incipient order was manifest by using a grid plan centred upon the *plaza mayor*, the central square, to regulate urban life. New Spanish structures were superimposed on some of the indigenous temples, palaces, and buildings.<sup>18</sup> Thus, in the early colonial period, the city became culturally complex with references to both Spanish and Mayan urban traditions. A practical reason for the Spanish appropriation of an indigenous centre, here and elsewhere, was that the colonial peoples could dismantle the indigenous monuments and reuse the materials as the building blocks of the new city. A letter from friar Lorenzo de Bienvenida to Philip II of Spain, dated 10 February 1548, explains that the Montejo family chose the city’s location primarily because of the abundance of readily available cut stone, plentiful water and food, and—this is not often mentioned in historical documents—the large, readily available indigenous workforce.<sup>19</sup> This large force of native workers constructed and sculpted the Casa de Montejo. The late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century historian Juan Francisco Molina Solís states that some 300 to 400 Maya were used to construct the Montejo mansion, while an undisclosed number became servants for Montejo’s wife.<sup>20</sup> Indigenous peoples were employed in numerous building projects throughout Hispanic America, and as Susan Verdi Webster has demonstrated, native artists, and architects were heads of guilds and foremen of construction (*maestros de obras*) in viceregal Quito, beginning in the sixteenth century.<sup>21</sup> Although it is not clear whether Mayan sculptors carved the whole of the Casa de Montejo, it seems quite possible, given that there are no records of a Spanish architect or sculptor working in Yucatán at this time. The art historian Manuel Toussaint, in his formalistic survey of the building’s imagery, argued that the facade was overseen by a Spanish architect, based on what Toussaint took to be a cohesive sculptural program drawing upon contemporary Spanish design, but neither he nor subsequent scholars have



Figure 2. Casa de Castril, Granada, Spain, ca. 1539. Attr. Sebastián de Alcántra (Photo: author).

been able to offer documentary evidence to affirm his claim.<sup>22</sup> It is clear that an artist conversant in contemporary European idioms designed the facade since all the motifs in the sculptural program are European, but it is less certain that the artist was European.

It is difficult to determine precisely when the palace was erected, although some form of residence must have been cre-

ated when Montejo's son, daughter-in-law, and their children took up residence on the site of the present structure soon after the Spanish founding of Mérida in 1542, as mandated by Spanish law.<sup>23</sup> The bulk of the present structure appears to date no later than 1549, when, according to an inscription on the pediment, the decorative facade was commissioned. Most scholars presume that the senior Montejo commissioned the building sometime between 1542 and 1549.<sup>24</sup> Montejo was not present in Mérida between 1542 and 1546; he was in Guatemala defending his character and his claims of governorship over other Central American regions. He and his wife, Beatriz Álvarez de Herrera, moved into some form of the Casa de Montejo by 1546.<sup>25</sup> So, while construction of the palace apparently began while the adelantado was abroad, the facade was commissioned after his return to Mérida.

The facade is the only unaltered element of the building.<sup>26</sup> It is surrounded on both sides and the top by blank portions of stuccoed wall, as was the custom in Spain at this time. An example from Granada, the Casa de Castril (ca. 1539, attr. Sebastián de Alcántra), shows how the contrast between the unadorned and sculpted surfaces draws the eye to the pertinent elements of the facade, such as busts, coats of arms, and other heraldic imagery (fig. 2). The facade decoration of the Casa de Montejo is composed of the most basic elements of the Spanish *estilo romano* (Roman style), which employs a Greco-Roman architectural vocabulary. It has typical Plateresque decorative features, most notably the dense surface decoration consisting of scroll-like vine motifs with busts, standing halberdiers, "wild men" and other grotesques.<sup>27</sup> The lower register of the facade is classical in design and is sculpted with references to the Montejo family's dynastic aspirations and conquests. At the left and right edges of the lower register, flanking the entrance, three pilasters are clustered together and fronted by a fluted column, all rising from elongated pedestals that sit atop hewn but unpolished blocks of stone (fig. 3). Capping the pilasters and columns are a series of pseudo-Corinthian capitals that are punctuated by small, horned heads. Within the field created by the clusters of pilasters and columns are the jambs that frame the rectangular central portal. These narrow, elongated jambs are symmetrical, and each contains two recessed panels that are divided by roundels holding busts framed by scalloped shells. The bust on the right portrays a bearded man whose head is turned off-centre and seems to glance to the left. His counterpart on the left is a young woman who glances upward across the entrance. These figures may be representations of Montejo's two children: his son, Francisco de Montejo (nicknamed El Mozo, or the Younger), and his daughter, Catalina. The woman's glance connects these two busts to the much larger female and male busts above, which are carved in significantly higher relief. She looks directly at the upper female figure, who is crowned and gazes

towards the square, where a ruined Mayan pyramid still stood. This bust can be identified as Montejo's wife, Beatriz Álvarez de Herrera. It is here that reference to Herrera's direct influence on Yucatán's colonization is found. Herrera was a principle financier of Montejo's colonization enterprise and through marriage provided Montejo the nobility desired for a governor. Her roles are honoured in the facade, as she is the focal point of the lower register's composition and not her husband, her bearded male counterpart to her left. Dressed as a warrior, and not crowned like his wife, he wears an armoured breastplate and a helmet and looks out to his left, also casting his glance over Mérida's main plaza, where the cathedral of Mérida is now located.

Within in the lower register are Latin inscriptions pronouncing the divine sanction of Montejo's campaigns. The inscription in the left plaque reads "Amor Die" and that of the right reads "Vincit." Guillermina Vázquez has suggested that upon the central Atlas-like figure, the inscription "Omnia" once appeared.<sup>28</sup> Although I have been unable to find any trace of this inscription, Vázquez's assertion seems plausible, as the inscriptions taken together would then read "Amor Die Omnia Vincit," or "the love of God will conquer all."

The facade's upper register consists of a balcony, at its centre surrounded by additional inscriptions and symbols of the royal conferral of Montejo's political position, including two halberdiers (specialized guards charged with protecting the monarchs, colonial viceroys, and regional courts) and a large coat of arms (fig. 4). Above the balcony's doorframe, set within a bed of vines, the Montejo crest appears topped by a ducal helmet upon which rests an eagle. This shallowly carved *escudo* (coat of arms) is in itself quite complex. Its four-part division includes a symbolic shield created by Charles V for Montejo in the upper left quadrant, Herrera's paternal and maternal arms in the upper right and lower left quadrants respectively, and Montejo's family blazon in the lower right quadrant. On either side of the rectangular balcony doorway are the halberdiers, flanked by two club-carrying "wild men." These four bearded figures are represented in contrapposto. The halberdiers are dressed in armour and carry halberds (a combined spear and battle-axe) and sheathed swords, while their unkempt counterparts are covered in knotted and matted hair and carry roughly shaped clubs. Directly above the halberdiers are capitals with recessed plaques: the left has the monogram "IHS" (Christ) and the right plaque is inscribed "MA" (Mary), presumed references to Montejo's evangelization mission. The capitals above the halberdiers support an ornate frieze consisting of high relief representations of seated, winged feline-like creatures alternating with three busts. The busts to the left and right are of females and the central one is of a bearded male; all are eroded, and the features are too superficially rendered to allow for identification.



