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Construction Processes of the Military Orders in the Kingdom of Castile (12th–15th Centuries)

David Gallego Valle * and Jesús Manuel Molero Garcia *

University of Castilla-La Mancha, 13071 Ciudad Real, Spain
* Correspondence: david.gallegovalle@uclm.es (D.G.V.); jesus.molero@uclm.es (J.M.M.G.)

Abstract: Military Orders in the Iberian Peninsula in the Middle Ages were greatly involved in both the processes of conquest and subsequent transformation of the territories seized from Islamic rule. Evidence of this involvement is still visible today through solid and long-lasting buildings raised in response to the new needs of the dominant Christian society. The most significant were fortresses, and all their variants, followed by the temples of various sizes and categories. However, there were also other lesser-known constructions including mills, hospitals, houses of the commandery, and houses of agricultural domains. This study, based on written and archaeological sources, focuses on the constructions linked to the Military Orders, especially those of the Orders of Santiago, Calatrava, and St. John throughout the Kingdom of Castile between the 12th and 15th centuries. This analysis thus delves into the temporal sequence and regional variations of these features that not only led to a transformation of the landscape but also reflected changes in the framework of a particular type of society affected by power relations, technological evolution, available resources and wealth, as well as by its mentality and identity. Founded on data gleaned through basic research, this study thus attempts to reconstruct, among other aspects, this historical development by identifying the operational sequence which began with the procurement of raw materials, passing through the construction processes, and the application of different techniques. The study has likewise placed a special emphasis on the alarifes and the final results of their duties by analysing their choices of construction techniques and their functions.

Keywords: Military Orders; Middle Ages; Order of Santiago; Order of Calatrava; Order of St. John; history of construction; castles; temples; built heritage; Kingdom of Castile

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1. Introduction

Military Orders in the Iberian Peninsula in the Middle Ages played active roles in the conquest and reorganisation of territories seized from Islamic rule. Among the main features of these processes, still perceptible today, are buildings raised by these institutions in response to the new needs of the Christian feudal society. The most obvious are the fortresses and temples, of various sizes and types. However, there were other less known constructions such as mills, tanneries, bakeries, hospitals, houses of the *encomienda* (commanderies), and houses of *heredad* (houses of agricultural domains).

The aim of this study is to explore, by consulting written and archaeological sources, how these constructions were raised throughout in the territories under the Military Orders of the Kingdom of Castile between the mid-12th century and the end of the 15th century, especially those undertaken by the Orders of Santiago, Calatrava, and St. John. We thus focus on the temporal sequence and the regional variants of a process marked by great

building activity and that, in one way or another, not only led to the transformation of the landscape but also reflected a specific type of society, its power relations, its technological evolution, its available resources and wealth, and the mentality and identity of its builders.

This implied prioritising data we collected through a methodology combining archaeological and written sources mainly from the southern Meseta Central of Castile, the territory occupied by the Military Orders since the second half of the 12th century (Figure 1). The data led to reconstructing, among other aspects, the operational sequence, starting with the procurement of raw materials before passing through the construction processes applying different techniques. The study likewise highlighted the results of the undertakings of the *alarifes* themselves by delving into their choices of construction materials and the solutions they adopted.

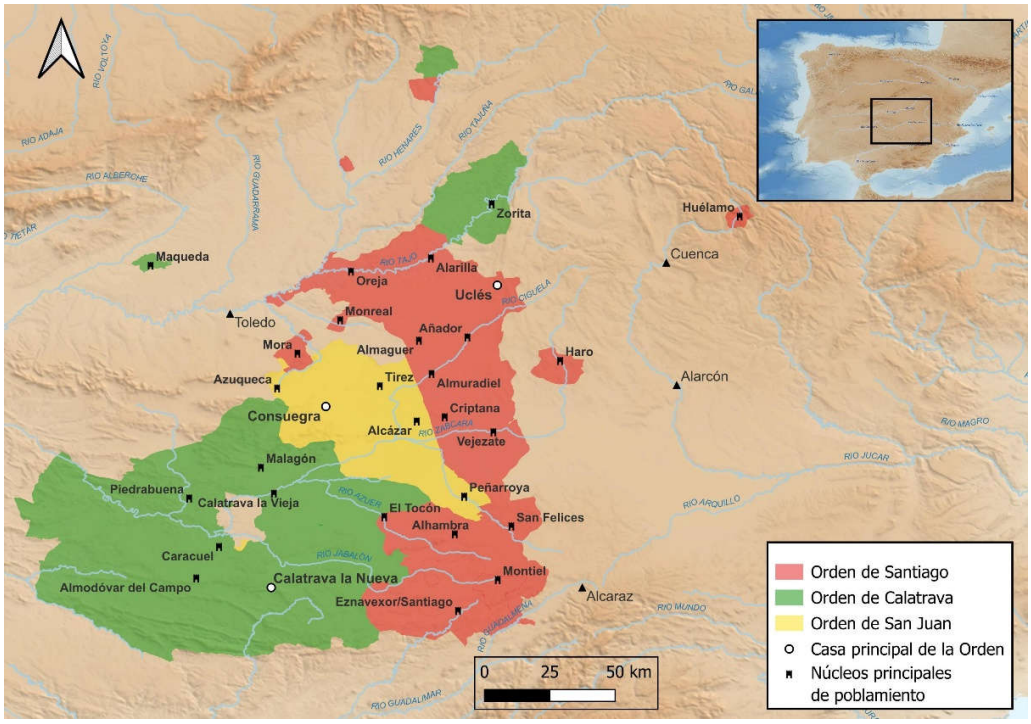

Figure 1. Map of the main domains of the medieval Military Orders to the south of the Meseta Central of Castile (red: Order of Santiago; green: Order of Calatrava; yellow: Order of St. John; white circles: parent headquarters of the Orders; black points: main settlements) (by authors).

