

**The Resurrection of the Military Order of Calatrava through the Construction of a  
New Capital**

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### Introduction:

The battle of Alarcos (1195) marked an abrupt end to the territorial advances of the Castilian King Alfonso VIII against the Almohad dynasty in Spain. While Alfonso himself escaped, his greatly outnumbered front line – which was composed almost entirely of the knights of Calatrava – was annihilated. The headquarters and namesake of the order – now known as Calatrava la Vieja – was captured by the Almohades. Additionally, a string of castles surrounding Toledo which had been donated to the Order of Calatrava by Alfonso VIII and his predecessors were lost to Muslim forces. As a result, the Castilian King could no longer rely on the knights of Calatrava to be his standing army.

During the following seventeen years, the few surviving members of the order lived a tenuous existence, leaving the name of Calatrava behind them and taking on the name of a very meager castle named Salvatierra. This more advanced position was bold, but eventually far too meager to withstand the Muslim forces of Cordoba. The small monastery-castle could not protect or provide enough water for the defenders, so the knights capitulated. Perhaps unwisely, the caliph allowed the knights to survive and withdraw from the castle with their honor and memories intact. This fortress, which translates as “salvation ground,” had been a symbol of the order’s determination to survive and defend Christian Spain. When Salvatierra fell, it sent an important message to Castile and the entire West that Iberia was vulnerable. The result was Pope Innocent III’s call for an international crusade in La Mancha, and the most decisive Christian victory of the Reconquista at the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa in 1212. The international

effort was critical to this victory, yet the most invested group was probably the nearly disbanded order of Calatrava/Salvatierra.

After Las Navas de Tolosa, the Order of Calatrava – whose resolve and courage had gained tremendous political currency in Iberia – was able to reconstruct itself in whatever manner it chose. In addition to regaining all of the castles they had lost after Alarcos, they suddenly had the means to build a new capital to represent their order. This new capital provided the Order with an opportunity to express its historical identity as well as its future goals in the region. Among the options for their headquarters was the original namesake of their order, the marshland fortress on the Guadiana River known now as Calatrava la Vieja, and the castle of Salvatierra, which had held the order together throughout their times of greatest crisis. With new wealth at their disposal, any of their previously held possessions could have been reoccupied, expanded, or even replaced. (Fig. 1) Instead, the order decided to create a new capital on a much larger hill directly across from Salvatierra.

The Order named this enormous complex of monastic buildings and frontier fortifications *Calatrava la Nueva*; a clear invocation of their roots as an order, as well as a distinct reference to their resurrection from near total oblivion. It is my contention that the years of displacement and crisis between the Battles of Alarcos (1195) and Las Navas de Tolosa (1112) were the key to the order's architectural decisions at their new capital. In this paper, I explain how the idea for Calatrava la Nueva germinated during this period, and how the choices of site, plan and style at Calatrava la Nueva each reflect the rebirth of Calatrava as a military order. Most importantly, I explain how Calatrava la Nueva offers a unique opportunity to determine how members of a military order



responded to the challenge of creating a singular and symbolic identity through architecture.

The treatment of the Order of Calatrava by historians has largely ignored their architecture. Any mention of the tens of castles inhabited by the order usually takes the form of a list of donations to the order by the King of Castile or Aragon, and sometimes a map of their locations as they relate to the Castilian capital of Toledo. Prof. Joseph O'Callaghan, of Fordham University has written the bulk of the history of the Order in the English language. In the preface to his collection of essays titled *The Spanish Military Order of Calatrava and its Affiliates* he admits his studies "... deal only incidentally with the military role of the Order..." deciding to focus instead on "...the monastic character of the (military) Orders."<sup>1</sup> In particular, O'Callaghan and others have placed great emphasis on the affiliation of Calatrava with the larger Cistercian movement. According to this narrative, the adaptation of the Cistercian Rule to the Order of Calatrava is of chief importance. In addition, the placement of Calatrava directly under the influence of the Abbey of Morimond, and the Order's eventual acceptance as full members of the Cistercian Order in 1187 are described as unique anomalies among military Orders. Under this narrative, the first years of the Order's inception take precedence over their resurrection after the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa.

O'Callaghan's most influential contribution to this paper was his definition of the period of "Crisis and Survival" between Alarcos in 1195 and Las Navas de Tolosa in 1212. Unfortunately, O'Callaghan allows Las Navas de Tolosa to be both the climax and end to his story concerning the "near destruction" of the order. The decisions made by the

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph F. O'Callaghan, *The Spanish Military Order of Calatrava and its Affiliates* (London [England]: Variorum Reprints, 1975) 1.



order in their moment of triumph are not fully considered. The timeline in the appendix of this work should help readers to understand the sequence of events in the first half-century of the Order's history, as well as cumulative effect these events had on their identity at the moment they chose to construct Calatrava la Nueva.