Figure 3. Lower facade, Casa de Montejo (Photo: author).

From the cornice hang pine cones, which are also seen hanging from the larger, otherwise undecorated triangular pediment of the facade.<sup>29</sup>

Topping the sculpted facade is a small pediment representing two rearing lions, whose manes are knotted much in the

same way as hair of the “wild men.” Between the lions is a recessed panel that carries the inscription “Esta obra mando hacer el adelantado don Francisco de Montejo año de MDXLIX.”<sup>30</sup> At the apex of the pediment is another bearded male figure in shallow relief.

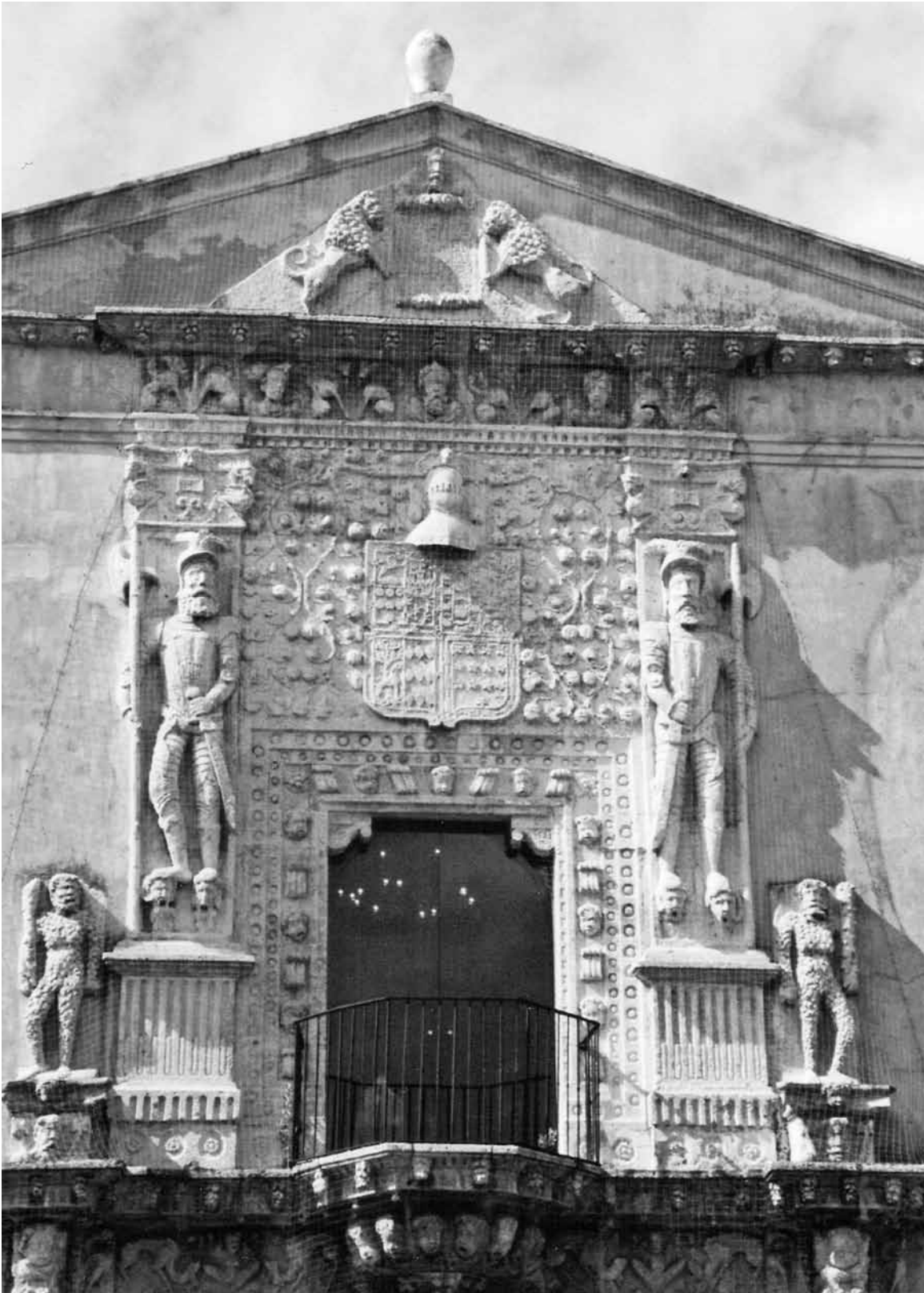


Figure 4. Upper facade, Casa de Montejo (Photo: author).

## The Facade in the Context of Sixteenth-Century Spain and Hispanic America

Even though the facade of the Casa de Montejo is situated in a dynamic multicultural space, it presents an elaborate sculpted display of strictly European images and has no indigenous elements. In Europe patrons and scholars ascribed specific cultural meanings to many of these images, meanings frequently associated with social standing and political power.<sup>31</sup> The Montejo facade is a powerful piece of visual rhetoric expressing its patron's political and social standing and his intentions to maintain that standing, and situated as it is in a colonial capital, it should be considered not only within the context of European and Spanish patronage traditions, but also within architectural patronage traditions in Hispanic America. Likewise, the reception of Montejo's intentions by diverse audiences remains largely unexplored, and must be accounted for.

In some respects, the building closely adheres to Spanish traditions, in which the rhetoric in facade design was tied to shifting power relations between the Spanish noble class and the imperial state. From the last quarter of the fifteenth century through the first half of the sixteenth century, the political climate of Spain transformed dramatically, with the unification of several Spanish kingdoms under the Catholic monarchs and the union of the Spanish crown with the Holy Roman Emperorship under Charles V. To celebrate their colonial achievements and their increasing consolidation of imperial power within Spain, the Spanish monarchs turned to various stylistic idioms in their architectural patronage. The Catholic monarchs Isabella and Ferdinand established an art form known as the Isabelline Gothic, which has been clearly linked to the assertion of their sovereignty over the newly unified kingdoms of Spain. Art historian Jonathan Brown has noted that the decorative arts were patronized by the monarchs as a visual metaphor to suggest their "hegemony over the [Spanish] nobles," while also "signal[ing] the dominant presence of the monarchy throughout the kingdom."<sup>32</sup> Clear manifestations of their ambitions are seen in the chapel complexes in Granada and Burgos, which include within their dazzling surfaces numerous coats of arms, "wild men," soldiers, saints, inscriptions, and so forth.

The facade of the Casa de Montejo reflects the Isabelline style, particularly its upper register. It is here that Montejo's political standing is most clearly and authoritatively expressed. Indeed, the imagery promotes dynastic legitimacy as secured by familial descent (the large coat of arms), and political sovereignty as ordained by the king (the upper left blazon of the coat of arms created for Montejo at the bequest of Charles V) and executed by force (the imposing halberdiers and Gothic "wild men").