The article is divided into two large sections. The first contextualises the Military Orders themselves from a historical point of view and defines a series of phases concerning their construction activity. This is based on the means of conceiving and executing their different buildings, as well as their typology and function. The second section comprises a series of case studies serving to shed light on how the constructions were financed, and in the cases benefitting from written records, who were their promoters and the *alarifes* taking on the projects.

2. The Military Orders in the Kingdom of Castile: Implementation, Development, and Building Activity

Military Orders are one of the most representative and characteristic religious institutions of the Middle Ages. They emerged in the Holy Land during the first half of the 12th century and, due to their great prestige, quickly spread throughout Europe. They combined two fundamental principles that were highly valued by the Christian society of the time. The first consisted of chivalry and the exercise of a just and holy war against the

infidels while the second was their conviction of ascetic and militant religious life, typical of reformist monasticism (Rodríguez-Picavea Matilla 2008). Their sphere of action gravitated towards border areas (Josserand 2009, pp. 372–75), which explains the importance they acquired in the Iberian Peninsula where they were supported by popes, monarchs, and individuals.

The idea of expanding the Crusade to Spain in the 12th century (Palacios Ontalva 2017) led to the arrival of the first *freires* and establishments of Templars and Hospitallers. Their mission was initially limited to the collection of *responsiones,* alms to support their activities in the Holy Land. However, from the second half of this century, they began carrying out much more committed functions (Luttrell 2005, pp. 45–76), which led to the emergence of the first properly Hispanic Orders, notably the Calatrava, Santiago, and Alcántara Orders (Rodríguez-Picavea Matilla 2005, pp. 101–36).

In order to carry out their functions, these Military Orders received numerous donations and privileges in the form of money, land, livestock, seigniorial fees, properties, and, especially, castles. The Spanish monarchy, from the beginning, viewed these institutions as the most effective allies to guarantee the security of the Kingdom, facilitate its expansion, and reinforce its political power (Ayala Martínez 2007, chap. 6). This led the Military Orders to consolidate their positions as great lords of the Kingdom, with their masters to occupy prominent positions in the court and in the political hierarchy. Their vast domains extended throughout the Iberian Peninsula, notably in the south of the Meseta Central, the main scene of political and border confrontations during the period of formation and expansion of these armed corps (Ruiz Gómez 2003).

The assets of these institutions varied in size and type from their inception in the 12th century until practically the dawn of the Modern Era, when their mastership fell under the authority of the monarchy (Rodríguez-Picavea Matilla 2008, p. 417). This meant that a large part of their buildings, especially castles, underwent profound transformations, with many being either abandoned or evolving into new roles as palaces. Research in recent years on this panorama (Molero García and Gallego Valle 2020, pp. 91–112) has thus led to placing the construction processes of these buildings into three major phases, each marked by its own features.

The first phase, limited to the first hundred years (1150 and 1250) of the Military Orders, saw these institutions acquire most of their assets. It as a period marked by hostile acts of conquest and their parallel political processes. As noblemen, the Military Orders both received and erected numerous castles and fortresses, structures that did not respond to a single model but were adapted to the needs, tastes, and technical advances of each moment. The bellicose atmosphere and religious radicalisation that characterised the classical era of the *reconquest* (García Fitz 2010) imposed its distinctive seal which it manifested through the development, among others, of a special type of fortification, notably the castle perched in rugged rocky settings controlling vast surrounding areas and strictly commanding the north–south routes of communication (Figure 2).

Thus, the castles of Military Orders during the first hundred years of their existence responded to the same general pattern as those of border fortifications except for certain cases of castle-convents such as Calatrava La Nueva, Uclés, and Consuegra (Molero García 2016, pp. 103–34). The territory likewise saw the raising of buildings linked to the feudalisation of the landscape (Ruiz Gómez 2003, p. 236). These consisted of churches built in recently repopulated towns and villages or within the castles themselves (Figure 3). One cannot ignore other essential features such as mills and houses of *heredad* linked to the exploitation of the territory that were key to the introduction of socio-economic transformations (Matellanes Merchán 1999, p. 529).

Figure 2. The Castle of Salvatierra (Calzada de Calatrava) is an archetype of the border fortresses of the Military Orders between the 12th and 13th centuries. Photo by authors.

Figure 3. Church of the town of Arenas de San Juan. Photo by authors.

A second phase of the constructive processes ranged approximately between 1250 and 1450. During this timeframe the Military Orders experienced a clear aristocratisation marked by administrative transformations such as the creation of the *mesa maestral* and the consolidation of the network of commanderies (Ayala Martínez 2007, chap. 4). These modifications were reflected especially in the centres of power (fortifications and houses

of the commandery), where structural changes were imposed linked to their function as seats of jurisdictional rule but also due to their new uses linked to warfare (Figure 4). The 14th century already experienced the first adaptations to gunpowder artillery, a surge of passive defences, and a significant increase in the height of keep towers. At the same time, castles began to be raised in flatter areas, integrated into the towns and villages, a fact that accentuated the residential and political-representative aspects of seigniorial authority (Figure 5).