The Casa de Montejo's facade also exhibits symbols of self-representation that are derived less from monarchical traditions

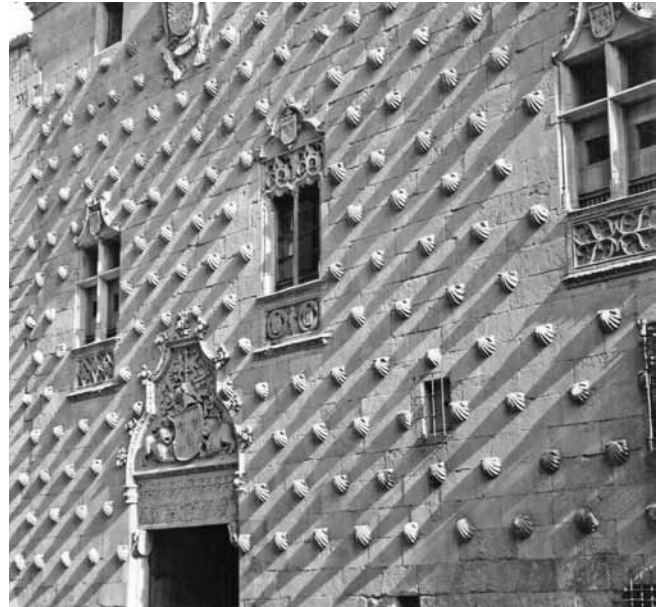


Figure 5. Casa de las Conchas (House of the Shells), Salamanca, Spain, ca. early sixteenth century (Photo: author).

than from the practices of Spanish nobles. Presumably because of the political ideologies attached to the Isabelline Gothic, the Spanish nobility embraced a thoroughly different idiom: a Renaissance style.<sup>33</sup> As Italian patrons had made their facades into tools for self-representation, so did Spanish nobles, who remodelled their ancestral homes to incorporate classicizing decorative elements.<sup>34</sup> Early Spanish efforts that relied upon Italian forms include palaces commissioned by the Maldonado family, such as the Casa de las Conchas (House of the Shells) in Salamanca (fig. 5). In this instance, the quintessentially Spanish Renaissance features include scallop shells combined with more traditional heraldic imagery. This structure is an early reflection of a shift from the Gothic forms favoured by the Catholic monarchs to Renaissance aesthetics that the Spanish nobles and diplomats admired when travelling abroad.

Over the course of the first decades of the fifteenth century, Spanish patrons and architects developed the Renaissance idiom known today as the Plateresque, or *plateresco* (silversmith-like), as seen in the facade of the Casa de Castril, the Ayuntamiento (Seville), and the Universidad de Salamanca (figs. 2, 6, and 7). In each instance, Roman forms are overlaid with dense surface decoration, typical of the Plateresque. As the Plateresque style matured it began to acquire idiosyncratic cultural meanings. It is clear that the sixteenth-century Spanish theorists who introduced the architectural vocabulary of the Italian Renaissance to the Iberian Peninsula advocated the principle of diversity in decorative elements in conjunction with classicizing design. For





Figure 6. Ayuntamiento, Seville, Spain, ca. 1527–34 (Photo: author).

example, in his 1526 treatise *Medidas del Romano*, Diego de Sagredo introduced principles of Renaissance architecture in a vernacular survey of design and sculptural adornment for Spanish patrons and builders.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, Sagredo suggested that architects should not simply imitate classical forms, and he encouraged experimentation in design, as the ancient Romans did. Sagredo states, “It is true that, in the buildings [of the ancient Romans], there is a great diversity of ornaments, which have been applied without restraint, and seem more like added finery than an essential part of the finished building.”<sup>36</sup> Although he hints at some frivolity in ornament, he is implying that artists should place importance on artistic license and invention in surface decoration. Indeed, he realized that in practice, even the ancient Romans did not always follow the principles set out in theoretical books, such as those by Vitruvius.<sup>37</sup> For example, Sagredo endorsed the baluster as a classical architectural element, which was in accordance with ancient precedent, even though balusters do not appear in Vitruvius. Therefore, he endeavoured to help Spanish patrons and architects formulate a Spanish understanding of the Renaissance idiom, rather than an understanding derived slavishly from the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italian architects to whom he alludes in his text.<sup>38</sup> Clearly, Sagredo and his contemporary promoters of the

Plateresque achieved their goals, because over a period of roughly four decades (ca. 1490–1530), some 700 buildings were erected throughout Spain in the Plateresque idiom.<sup>39</sup> Because of this large number of structures, the original motivations behind the idiom’s inception were diluted. However, certain meanings did accrue as the Plateresque style matured, including the moral/civic principle that the purpose of large-scale secular architecture is not to aggrandize the individual but to glorify the city.<sup>40</sup> As in the case of the town hall in Seville or the university in Salamanca, the buildings with their Plateresque facades became icons of the city, and thus are invested with civic pride, reflecting Sagredo’s conceptions of secular architecture.

The Plateresque idiom as understood by Sagredo and his contemporaries also provided a means by which magnificent, private residential architecture could express civic-minded virtue, as was the case in Granada, Salamanca, Úbeda, and Baeza. In these instances, the buildings have evolved into symbols of the Renaissance age. For early sixteenth-century Spanish patrons of architecture, the Plateresque inflection of classicism—flexible enough to accommodate local traditions—more than adequately conveyed notions of magnificence.<sup>41</sup> Although the Plateresque was originally conceived as a mode of self-representation to express noble autonomy in the face of the mon-

archical authority, it also developed as an indicator of Spanish culture, and this meaning must also be applied to the Casa de Montejo's facade.

Like their Iberian counterparts, the colonizers' architectural practices were driven by diverse motivations, including certain desires to express social and political advancements made in the Americas, and the Montejo palace illustrates these desires clearly. The building practices of the colonizers have not received much scholarly attention.<sup>42</sup> Ortiz Macedo's 1994 book *Los palacios nobiliarios de la Nueva España* is the most extensive study, and although the art historian Elisa Vargaslugo has described this book as the foundation upon which future investigation must be based, no such scholarship has appeared.<sup>43</sup> Most of the information that has been published is found in broader architectural studies that treat secular architecture as an afterthought. This information has been useful in demonstrating that the colonizers imported contemporary European styles to the Americas,<sup>44</sup> but the standard approach to palace architecture, as exemplified in the work of Macedo, has been to treat Hispanic American palace architecture as provincial reflections of privileged European models.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, in her important architectural study of Peru, Valerie Fraser has suggested that in the day-to-day hardships of colonial life on the remote American frontiers an ornate residential facade was little more than a triviality.<sup>46</sup> The lack of substantial scholarly inquiry on the sixteenth-century palaces is presumably because of the limited numbers that still exist unaltered. However, much more research is justified because many of the surviving structures, the Montejo palace chief among them, are extremely interesting examples of Hispanic American adaptations of European facade design. A mid-sixteenth-century Mexican palace that typifies the new colonial aesthetic in architecture is the Casa del que Mató el Animal (The House of the Animal Killer, or St. George Slaying the Dragon) in Puebla (fig. 8). This palace's facade has a classically inspired format, which is overlaid with indigenous sculptural designs depicting animal and human figures typically found in Aztec relief sculpture. The overlaying of classicizing forms with such highly decorative elements evokes Plateresque tenets, even if these elements are indigenous. They represent uniquely central Mexican approaches to Renaissance aesthetics, as John McAndrew and Manuel Toussaint state:

Plateresque and late Gothic decoration were in themselves so free that they could take their places easily and harmoniously in the many unorthodox Mexican style-mixtures of the sixteenth century. They were sympathetically understood and absorbed by the new country, and soon became eloquent means of local expression.<sup>47</sup>

The Plateresque lent itself to inflection, if not translation, in a colonial Hispanic American idiom. The incorporation of in-

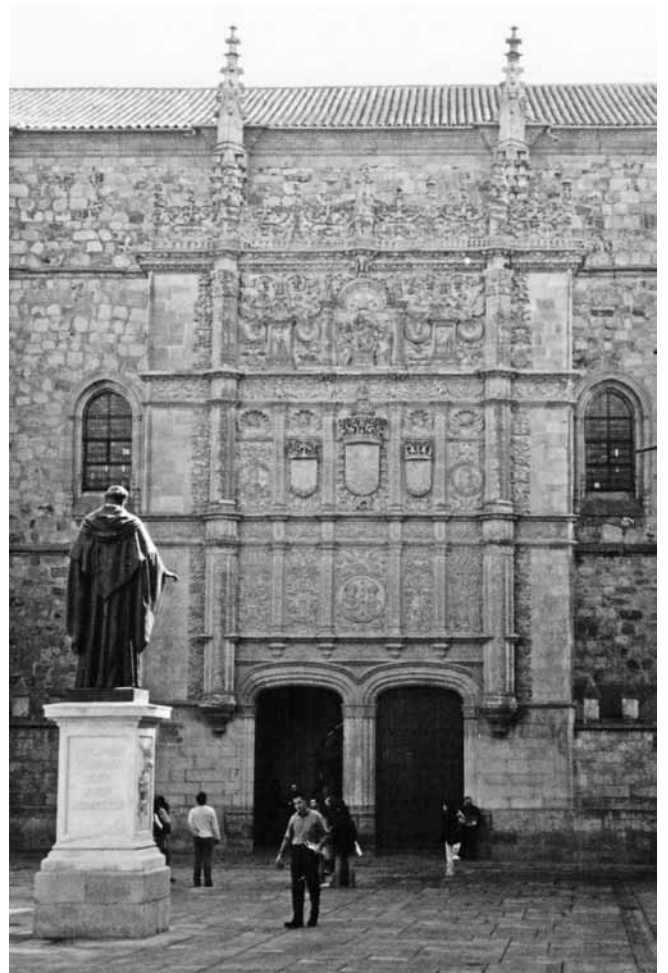


Figure 7. Universidad de Salamanca, Salamanca, Spain, ca. mid-sixteenth century (Photo: author).

igenous features—and their possible symbolisms—explicitly illustrates McAndrew and Toussaint's point that the Plateresque style could be deployed in different contexts and could lend itself to new interpretations that other stylistic idioms could not so readily express. Their analysis is limited to church architecture but may readily be applied to other forms of architecture, including residential structures such as the Casa de Montejo, for a more complete analysis of the roles Hispanic American architecture served in colonial society.

The Casa de Montejo's facade is a hybrid of Spanish styles with a pseudo-Gothic sensibility, its prominent display of heraldic imagery superimposed upon a Plateresque structure of interlocking Roman architectural features. The conflation of styles on the facade does suggest certain degrees of provincialism. However, when contextualized in respect to Montejo's and his wife's lives, the classification of the monument as provincial



Figure 8. Casa del que Mató el Animal, Puebla, Mexico, ca. mid-sixteenth century (Photo: author).

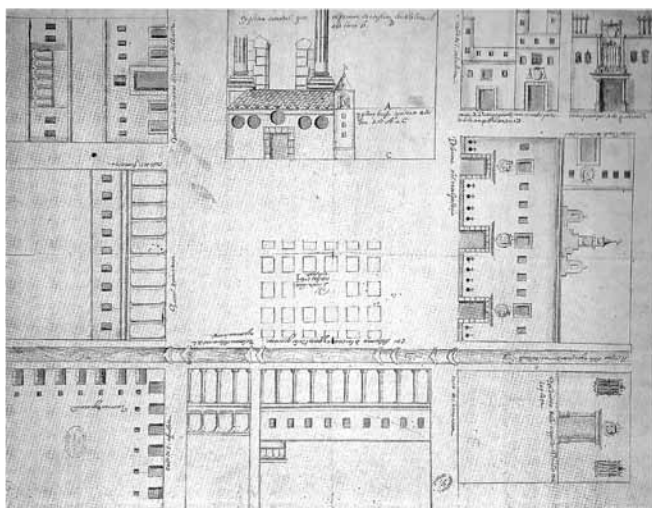


Figure 9. Plan of the Main Plaza of Mexico City, 1596. Ink on paper, 42 x 57 cm. Seville, Archivo General de Indias (Photo: Archivo General de Indias).

loses credence. Montejo and Herrera had lived in several viceregal capitals, including Mexico City, where there were numerous Plateresque-style buildings (no longer extant), as indicated in a period map from 1596 (now in the Archivo General de Indias, Seville) (fig 9). Although the structures and the map itself are very simply drawn, several Plateresque-style residential facades are clearly seen in the upper right and lower left, and they are depicted in the same degree of detail as the viceregal

palace. By being rendered with the same clarity as the viceregal palace, an important symbol of the imperial state, the documentation of these buildings references Sagredo's conceptions of civic pride and indicates the importance of residential facades as identifying features of the colonial capital and the prestige of their patrons. Presumably, Montejo and Herrera understood the Plateresque, as other colonizers had, as a signifier of noble autonomy and as an expression of Spanish civic culture on the expanding Hispanic American frontiers. Moreover, because the Plateresque allowed for great diversity in ornament, the style allowed Montejo and his artisans to configure the Plateresque's symbols into a sculpted program that showed his absolute authority in Yucatán.

#### The Plateresque and Its Political Application in the Casa de Montejo

In this facade Montejo meant to express his accomplishments, even those in which he utilized force against the indigenous populations and other Spaniards and actively circumvented the authority of the *audiencia*—the viceregal government. Montejo's use of force and coercion brought to the fore criticism of his quasi-feudal authority, and whether or not the claims of Cerrato and Las Casas were valid, their accusations affected contemporary and current perceptions of Montejo. To combat these perceptions, Montejo turned to the public realm of facade design. The Casa de Montejo's facade allowed him to celebrate his colonizing accomplishments while conspicuously affirming his political power. In so doing, Montejo took a different direction than did Hernán Cortés in his palace (fig. 10). Clearly, the term *palace* should be used loosely in describing Cortés's home, which is more like a *casa fuerte* (strong house). Cortés used its imposing structure rather than symbolic ornament to signal his political authority in Cuernavaca at a time when rival Spanish factions challenged it.