Figure 4. Structure serving as both a castle and commandery of Herrera (Corral de Calatrava). Photo by authors.

This socio-economic aspect related to the Orders as rentiers is manifested by the appearance of the castle-house of the commandery, a variation of the traditional seigniorial castle. To this were added the priory palaces of the Order of the Hospital and the master palaces of the Hispanic Orders (Molero García 2014a, pp. 229–30). These processes, as will be seen, entailed important transformations to the features of the surrounding landscape, which had to be put at the service of the large constructions. Examples are the multiplication of quarries of all types and the roads serving them. In addition, throughout the general crisis of the 1300s, the territories under these Orders experienced an internal reorganisation, which tended to centralise their possessions. This led to the abandonment of a large number of villages, whose only vestiges today are either their old parish churches converted into hermitages or occasional country houses.

The third and final phase of the constructive processes was limited to the second half of the 15th century and the initial decades of the 16th century. It was manifested by two major phenomena that are particularly evident in the military and residential constructions of the Orders. Firstly, was the development, especially in the areas along the border with the Kingdom of Granada, of pre-bastioned-type fortifications or, failing that, the design of various features indicative of artillery such as embrasures, wide ditches, circular towers with firing chambers, and other passive defences. In addition, this phase saw the erection of Renaissance-styled castle-palaces (Cobos and De Castro 2000). Although

some of the elements of these buildings recall those of the old seigniorial castles, they no longer responded in the organisation, materials, spatial, or functional characteristics of the already obsolete medieval fortifications. The variant typical of this type of construction for the lordships of the Military Orders were the houses of the commandery (Figure 6), buildings where military features were reduced to a minimum.

Figure 5. Tower of the Priory Palace of the Order of St. John of Consuegra. Photo by authors.

As noted above, numerous buildings owned by the Military Orders often either fell into disuse or were transformed at the end of the Middle Ages. Many fortresses, as confirmed by both written and archaeological records, were falling into ruin, suffering from poor repair (García-Carpintero López de Mota 2020) or the abandonment of some of their facilities and interior spaces. Furthermore, parish churches, having emerged in the heat of the conquest and the initial repopulation, were already obsolete by this time. This was due either to the ageing of their materials or because they had become too small. A process was thus initiated to demolish them to make space for new buildings. These new edifices, notably those in the domains of the Order of Santiago, were authentic vast works of art (Molina Chamizo 2006, pp. 379–80). Worse luck befell the old medieval hermitages scattered throughout the territory (Porras Arboledas 1997, p. 50), which were either transformed into rural sanctuaries with a great popular following, and thus maintained by brotherhoods and councils, or, on the contrary, abandoned and left to fall into ruin.

Figure 6. A 3D reconstruction of the house of the commandery of Daimiel (from Molero García and García-Carpintero López de Mota 2020).

3. Construction Organisation and Execution

The concept of '*obra y fábrica*' (work and building) is well-established among art historians in reference to massive cathedral or monastic projects. Yet the concept can also, in a broad sense, apply to construction processes of buildings of the Military Orders. Palomo Fernández (1999, p. 132), in this sense, defined them as authentic construction establishments whose main aims were to guarantee the financing, continuity, and organisation of the ventures. These institutions thus guaranteed by means of numerous mechanisms the erection of the main buildings, especially lofty fortresses (e.g., Calatrava La Nueva, Uclés, and Consuegra), by mobilising vast resources, both their own and of others, especially from the crown (Rodríguez-Picavea Matilla 2008, p. 156).

In this sense, the Military Orders operated as construction enterprises, responsible for procuring the resources, organising the workshops, and guaranteeing the supply of materials for each of their projects. It is our belief that the construction systems and their procedures did not vary significantly between one Order and another, or with other contemporary seigniorial powers. However, it is possible to identify different distinctions and approaches depending on the territory and period, as well as the appearance of singular buildings such as castle-convents and houses of *bastimento* (warehouses).

The organisation of work in the construction process in the territories of the Military Orders presumably did not vary significantly from that observed in other areas of Iberia such as those studied by Cómez Ramos (2009, pp. 79–120). What our research has been able to certify is a very important number of Mudéjar *alarifes* throughout the Middle Ages, a fact that appears to be fundamental as it conditions the entire construction process. There is evidence of them in the lands under the Orders of Santiago (Porras Arboledas 1997, p. 310) and Calatrava (Almagro Vidal and Villegas Díaz 2009, pp. 37–55). Otherwise their presence, despite a lack of precise information, cannot be ruled out for the lands under control of the Order of St. John.

One must acknowledge that written sources describing the methods of construction, especially in rural sectors such as those of the study area, are practically non-existent until the second half of the 15th century. This fact has greatly limited the current research and has led to hypotheses that were later found to be invalid. Bearing this limitation in mind, we believe that applying an appropriate methodology to the analyses of the materiality of these features (either emerging above ground level or unearthed by archaeological excavations) can offer sufficient information on their systems of construction. This type of evidence

can shed light on a series of aspects including the approach to constructive projects, the materials required and how to procure them, the techniques to apply, and the professionals needed to perform the tasks.