Both Cortés and Montejo built their palaces at the heart of their respective urban centres, the plaza mayor. There can be no denying the importance of the main square in Hispanic culture, bordered as it was by the institutional bodies of the Spanish culture, principally the church and town hall.<sup>48</sup> The main plaza was conceived of as an indicator of Spanish culture on the remote frontiers. In certain instances, principally in the viceregal capitals, the space of the plaza mayor was infused with the body politic of the monarchy. The urban space of the plaza and the city were metaphors for the king's presence on foreign lands, and this presence was most strongly expressed through the viceregal palace.

The conception of the main plaza and its fronting structures as a metaphor for the imperial presence is explicitly recorded in period images of the Royal Palace of Mexico City (the



Figure 10. Palacio de Cortés, Cuernavaca, Mexico, ca. early sixteenth century (Photo: Archivision).

home of the Mexican viceroy, but analogous with the monarchical residences of Spain).<sup>49</sup> In his analysis of the Royal Palace in pictorial representations, Michael Schreffler has emphasized the privileged position of the Royal Palace in these representations, appearing as the focal point even though in reality such a privileging vantage did not exist.<sup>50</sup> The scene on a late seventeenth-century *biombo* (folding screen) at the Museo Franz Mayer (Mexico City) (fig. 11) is a particularly strong example of this. Seemingly, the altering of the pictorial space signified the importance of the palace as a metaphor for the monarchical presence, a stand-in for a foreign king who would never reside in the politicized residence during the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries. The viceregal palace, and presumably all other gubernatorial and council buildings of the American provinces, were equated to the body politic of the crown and signified the presence of the monarchy by dominating the core of Hispanic American urban spaces and political culture: the plaza mayor. By the time of the creation of the *biombo* illustrated here, the spaces of the plazas were tightly controlled by the monarchy and its supporting religious institutions, to the point that individuals were no longer allowed to build their homes on the borders of the plaza. The plaza's associations with the imperial state were fully formalized in the Laws of the Indies of 1573, in which ordinance 127 of the *Ordenanzas de Población* (Settlement Ordinances) stipulates that “on the plaza there should be no private lots, rather [the

lots are] for the church building and the royal houses and for public property and for stores and trade houses.”<sup>51</sup> Although the justification of this ordinance seems common-sensical—to spur quick growth and cultural stability—the laws likewise must have been envisioned as means to punitively restrict prominent displays of individual self-representation at the heart of Hispanic American urban centres, like those of Cortés and Montejó. Further, unlike such Spanish predecessors as the Casa de Castril, the Montejó palace was easily viewed on Mérida's plaza and not obscured by the confusion of a medieval setting. Thus a palace like the Casa de Montejó, existing alongside the institutions of the crown and church, challenged the space of the monarchy's carefully constructed and guarded sanctum.

It is clear from the Casa de Montejó and other surviving structures that the colonizers shared the same desires as their European counterparts when it came to expressing themselves through facades. The Spanish crown was aware of this practice. The crown enacted legislation that restricted architectural displays of magnificence in colonial urban centres, although, curiously enough, it was directed toward religious institutions that sought to claim urban spaces. In 1550, Charles V issued a decree stating these religious houses should “be humble and that there be found on them no superfluities other than that which is strictly necessary for their habitation and order.”<sup>52</sup> Although the ordinance may have been directed towards religious houses, the



Figure 11. The Very Noble and Loyal City of Mexico City, biombo (folding-screen), late seventeenth century. Oil on canvas, 213 x 550 cm. Mexico City, Museo Franz Mayer (Photo: Museo Franz Mayer).

law was designed to curb all facade decoration. In fact, it seems that those who drafted the ordinance may have had the Casa de Montejo in mind. The ordinance was issued the year after the facade was commissioned, the same year Montejo was stripped of his governing authority. Thus, just as Montejo's political actions brought him into conflict with the monarchical administration, so too did the facade of the Casa de Montejo, which contrasts with the rest of Mérida's structures. Control of the city's main core, contested since the second half of the 1540s by the Casa de Montejo's facade, was contested again by the construction of the Cathedral of San Ildefonso (ca. 1562–99) (fig. 12). The facade of the cathedral, although larger in scale than the Casa de Montejo, is much simpler in decoration. The only sculptural element is Philip II's coat of arms. Clearly, because of its size, scale, and simplicity, the intent behind the cathedral's facade was to signal the monarchical state's dominion over all competing institutions, groups, and individuals. The necessity for this monarchical display in Mérida more than a decade after the completion of the Montejo facade further shows that Montejo's carefully conceived message continued to resonate in the provincial capital well after his political downfall and subsequent death in 1553. The Casa de Montejo's facade dictated a message that fostered independent autonomy and threatened the vice-regency, so that the monarchy had to reinforce its presence in

Mérida through the built form. In fact, prior to the construction of the cathedral, the visual presence of the monarchy was virtually absent: it had been pre-empted by the visual rhetoric of Francisco de Montejo. Mérida's plaza mayor was watched over by the Casa de Montejo, not by buildings of the imperial state. The adelantado's presence in and surveillance of Mérida was heightened by the residence's balcony, where, from his elevated position, Montejo could make public appearances and witness the meting out of justice. From this powerful elevated position, both literally and figuratively, Montejo was framed by his royal emblems of office. The inclusion of the halberdiers around the balcony further affirmed the adelantado's governing powers and his identity. *Alabarderos*, or halberdiers, were vital components of a royal entourage. As noted, Montejo had spent several years attending both the Spanish royal court and the audiencias, and likely understood the implicit rhetoric of incorporating alabarderos into the facade's program. As the most dominant figures on his facade, and flanking the balcony, that powerful site of authority, observation, and presentation, the halberdiers imply that Montejo perceived himself as a political figure equal to, if not more powerful than, the Hispanic American governing institutions whose authority he contested, most tellingly in his armed takeover of Tabasco after his authority had been removed by the Guatemalan audiencia.

By affirming his authority in Mérida's centre so publicly, so elaborately, and on such a large scale, Montejo laid claim to the main plaza. His ability to do this was enhanced by the Plateresque idiom, open enough to celebrate the presence of Spanish culture on the frontiers, but also capable of expressing individual ambitions through the conflation of signs of nobility with emblems of monarchical authority. The monarchy was subsequently forced to formulate strategies by which to address and censor such grandiose displays.

### Conclusion

The political climate of sixteenth-century Hispanic America was continuously in flux as individuals and institutions jockeyed for jurisdiction over the frontiers. In this climate, architecture became a form of public signification by which individuals, groups, corporations, and institutions expressed their agendas within increasingly homogenous urban spaces. The visual rhetoric conveyed on facades in many instances borrowed heavily from European stylistic traditions, but the manner in which they were assembled reflects a Hispanic American sensibility and aesthetic that corresponded not only to the colonizers' efforts to show their conquests over new lands and peoples, but also to acknowledge and promote their own new political authority. The Casa de Montejo's facade is a primary example of this practice.

By situating the facade in its colonial context, we can explore its patron's reasons for using a particular stylistic idiom and the subsequent reception of its visual manifestations. In the Montejo facade, the Plateresque was employed for its associations with noble autonomy, and the facade raises questions about both the development of palatial residences in viceregal Hispanic America and the ways the colonizers experimented with and challenged accepted forms of self-representation in architectural design. The messages sculpted onto such facades as the Casa de Montejo's resonated loudly, and inevitably affected the administration and growth of the built environments and governments of Hispanic America.

### Acknowledgements

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Figure 12. Cathedral of San Ildefonso, Mérida, Yucatán, ca. 1562–99 (Photo: author).

### Notes

- 1 The main essays that have investigated the Casa de Montejo and its facade are C. Cody Bartee, "Exploring a Female Legacy: Beatriz Álvarez de Herrera and the Facade of the Casa de Montejo," *Women and Art in Early Modern Latin America*, ed. Kellen Kee McIntyre and Richard E. Phillips (Leiden, The Netherlands, 2006), 369–95; Bartee, "Colonial Contradictions in the Casa de Montejo in Mérida, Yucatán: Space, Society, and Self-Representation at the Edge of Viceregal Mexico," PhD diss., Binghamton University, 2007; Pablo Chico Ponce de León, "La expresión Renacentista en al arquitectura colonial de Yucatán," *Cuadernos de Arquitectura Virreñal* 14 (1993): 57–68; Jorge Ignacio Rubio Mañé, *La Casa de Montejo en Mérida de Yucatán con un estudio de Manuel Tous-*

*saint* (México, D.F., 1941); Juan Antonio Siller and Jaime Abundis Canales, “La casa de adelantado Francisco de Montejo en Mérida,” *Cuadernos de Arquitectura Virreinal* 1 (1985): 24–47; and Guillermina Vázquez, “Una aproximación a la iconografía de la fachada de la Casa de Montejo,” in *Estudios acerca del arte novohispano. Homenaje e Elisa Vargashugo*, ed. José Guadalupe Victoria (México, D.F., 1983), 157–166.

In his 2006 essay, Barteet focuses on recuperating the narrative and presence of Beatriz Álvarez de Herrera in colonial Yucatán while examining her influence and patronage in the production of the facade of the Casa de Montejo. He addresses briefly his concerns about the established conquest narrative, which was explored more deeply in his dissertation. Almost all other discussions of the facade focus exclusively on the idea of conquest, including Mañé’s historiography of the building’s occupation, to which Manuel Tousseint contributed a brief formal description of the facade, Siller and Abundis Canales’s archeological survey and discussion of the facade, and Vázquez’s art-historical analysis that identifies the facade’s patron as a new American Hercules. Vázquez’s essay epitomizes the standard approach to the Casa de Montejo’s imagery by suggesting that Montejo adopted some of the iconography associated with the Holy Roman Emperor and King of Spain Charles V, specifically the image of Hercules, and employed it on the facade. Vázquez suggests that the imagery of the facade is a final celebration of Montejo’s Herculean efforts to pacify Yucatán (166).

- 2 The “conquest” history of Yucatán has been addressed extensively in recent decades and does not need to be revisited here. See Robert Chamberlain, *The Conquest and Colonization of the Yucatan* (New York, 1948); Chamberlain, “The Governorship of the Adelantado Francisco de Montejo in Chiapas, 1539–1544,” in *Contributions to American Anthropology and History* 9, 44–47 (Washington, D.C., 1948): 163–208; Inga Clendinnen, *Ambivalent Conquests: Maya and Spaniard in Yucatan, 1517–1570* (New York, 1987); Nancy Farriss, *Maya Society Under Colonial Rule: The Collective Enterprise of Survival* (Princeton, 1984); Matthew Restall, *Maya Conquistador* (Boston, 1998), and *The Maya World: Yucatec Culture and Society, 1550–1850* (Stanford, 1997).

The Montejos planned three separate *entradas* (entries) into Yucatán, the first between 1528 and 1529, the second between 1530 and 1535, and the final in 1542. Although many settlements were founded in the last of these excursions, the Maya continued to resist Spanish occupation for the whole colonial period, as indicated by the uprisings between 1546 and 1547.

- 3 The term Plateresque or *plateresco* is translated generally as meaning “silversmith-like.” The Plateresque is a Spanish variant of Renaissance aesthetics that developed in Spain at the end of the fifteenth century, before it was eclipsed in the 1530s by a less decorative variant of the Renaissance idiom. For general discussions of the Plateresque’s formation in Spain, see J. B. Bury, “The Stylistic Term Plateresque,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 39 (1976): 199–230;

and Earl E. Rosenthal, “The Uniqueness of the Renaissance in Spain,” *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 122 (December 1983): 225–31. Bury offers the more extensive discussion of the term.

- 4 I use the phrase Hispanic America to refer specifically to the regions of modern Latin America that were governed by the Spanish monarchy in the colonial or viceregal era (roughly 1520s to 1820s).
- 5 In 1550 Montejo was officially stripped of his authority and titles. Upon his return to Spain in 1551 and for two years afterward, Montejo pleaded vehemently to the court to reinstate his estates and authority. His success was partial: only the title of adelantado was returned to his heirs, and then only as a ceremonial title. His only daughter, Catalina, inherited the title after her father’s death in 1553 while he was still in Spain. By the time of his death, Montejo’s wife, Herrera, had returned to Mexico City, where she lived out the remainder of her life. Although Catalina inherited her father’s titles, she did not live in Mérida; she too lived out the remainder of her life in Mexico City after the death of her husband, Alonso Maldonado. Montejo’s only son, El Mozo (The Younger), resided in his father’s house after the senior’s return to Spain, and lived the remainder of his life in Mérida with his wife, Andrea del Castillo, and their three children.
- 6 *Real Cédula de capitulación con Francisco de Montejo, vecino de México para la conquista de Yucatán*, 1526–12–08, Granada. Archivo General de Indias (hereafter AGI), Indiferente General, Leg. 415, 1, f. 90v–98v.
- 7 Samuel Z. Stone, *The Heritage of the Conquistadors: Ruling Classes in Central America from the Conquest to the Sandanistas* (Lincoln and London, 1990), 55–56; and Luis Weckman, *The Medieval Heritage of Mexico*, trans. Frances M. López-Morillas (New York, 1992), 333–35. Of these sources, Weckman offers the more thorough analysis of the royal position.
- 8 Chamberlain, *Conquest and Colonization*, 153–55 and 181; Chamberlain, “The Governorship of the Adelantado,” 168; and *Colección de documentos inéditos relativos al descubrimiento, conquista y colonización de las antiguas posesiones españolas en América y Oceanía, sacados de los archivos del Reino, y muy especialmente de Indias; Madrid, 1864–84* (repr., Liechtenstein, 1964–69), 14, 97. In the 1530s the Spanish crown divided present-day Honduras into two sections for administrative needs: Honduras and Higuera; Higuera encompassed the western regions of the modern country.
- 9 The audiencias of Hispanic America were regional courts with tribunal judges appointed by the Spanish crown.
- 10 For a summary of these events, see Chamberlain, *Conquest and Colonization*, 232–36. The Franciscan friar Diego de Landa, in his *Relación de las cosas de Yucatán (An Account of the Things of the Yucatán)* of 1566, offers a graphic narrative of these events. See Landa, *Relación de las cosas de Yucatán*, ed. Angel M. Garibay K. (México, D.F., 1966), 27; and Alfred M. Tozzer, ed. and trans., “Landa’s Relación de las cosas de Yucatán,” *Papers of the Peabody Museum of American Archaeology and Ethnology*, vol. 18 (Cambridge, Mass., 1941), 62.