3.1. The Presence of Master Builders and the Design of the Buildings

A first subject of focus when analysing the organisation of work, which is far from trivial and influences the rest of the process, is the planning of the design of the buildings. In the case of the Hispanic Military Orders, there is evidence that, during most of the Middle Ages, the figure of the *obrero mayor*, the master worker charged with the supervision and commissioning of the constructions in the different territories, was not institutionalised as it was later at the dawn of the Modern Era (Ayala Martínez 2007, p. 285). The absence of this figure meant that work orders were probably assumed either by local master builders, most likely Mudéjar, or a foreman engaged from a nearby city. This is the case for the important centre of Toledo which at the outset of the 13th century supplied a master builder to supervise the construction of the castle-convent of Calatrava La Nueva (Zapata Alarcón 2015, p. 60) (Figure 7). This individual was in a position to sign piecework contracts whose contents broadly specified the layout of the building, the necessary personnel, and the costs of the materials.

Figure 7. Castle-convent of Calatrava La Nueva (Aldea del Rey). Photo by authors.

Evidence of the existence of these master builders in the earliest phases relies on information gathered from the archaeology of the architecture as written sources, such as the *Libros de Visita* (visitation books) or lawsuits housed in the Judicial Archive of Toledo, only offer data subsequent to the second half of the 15th century (Romero Fernández-Pacheco 2016, pp. 31–72). These sources are particularly rich in casting light on construction systems, contracts, workers, materials, etc. (García-Carpintero López de Mota 2020), as noted in earlier research (on which we cannot dwell in detail here), especially that concerning the Castle of Montiel (Gallego Valle and Molero García 2017, pp. 657–68). However, it is appropriate to highlight at least one example in the archives that refers to visitations in

1515 by members of the Order of Santiago to the Commandery of Montiel[1] (but in reference to an event of 1507) (Figure 8). The case describes a lawsuit over the construction process that was financed by a *media anata* imposed by the knight commander Gonzalo Chacón. The statements by witnesses cite the presence not only of *alarifes*, but also of quarrymen and other tradesmen, in this case locals, who were under the tutelage of the general design of the *obrero mayor* of the Order of Santiago. The lawsuit was eventually 'papered over' at the time and the commander was absolved of all blame, although note was made that he had not been as scrupulous with the accounts as he should have.

Figure 8. Estrella Castle (Montiel). Photo by authors.

In spite of the absence of written documentation shedding light on the materiality of the constructions, it is evident the builders resorted to earlier guidelines to raise fortresses. This is deduced from the study on the distribution of the castle-houses of the commandery built by the Order of Santiago between the Sierra del Segura and Campo de Montiel between the end of the 13th century and the outset of the 14th century such as Montiel, Montizón (Figure 9), and Segura itself (Gallego Valle 2021, pp. 779–85). The design of these buildings, adapted to orographic constraints, adhered to a similar model marked by the predominance of an interior space with a keep, converted into the main symbol of the building, and a privative church of the Order, where there must have been interesting decorative programmes, but unfortunately, we only preserve very isolated fragments, either in the archaeological remains or in late written sources, mostly dating from the end of the 15th century. In addition, the measurements and typology of the floor plan of these towers, both quadrangular and semicircular, reveal practically identical proportions, a fact that cannot be coincidental.

Another theme evidenced by archaeological research but devoid of clear input from written texts is whether these master builders had notions of poliorcetics or not. Clearly fundamental to any military enclosure is the choice of location, the general plan, the arrangement of the towers and wall sections, the shooting features, etc. It is thus obvious

that these *maestros* must have either possessed sufficient notions of military engineering to undertake the project or benefitted from precise direct advice. Indeed, plans of castles had to take into account the distance between towers to channel attackers into kill zones. Access to them also evolved as their entrances became more complex with the adoption of an elbow-shaped layout (Molero García et al. 2021, pp. 205–34). It is possible that the planning was carried out by the knights commanders or *freires* who were responsible for the fortresses (Ayala Martínez 2007, p. 271), as one can perceive that they adopted solutions resulting from their experience, incorporating not only Christian traditions but features acquired from their foes on the other side of the border, especially during the Christian expansion into the Guadalquivir Valley.

Figure 9. Castle of Montizón (Villamanrique). Photo by authors.

Leaving aside the fortresses, one cannot rule out the presence of master builders in the construction of temples. However, the participation of *obreros mayores* is only confirmed by written records related to the great undertakings of the 15th and early 16th centuries (Molina Chamizo 2006, pp. 380–81). It is likely that the Orders themselves counted on experienced master builders who moved around their territories, a system known in other seigniorial domains. Hence, in this sense, there appears to be no clear evidence of differences between the different territories. We have accordingly identified buildings in certain uninhabited areas, such as Guadalajara, bearing Romanesque layouts that are very similar to those from more northern lands (Salgado Pantoja 2021). These stonework temples, raised during the 13th century, followed a design characterised by one to three naves ending in semicircular apses. Examples include those in the villages of the Santiago Order around Uclés and Montiel (Figure 10) and the Church of the Order of the Hospital of Arenas de San Juan. These seem to have been very similar to those documented in other territories under the control of the Military Order (Gerrard 2006; Perez Monzón 1999).

The presence of Mudéjar *alarifes*, in some cases called *maestros,* is confirmed in the domains of both the Orders of Santiago and Calatrava. Their hand is noted in religious buildings and in the methods of building fortresses, notably in the paradigmatic castle-convent of Calatrava La Nueva (Zapata Alarcón 2015, pp. 53–69). Their participation can

also be confirmed by the fortresses of Montiel and Uclés not only for the first centuries but also later in the 15th century by references to individuals such as Martin Marchina and Ibrahim el Moro[2]. Here and elsewhere these *maestros* reveal a unique know-how of different construction techniques and materials, ranging from stone to bricks, distancing the traditional image of these professions (Borrás Gualis 1990, pp. 101–5).

Figure 10. Church of the deserted hamlet of Torres (Montiel). Photo by authors.

3.2. Techniques, Materials, and Trades

The participation of other professionals ranking below the master builders must have been common in the territories of the different Military Orders. Quarrymen, *alarifes*, and even carpenters at times took charge of the works depending on the technique and level of difficulty. As noted above, although written records are scarce or non-existent for most of this study's chronological timeframes, the materiality of the structures offers ample information as to both the individuals who participated in their construction and the entire system applied to the task.

An involvement of *alarifes* is obvious when it comes to small and medium-sized military enclosures and temples, where the greatest technical difficulty was raising the vaults and laying the stonework (García Mansilla 2003, pp. 7–15). Therefore, one of these professionals serving to direct the operations and carry out the most qualified work presumably sufficed. At the same level, and in many cases combining both tasks in the same person, were carpenters charged with collecting and working all the wood used to fashion the falsework for vaults, scaffolding, and roofs. Both they and the *alarifes* were also often charged with the design and assemblage of the devices, most often serving to hoist heavy loads, systematically put to use at the construction sites (Cómez Ramos 2009, p. 117).

A paradigmatic case in point, the focus of our archaeological and architectural research of recent years (Molero García et al. 2022, pp. 16–35), pertains to the construction processes of the vaults of certain unique buildings of Military Orders from the 13th and early 14th centuries. Their detailed analysis suggests the presence of crews of specialists, either

Mudéjar or Christian, who relocated from site to site. The findings also indicate that the vaults were not fashioned with falsework but by joining of courses of stones of different morphologies, a technique that could only be applied after raising the walls. This technique resorting to staggered work phases thus sped up the operation. Examples are the Calatrava La Nueva (first half of the 13th century), the tower of the Grand Prior of Alcázar de San Juan (late 13th century), and, with data from archaeological excavations, the 13th-century churches in Montiel (Nuestra Señora de La Estrella and Santiago) (Figure 11).

Figure 11. View of the excavation of the vaults of the Church of Nuestra Señora de La Estrella (Montiel). Photo by authors.

At a lower rank were the other workers, such as quarrymen, who were assigned to provide the stone that was extracted either at the construction site itself or transported from nearby quarries (Cómez Ramos 2009, p. 120). It is conceivable that *alarifes* charged with the construction extracted the stone themselves. There are records indicating that these professionals throughout the lands controlled by the Military Orders were essential in raising the walls of different types. These walls were made of ashlars or formwork or, more commonly, of parallel rows of stone raised like parapets whose interiors were packed with a fill of stone rubble bonded with lime mortar. This technique, observed during the excavation of the western wall of the Estremera quarter of Uclés, and confirmed by petrological analyses, allowed different crews led by professionals to rapidly and simultaneously raise different sections of the wall.

This type of work demanded a massive amount of stone that was extracted from different types of quarries (Gómez Canales 2008, p. 50). Knowledge of these exploitations has advanced thanks to archaeological research. Pottery continues to be fundamental in their dating. When abundant and combined with domestic structures they suggest the presence of a nucleus of a settlement of varying types that could survive over time by supplying stone to various localities. This required the building of roads, sources of water to cut the stones, and space to extend the quarry faces. An example is the hill of Las Canterillas to the north of Uclés, which still bears traces of limestone extraction as well as

wedge holes used to extract the large blocks. Moreover, archaeometric studies of this site link its materials with those of the walls of Uclés (Figure 12).

Figure 12. Zig-zag wall of the Estremera quarter of the town of Uclés. Photo by authors.

In other cases, due to their location on high rocky summits, the outcrops themselves served as quarries. Although there are countless examples, we cite here the case of the Castle and Church of Torres (Cumbres de San Bartolomé, Huelva). The practically inaccessible position of the building, on the peak of a mountain, led the Order of St. John to resort to the veins of quartzite and slate at hand. The research we conducted on this castle and its surroundings indicates that stones were extracted simultaneously to the digging of the ditch. However, as this material did not suffice, the outcrops from the surroundings had to be exploited so as to yield medium and small-sized blocks. The extraction debris was later crushed and used as aggregate, an action observed, for example, in the construction of the Church of the Castle of Eznavexor (Villamanrique).

There is evidence of the existence of specialised stonemason crews, such as those dedicated to extracting and cutting the stone, who were often charged with specific elements of the construction. Their main tasks are reflected in the extraction of blocks for hollowed features, stairs, and corners, which were subsequently marked (Gómez Canales 2008, p. 48). The presence of specialised stonemasons is constant in the different buildings of the Military Orders from the end of the 13th century as evidenced by the towers of Alcázar de San Juan, Terrinches, and Génave. These structures, which formed part of larger enclosures, bear numerous mason marks. It must be noted that in many cases these symbols served as guides to place the blocks and should not be confused with other stone graffiti (calvaries, stars, checker boards, alquerques).

Records evidencing the work of specialised stonemasons are not limited to temples and large fortresses but include smaller features, such as watermills scattered along the main rivers crossing the domains of the Military Orders (Matellanes Merchán 1999, p. 514). Our investigation of the Vicario Mill of Montiel (Gallego Valle and Molero García 2016)

(Figure 13) has revealed the process the stonemasons applied to its construction. These observations are complimented by references to the mill in the visitation books of 1478[3], which describe investments and repairs to its infrastructure. In any case, it is clear that the mill house was raised with large ashlars despite the loss of many to looting. Of particular interest is the construction of its mill race and vertical penstock which resorted to perfectly squared blocks.