- 11 AGI, Indiferente General, Leg. 415, 1, f. 93v. For a brief description of the act of the requerimiento, see Valerie Fraser, *The Architecture of Conquest: Building the Viceroyalty of Peru, 1535–1635* (Cambridge, U.K., 1990), 51–57.
- 12 In his text Landa recorded the Pachecos’ justification for their actions (Landa, 27; and Tozzer, 61). Additionally, the historian Matthew Restall has noted that the brutalities carried out by the Spanish conquistadores were typical of military practices utilized by Spanish armies during the *Reconquista* of Spain and the greater colonial period. For more information, see Restall, *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest* (Oxford, 2003), 24–25.
- 13 Las Casas, *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*, ed. Consuelo Varela (Madrid, 1999).
- 14 Las Casa, *Brevísima relación*, 124.
- 15 The first challenge to Montejo’s Tabascan governorship was between 1530 and 1531, when his position of *alcalde* (governor/mayor of a district) was temporarily removed.
- 16 For information on Cerrato’s charges against Montejo, see Chamberlain, *Conquest and Colonization*, 292–98.
- 17 It was not the adelantado but his son and nephew, both also named Francisco de Montejo, who carried out the final colonization of Yucatán. Presumably, because his father did not return to Yucatán until 1546, El Mozo began construction of the family’s residence. For additional biographical information on the Montejo family, see note 5. The Spanish renamed the city Mérida because the ruins of the Maya city reminded the conquistadores of the ancient Roman city of Mérida, Spain. See Diego López de Cogolludo in his *Historia de Yucatán*, 3 vols., 4th ed. (Campeche, 1954–55), 1:255; Landa, *Relación de las cosas*, 222; and Tozzer, “Landa’s Relación de las cosas,” 57–58.
- 18 The Mayan pyramid of Tihó remained a dominant feature of Mérida well into the seventeenth century (Cogolludo, *Historia* 1: 100). Mark Childress Lindsay has noted that the pyramid actually functioned as the fulcrum around which the colonial city was oriented and that the pyramid remained until 1656. For more information, see Lindsay, “Spanish Merida: Overlaying the Maya City,” PhD diss., University of Florida, 1999, 50, 56, and 64.
- 19 *Sobre la provincia de Yucatán, Carta del franciscano fray Lorenzo de Bienvenida al príncipe D. Felipe, dándole cuenta de algunos asuntos referentes a la provincia de Yucatán y quejándose de abusos*, 1548–02–10, Yucatán. Archivo Histórico Nacional, Diversos-Colecciones, 23, n. 16, 2r.
- 20 Molina Solís, *Historia del descubrimiento y conquista de Yucatán con una reseña de la historia de los mayos*, 2 vols. (México, D.F., 1943), 2: 33–39.
- 21 Susan Verdi Webster, “Masters of Trade: Native Artisans, Guilds, and the Construction of Colonial Quito,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 68, 1 (March 2009): 17.
- 22 Mañé and Toussaint, *La Casa de Montejo*, xv.
- 23 Spanish law required that the conquistadores begin construction of their new homes soon after the foundation of a city. It was also in the conquerors’ best interests because it afforded them legal rights to hold political offices. For discussion of some of these issues, see Valerie Fraser, *The Architecture of Conquest, Building in the Viceroyalty of Peru, 1535–1635* (Cambridge, 1990), 71.
- 24 See sources in note 1.
- 25 In 1544 El Mozo offered board to the first four Franciscans who had arrived in Mérida until their own residence could be built (Chamberlain, *Conquest and Colonization*, 314). Although it is unknown if they accepted his offer, it seems safe to suggest that the main body of the palace had been erected.
- 26 In their 1985 archeological summary, “La casa de adelantado Francisco de Montejo en Mérida,” Siller and Abundis Canales documented the evolution of the palace from its foundations to its modern habitation by BanaMex.
- 27 A “wild man” is a mythological figure that was developed in Europe primarily during the medieval era. Most often these figures were represented covered in hair and carrying clubs. Over time they were incorporated into heraldic imagery as supporters of coats of arms. In many respects, “wild men” were a metaphor for man’s uncivilized nature. Likewise, the “wild man” could symbolize racial or cultural difference. For more information, see Roger Barta, *Wild Men in the Looking Glass: The Mythic Origins of European Otherness*, trans. Carl T. Berrisford (Ann Arbor, 1994); Richard Bernheimer, *Wild Men in the Middle Ages: A Study in Art, Sentiment, and Demonology* (Cambridge, 1952); and Vanita Seth, “Difference with a Difference: Wild Men, Gods, and Other Protagonists,” *Parallax* 9, 4 (2003): 75–87.
- 28 Vázquez, “La casa de adelantado,” 164.
- 29 The pine cone images on the facade are an interesting but ambiguous feature. Since antiquity pine cones have been associated with fertility in both non-Christian and Christian traditions. It is possible, then, that the cones are a metaphor for the fruitful successes the Spanish hoped to achieve—cultural, economic, political, etc. Likewise it is possible that the cones have no symbolic associations at all and are purely decorative. Curiously, pine cones were often used in Mesoamerican imagery as well, in which the cones were possible allusions to rebirth, thus, allowing for possible indigenous readings of the facade, different from Spanish narratives.
- 30 The translated text reads, “This work was ordered done by the adelantado don Francisco de Montejo in 1549.”
- 31 Charles Burroughs, *The Italian Renaissance Palace Facade: Structures of Authority, Surfaces of Sense* (Cambridge, U.K., 2002), 12–42.
- 32 Jonathan Brown, “Spain in the Age of Exploration: Crossroads of Artistic Culture,” in *Circa 1492: Art in the Age of Exploration*, ed. Jay A. Levenson (Washington, D.C., 1992), 42.
- 33 For a discussion of the nobles’ attempts to separate themselves from the monarchs, see Pilar Martínez Taboada, “Los Mendozas y la introducción del urbanismo Renacentista en España,” *Goya* 229–30 (July/October 1992): 56–64; and Victor Nieto Alcalde