Figure 13. Vicario Mill (Montiel). Photo by authors.

Tapiadores, specialists in raising rammed earth walls (Graciani García 2009, pp. 109–41), perhaps associated with a carpenter, were presumably a fixture in these construction sites (Cómez Ramos 2009, p. 72). Our research has recorded many cases of rammed earth walls raised with earth and masonry (or mixed), in many cases adapted to local resources. An example is the rammed earth wall preserving its surface crust at the Castle of Santa María del Guadiana (Argamasilla de Alba) (Figure 14). Rammed quicklime walls using gypsum such as that of the Church of Belmontejo (Horcajo de Santiago) are common to the area of Cuenca. The use of rammed earth was constant throughout the Sierra del Segura. These features are at times mistaken for Islamic works, as is the case of the walls of Segura or Hornos, as well as those of the inaccessible Castle of Espinareda.

Another lesser known group of individuals linked to construction consisted of the suppliers (Palomo Fernández 1999, p. 132). These included makers of quicklime, plaster, bricks, and tiles and blacksmiths, who potentially, beside their normal work, could have also directly participated in the works. Either these types of products were acquired locally in a finished state or orders were given to stockpile them at points belonging to the promoter, an option that is more in line with the cases of this study. In the area around Montiel, for example, our archaeological surveys recorded brickworks, lime kilns, and zones where earth was extracted to construct the buildings of the town and castle. Many of these features are located in the Jabalón River Valley at the foot of the site. Others such as the stockpiles of sand, in turn, had to be procured several kilometres away.

Figure 14. View of the archaeological excavation of the Castle of Santa María del Guadiana (Argamasilla de Alba). Photo by authors.

The peonage, the most basic members of the labour force consisting of a very heterogeneous group of individuals, is rarely cited in written records. The group firstly consisted of day labourers whose involvement was not always constant but contracted for fixed periods to carry out specific tasks. The group likewise included contingents of occasional operatives who, due to seigniorial or regional obligations, were required to provide their services for a certain number of days. Examples are the peasants residing on the lands owned by the Military Orders, normally linked to border *fueros* (regional charters) such as that of Cuenca (Rodríguez-Picavea Matilla 2008, p. 356). In this group one must also include Mudéjar contingents enslaved subsequent to the great conquests of the 13th century (Zapata Alarcón 2015, p. 58) and to the constant clashes along the border. Decisive in this sense were the Mudéjars in the territories under the Military Orders, especially that of the Order of Santiago, deported from Murcia and Lower Andalusia to Castile and subjected to servitude after the revolt of 1264.

One must also highlight, albeit in a general manner, a persistent attendance of women in these architectural processes throughout the Middle Ages (Rabadé Obradó 1988, pp. 114–15). They, in fact, formed part of the group of day labourers tasked with transporting materials, carrying out demolitions, and serving as auxiliary personnel in quarries. They were likewise specialised in certain trades, such as the production of lime mortars (Borrero Fernández 2001, pp. 97–122), where they earned salaries equal to that of their male counterparts. The data from other territories point to their engagement, for example, in various large-scale ventures (Figure 15), such as in the erection of the Cathedrals of Toledo and Burgos, and in repairs to Valencian castles (García Mansilla 2003, pp. 8–9). Women also worked in various projects under the Order of Santiago such as the repair of the mills belonging to the Hospital of Cuenca (Sánchez Ayuso 2009, vol. 2, p. 367).

Figure 15. Miniature depicting women participating in the reconstruction of the wall of Rhodes belonging to the Order of the Hospital (ca. 1483). Source: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Ms. Lat. 6067—Guillaume Caoursin, *Gestorum Rhodie obsidionis commentarii, Oratio de morte magni Turci, De casu regis Zizimi*. Fol. 68 v.

To conclude this brief incursion into the personnel mobilised for these constructions we turn to the issue of their salaries. Without advancing a general overview of the subject, already carried out by other researchers (e.g., Cómez Ramos 2009, pp. 71–76), it is possible to specify that compensation for the days and tasks varied considerably from one geographical area to another. These were particularly high in Andalusian lands, especially for specialists of quarry work. The best paid were the *alarifes* and the master builders, at a rank above the carpenters and quarrymen. The promoter could reimburse them in different manners, either by cash or in the form of exemptions of taxes.

3.3. Financing the Buildings of the Military Orders

Due to the scarcity of the records from the 12th to the early 15th century, it is difficult to address the source of the funds that the various Military Orders of the Middle Ages had at their disposal to erect their different buildings. The visitation books cited above that yield information on the works, their costs, materials, contracts, and the individuals or institution responsible for the payments, in fact, only became systematic during the second half of 15th century. There are nonetheless, in the case of certain fortresses, various references, mostly indirect, that offer approximate responses to this question.

Research on the financing of fortresses of the Military Orders (Ayala Martínez 2007, pp. 575–90; Rodríguez-Picavea Matilla 2008, pp. 159–67) revealed that the expenses for their owners were broken down into three main types: construction and repairs, payments of the wages of the garrison, and maintenance of the supplies. It is the first of the three, construction and repairs, that is of interest to the current study. Moreover, it was this aspect that presumably represented the greatest investment. This is based on archaeological research which offers evidence that a great number of fortresses were raised simultaneously along different fronts during the conquest and repopulation of the territory.