- and Fernando Checa Cremades, *Arquitectura del Renacimiento en España, 1488–1599* (Madrid, 1989); Checa Cremades, *Pintura y escultura del Renacimiento en España, 1400–1600* (Madrid, 1983); and Rosenthal, “The Uniqueness of the Renaissance.”
- <sup>34</sup> Burroughs, *The Italian Renaissance Palace Facade*, 65; Martínez Taboada, “Los Mendozas,” 57; and Rosenthal, “The Uniqueness of the Renaissance,” 231.
- <sup>35</sup> Sagredo, *Mediadas del Romano*, ed. Luis Cervera Vera (Valencia, 1976).
- <sup>36</sup> Sagrado, *Mediadas del Romano*, 31–32. The Spanish text reads, “El si es verdad en los edificios ay mucha diversidad de ornamenteos le pone mas por atavio por necesidad sin tener medida... terminada.” For ease of reading, my transcription has included some modern formatting and spelling.
- <sup>37</sup> Nigel Llewellyn, “‘Hungry and Desperate for Knowledge’: Diego de Segredo’s Spanish Point of View,” in *Paper Palaces: The Rise of the Renaissance Architectural Treatise*, ed. Vaughn Hart and Peter Hicks (New Haven, 1998), 124; and Llewellyn, “Two Notes on Diego de Sagredo,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute* 40 (1977): 292–300.
- <sup>38</sup> The primary influences upon Sagredo, according to Nigel Llewellyn, were Leon Battista Alberti, Francesco di Giorgio, and Sebastian Serlio. For more information, see Llewellyn, “Hungry and Desperate for Knowledge,” 122–139.
- <sup>39</sup> Andrew M. Prentice, *Renaissance Architecture and Ornament in Spain: Arquitectura y ornamentación del Renacimiento en España* (New York, 1970), 13.
- <sup>40</sup> Llewellyn, “Hungry and Desperate for Knowledge,” 128.
- <sup>41</sup> Louis Green, “Galvano Fiamma, Azzone Visconti and the Revival of the Classical Theory of Magnificence,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 53 (1990): 98–113; and A.D. Fraser Jenkins, “Cosimo de’ Medici’s Patronage of Architecture and the Theory of Magnificence,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 33 (1970): 162–170.
- <sup>42</sup> There are only a handful of texts dedicated to the study of Hispanic American palaces; among them are Juan José Jungquera y Mato, “Cortés, los Colón y la ‘villa’ en el mundo Hispánico,” *Archivo español de arte* 61, 242 (April–June 1988): 95–104; and Luís Ortiz Macedo, *Los palacios nobiliarios de la Nueva España, prólogo de Elisa Vargaslugo* (México, D.F., 1994).
- <sup>43</sup> Ortiz Macedo, *Los palacios nobiliarios*, 9.
- <sup>44</sup> James Early, *The Colonial Architecture of Mexico* (Albuquerque, 1994); George Kubler, *Mexican Architecture of the Sixteenth Century* (New Haven, 1948); and Manuel Toussaint, *Colonial Art in Mexico*, trans. Elizabeth Wilder Weisman (Austin, 1967). Each of these works is indicative of this trend.
- <sup>45</sup> Ortiz Macedo, *Los palacios nobiliarios*.
- <sup>46</sup> Fraser, *The Architecture of Conquest*, 147. In her passage, Fraser is addressing issues concerning the more simplified creations of facades in the provinces of Peru. Fraser indicates that more stylistically conscious facades—principally church facades—were markers or indications of established culture and society, as opposed to frontier society (147–45).
- <sup>47</sup> McAndrew and Toussaint, “Tecali, Zacatlán, and the Renacimiento Purista in Mexico,” *The Art Bulletin* 24, 4 (December 1942): 312.
- <sup>48</sup> For discussions of Hispanic American urbanism and the importance of the plaza mayor in Hispanic traditions, see Dora P. Crouch, Daniel J. Garr, and Axel I. Mundigo, *Spanish City Planning in North America* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982); Jesus Escobar, *The Plaza Mayor and the Shaping of Baroque Madrid* (Cambridge, U.K., 2003); Graziano Gasparini, “The Laws of the Indies: The Spanish-American Grid Plan, the Urban Bureaucratic Form,” *The New City* 1 (Fall 1991): 6–33; Paul Rabinow, “Ordinance, Discipline, Regulation: Some Reflections on Urbanism,” *Humanities in Society* 5, 3–4 (Summer and Fall 1982): 267–78; Karen L. Rogers, “Checkerboard Grids: Principles and Practices of Spatial Order in the Americas and the Making of Place in New Mexico,” PhD diss., Binghamton University, 2005; Jaime Salcedo, *Urban Urbanismo Hispano-Americano, Siglos XIV, XVII y XVII: El modelo urbano aplicado a la América Español, su génesis y su desarrollo teórico y práctico*, 2nd ed. (Santafé de Bogotá, 1996); Michael Scheffler, *The Art of Allegiance: Visual Culture and Imperial Power in Baroque New Spain* (University Park, Penn., 2007).
- <sup>49</sup> Scheffler, *The Art of Allegiance*, 11–30.
- <sup>50</sup> Scheffler, *The Art of Allegiance*, 11–30. For additional information on the biombo tradition in Mexico beyond Scheffler’s analysis, see Sofia Sanabrai, “The *Biombo* or Folding Screen in Colonial Mexico,” in *Asia and Spanish America: Trans-Pacific Artistic and Cultural Exchange, 1500–1840, Papers from the 2006 Mayer Center Symposium at the Denver Art Museum*, ed. Donna Pierce and Ronald Otsuka (Denver, 2009), 69–106.
- <sup>51</sup> Diego Encines and Alfonso García Gallo, eds. *Cedulario Indiano, reapilado*, 4 vols. (Madrid, 1945–46), 4: 243. As transcribed by Encines and García Gallo, ordinance 127 reads, “En la plaça no se den solares para particulares donde para fabrica de la yglesia, y casas Reales, y propios de la ciudad: y edifique tiendas y casas para trantes, y sea lo primero que se edifique...” Encines and García Gallo have compiled a full transcription of the Laws of 1573. The full title of the Laws of the Indies of 1573 is *Las Leyes de Indias: ordenanzas de descubrimiento, nueva población y pacificación de las Indias (The Laws of the Indies: Ordinances for the Discovery, the New Settlement, and the Pacification of the Indies)*. As indicated in this title, the Laws are a complex body of materials relating to settlement, discovery, and pacification.
- <sup>52</sup> Sebastián López Santiago, José de Mesa Figueroa, and Teresa Gisbert de Mesa in their text, *Historia general del arte: Arte iberoamericano desde la colonización a la independencia* (Madrid, 1989), 3: 255. As transcribed by the authors, the text reads, “que las casas sean humildes y no aya en ellas superficialidad mas que quello que forzosamente es necesario para su habitación y horden.”