Although the income available to the militias to finance these undertakings varied, most consisted of direct donations from the monarchs (Rodríguez-Picavea Matilla 2008, p. 162). A compelling case from the outset of the 13th century is that of the will of Alfonso VIII (1204) who annually granted no less than 10,000 *maravedis* for a period of 10 years to the construction of the Castle of Salvatierra. This fortification at the time served as seat of the Calatrava Order and acted as the spearhead of the conflict of the Kingdom of Castile with the Almohad Caliphate. This figure contrasts with the 4000 *maravedis* reserved for the Castle of Uclés and the 2000 *maravedis* for the works of the Castle of Consuegra, seats respectively of the Orders of Santiago and St. John in the Kingdom of Castile. In any case, the will evidences the direct intervention of the crown in these early stages of their building. There is no doubt that these expenses were also covered by donations from large open farmlands and other earnings for the first concessions of castles to the Military Orders. There are records suggesting this in the areas of the Campo de Calatrava and in the neighbouring Campo de San Juan, most notably in reference to what is known as the 'four castles of the Upper Guadiana' positioned along the banks of this river (ca. 1215) (Molero García 2016, pp. 103–34).

From the second half of the 13th century, especially during the reign of Alfonso X, the monarchy ceded certain ecclesiastical benefits to the Military Orders, such as the *tercias* (a share of the tithe) (Rodríguez-Picavea Matilla 2008, p. 162). A well-known case revolved around the Castle of Osuna where the Castilian-Leonese monarch offered the *tercias* collected from the churches of the town to help finance the construction of the fortress. It is our belief that this type of funding also took place in other territories. The masters at this time, through their various incomes, by means of *retenencias* (supplies and other articles necessary for the maintenance and defence of a fortress), would allocate the economic resources to the commanders to cover the costs of the construction and maintenance of the fortresses (Ayala Martínez 2007, p. 582).

Earnings apart from the religious sources also stemmed from military activity against the Muslims. Benefits could be received, for example, from the preaching of crusades by certain military enterprises or the raising of funds to maintain the castles along the border, in particular those related to the Guerra del Estrecho and to the reign of Alfonso XI. To this type of funding can also be added to contributions collected from individuals in the form of pious donations.

Secular income was also secured in the form of royalties from the crown. Income deriving from livestock throughout the area of La Mancha was presumably fundamental to this process. This concerned especially the collection of *montazgos* and *portazgos*, tolls imposed for the passage of animals and people that certainly generated significant benefits due to the continuous north/south transit of livestock (Ruiz Gómez 2003). Also linked to livestock were revenues collected by the Orders from allowing animals to pasture on their lands and from holding of fairs such as that observed continuously in Montiel since 1252. Other income potentially derived from municipal obligations such as those noted in the *fueros* related to the defence and maintenance of the towns (Palacios Ontalva 2008, p. 352). Another very clear example were the funds from numerous royalties and monopolies offered by the crown, in times of need, for the works associated with the Castle of Consuegra. This project in 1173 received the revenues collected from the tolls imposed on pack animals transiting from the Christian territory towards the Sierra del Segura. Years later, in 1200, in the face of the Almohad threat, it was awarded a large sum stemming from exploiting the salt mines of Belinchón, which increased, four years later, with the delivery cited above of 2000 *maravedis* over a period of ten years (Molero García 2005, pp. 331–76).

Although there is no explicit reference in the written records of the exploitation of the territory's resources and certain monopolies by the Military Orders, they must have served

to cover a variety of expenses. In this regard, one cannot dismiss the income gained from renting mills and bakeries or the trade of certain products, such as those extracted from the sandstone quarries of Alhambra. These since ancient times were known both for their whetstones and for their refractory blocks serving to build specific features of bakeries and smithies (Sánchez Ayuso 2009, vol. 2, p. 307).

Despite all these sources of revenue, there is evidence in the 15th century of a serious drawback linked to the lack of liquidity to cover the great expenses related to the maintenance of castles. This problem, not exclusive to the territories of Military Orders, affected the neighbouring Kingdom of Valencia, where maintaining the castles was so costly that their owners themselves often voluntarily demolished them. Although these circumstances bear a certain logic concerning the castles in the rear, it also often affected those raised along the border with the Sultanate of Granada (Molero García 2014b, pp. 133–40). The ongoing attacks and the demographic debility along this border meant that they were unprofitable for the Military Orders as they required a continuous transfer of assets from possessions in the rear (Ayala Martínez 2007, pp. 561–602).

Leaving aside the military constructions that, due to the multitude of data, have monopolised the discourse of this study, the (Military Orders allocated significant revenues to the erection of other features intended to gain earnings either through rent or through entities linked to seigniorial administration, notably mills, bakeries, and the houses of the commandery. Visitation books since the end of the 15th century offer extensive information on these properties, which were subjected to continuous repairs that should have been covered by the commanderies. This resulted in many lawsuits both due to the idleness of the knights commanders and to their lack of funds, leading them to often resort to the *mesa maestral* to finance the works (García-Carpintero López de Mota 2022, pp. 358–64).

Finally, we would like to briefly delve into the issue of religious buildings. Normally, in the case of parishes, the councils themselves were responsible for their construction. Although these were financed with their revenues, funding also often came from private donors (Molina Chamizo 2006, pp. 368–69). The financing of buildings designed to be used exclusively by the Orders (monasteries, convents, and churches or chapels built inside castles) did not vary significantly from that of the fortresses. Hermitages and hospitals attached to councils had to be paid for by these institutions, although it is usual for them to have been founded and maintained by brotherhoods and often by private donors.

4. Conclusions

The Military Orders studied here emerged in the Middle Ages within the complex framework of the Holy Crusade, initiated at the end of the 11th century, and the Spanish *Reconquista* of the 12th century, in the heat of the triumphant expansion of Latin Christianity, ecclesiastical reform, and the Christianisation of chivalry. The key role they played in the defence and organisation of vast lordships in various regions of Occidental Europe and Latin Orient, including the Kingdom of Castile, warrants them to be considered as institutions of medieval society yielding a significant built heritage directly related to their distinct political–military and religious activities.

Firstly, both the offensive and defensive aspects of the conflict led to the building of a series of fortifications along the border. Most, originally raised under Islamic rule, would soon be modified to comply with the values and functions of their new owners by the construction within their walls of temples, hospitals, warehouses, etc. Military activity was closely linked to the political–administrative activities as these fortresses, together with other buildings such as the houses of the commandery, that served as residences for the main dignitaries of the Orders, from masters to knights commanders. They allowed them to carry out their functions and assert their seigniorial and jurisdictional rights.

As ecclesiastical entities, the religious personnel of the Military Orders had to fulfil their vows of monasticism. This required the Orders to build convents for both men and women, and above all, parish churches to administer the sacraments and care for the souls of the inhabitants of their lordships. Their charitable and medical work, in turn, led to the construction of their own hospitals, at times in border castles and along routes of pilgrimage. Finally, the Orders also supported the founding of hospitals in the towns and councils under their domain, whose promoters were mainly brotherhoods created for this purpose.

A final group of constructions were designed for the manufacture of goods and economic production and served the Military Orders to assert their acquisition of seigniorial rights and monopolies. These basically consisted of mills, tanneries, bakeries, wine cellars, winepresses, etc. and, above all, warehouses to store the products and revenues procured by the commanderies. They took on the form of the warehouses of the Order of Santiago and the houses of *bastimiento*, wine cellars, warehouses in the *castles-houses of the commandery*, and, in the countryside, barns and houses of agricultural domains.

This varied built heritage, which has progressively deteriorated over the centuries, can still be the object of study when applying the appropriate methodology, that is, combining analyses of material remains with information gleaned from written sources. This investigation applied this method to case studies and territorial analyses of the main domains of the Santiago, Calatrava, and St. John Orders in the Kingdom of Castile. Our research thus recorded numerous buildings, many no longer standing in elevation, rendering it necessary to apply the archaeological method for their characterisation.

The preceding pages have thus focused on the constructive activities promoted by the Military Orders in the Kingdom of Castile between the 12th and 15th centuries. Firstly, the study advances three evolutionary phases responding both to the material nature of the buildings and to their function. The first phase (12th to mid-13th centuries) is dominated by military features, either inherited from the Islamic past or raised *ex novo*. These constructions were built quickly for the most part using the rammed earth technique in its various forms, especially that involving stone. The second phase, ranging from the mid-13th to the mid-15th century, is characterised by the emergence of the castles-houses of the commandery, as well as other buildings of religious and socio-economic nature. This phase stems from the gradual aristocratisation of the Orders and their growing interest in becoming rentiers and colonisers. Finally, the third phase, spanning the mid-15th to the mid-16th century (and marking the transition to the Modern Era), was characterised, in particular, by the abandonment of the earlier military and religious buildings from the first phase and, above all, by the construction of palaces doubling as headquarters of commanderies, the modernisation of convents, the erection of Renaissance-style buildings, and extensive church renovation.

The constructions carried out by the Military Orders are not an exception but follow the general styles, technical resources, and solutions of each historical moment. There are, without a doubt, exceptions, such as the castle-convents, the castle-houses of the commandery, and farms. These features are nonetheless perfectly integrated into the specific models of their territory as evidenced by their adoption of regional techniques, materials, and stylistic solutions. Unfortunately, there is little information on how their building was organised, their financing, the materials put to use, and the individuals involved. However, comparative analyses combining the archaeological method and data from mid-15th-century visitation books shed light on the complexities of the planning and organisation of the construction processes. Here one must highlight the direct participation of Mudéjar *alarifes* as well as other professionals (carpenters, stonemasons, *tapiadores*, suppliers, etc.) who left their mark. Finally, this study also addressed socio-economic

aspects of the construction processes, firstly along the lines of how the works were financed during the different phases. In this sense one must highlight the direct participation of the monarchy in the first phase and the subsequent involvement in the Late Middle Ages of masters, knights commanders, and the municipal councils themselves, according to the type of building.

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Notes

[1] 1515 Archivo Histórico Nacional (AHN), Órdenes Militares (OOMM), Libro 1078: Visita de los Partidos de la Mancha y Campo de Motiel. Montiel, 543–544.

[2] 1478. AHN, OO.MM, Libro 1063-C: Visita a los partidos de la Mancha, Ribera del Tajo, Campo de Montiel y Segura. Montiel: p. 224.

[3] 1478. AHN, OO.MM, Libro 1063-C: Visita a los partidos de la Mancha, Ribera del Tajo, Campo de Montiel y Segura. Montiel: p. 236.

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