I contend that the construction of the largest monastic-military complex in Iberia was not a foregone conclusion in 1213, and that the Order's decision to recall their past by retaking their original name of Calatrava is both significant, and deeply imbedded in the architecture of their new capital. The lack of attention paid to Calatrava La Nueva as a historical source is related to the fundamental difference between historians and art historians concerning the approach to material culture. While an immense new fortification such as Calatrava la Nueva would certainly have had primarily geopolitical consequences on the region, I believe it was more than a dot marking the southernmost Christian possession on a historical map of the Reconquista. This shallow reading of medieval fortifications lumps a unique castle/monastery into a category of purely military structures and ignores its ability to speak directly for its equally unique inhabitants. Calatrava la Nueva was an active agent in the Reconquista; one that can help both art and cultural historians to better understand how the most polemical and combative actors on the Christian/Muslim frontier manifested their ideology. Given the dearth of information available concerning the way military Orders perceived themselves, a reconstruction of Calatrava's headquarters should offer a welcome insight into the identity that the Calatravan monks wished to project.

## Chapter I: The Order of Calatrava's Long History and Recent Victory

As essential as sequence and chronology are to the study of the Reconquista on the whole, it is equally important to follow a very specific sequence of decisions regarding Calatrava la Nueva's construction. This paper argues that the timing for the castle/monastery's construction was the most critical factor in determining the choice of site, and that the choices of plan and style were in turn, highly influenced by the choice of site. Hence, the first question discussed here is whether the choice of site for Calatrava la Nueva was affected more by the immediate relief after the Christian victory at las Navas de Tolosa, or by the long period of "Crisis and Survival" following the devastating Christian loss at Alarcos seventeen years earlier.

From the foot of the rocky outcropping on which Calatrava la Nueva stands, it appears as much a city as it does a fortress. The curtain walls that encircle the crown of the hill were built of volcanic stone quarried directly from the site itself. This lack of definition between site and structure creates the impression that the castle grew directly out of the top of the hillside. (Fig. 2) It is still apparent from the remaining structures and foundations that this complex was built by a group with enormous resources, yet there is nothing ostentatious about Calatrava la Nueva. Judging by the rubble construction, irregular stacking and thick mortar, its walls were built solidly, yet very quickly. Due to the extensive base of curtain walls, and the grade of the hillside, the castle complex does not even have a particularly dramatic profile. (Fig. 3) It is clear, however, that the castle/monastery could easily house a substantial garrison. (Fig. 4) Based on this impression alone, one could assume the complex was built to accommodate a sizable



community composed of lay workers, Cistercian monks, and monastic knights. However, in 1213, when construction on the site is believed to have been begun, the Order of Calatrava la Nueva had barely begun to replenish its numbers and influence on the Peninsula. Consequently, it may be more accurate to consider Calatrava la Nueva as either a hopeful vision of the future, in which their numbers would justify a complex of buildings of this scale, or as a reflection of their distant past, when the Order's power in the frontier was second only to the King of Castile.

In order to decipher why the Order of Calatrava decided it was necessary to build a structure of this scale, it is important to properly narrate their turbulent history. The events which precipitated the foundation of the order in 1158, their years of success, their near total loss at the battle of Alarcos in 1195, the meager years at Salvatierra, and the euphoric victory at Las Navas de Tolosa in 1212 all helped to shape an identity that was as unique as the edifice they built to be their new headquarters. This narrative also offers an opportunity to consider the effect of the patronage of the King of Castile on the choices made at Calatrava la Nueva.

### **Calatrava's Origins and its Identity: (1147-1164)**

The Order of Calatrava was initially named after a fortress 55 miles south of the Castilian capital of Toledo. (Fig. 5) This fortress, now known as Calatrava la Vieja, was originally built by the Muslim conquerors of Iberia in the ninth century. From the ninth to the mid twelfth century, the fortress – then named *Qal'at Rabah* – acted as a strategic focal point in the Guadiana river basin. After the fall of the Umayyad Caliphate in the eleventh century, the fortress regularly changed hands between the Taifa kingdoms of Seville,



Toledo, and Cordoba. Its location upon a low hilltop next to the Guadiana River, and on the road between Toledo and Cordoba made it extremely desirable throughout its history. When the Almoravids invaded from Morocco in 1086, the new Muslim dynasty made the fortress a spearhead for attacks against the Castilian capital of Toledo, which had been recaptured by Alfonso VI the year before (1085).

In 1147, Alfonso VII of Castile captured the fortress and quickly realized that he could not maintain a garrison to occupy the fortress through his feudal power alone. The surrounding marshland around the river was insalubrious and its advanced position on the Christian/Muslim frontier was constantly under threat of attack. According to the bishop of Toledo, Rodrigo Jimenez de Rada – who wrote the only narrative of the foundation of the Order of Calatrava in the early thirteenth century – Alfonso VII quickly sought the assistance of the Order of the Temple to garrison the castle. The Templars' success in the year-round protection of the Holy Land after the first crusade made them the only pre-existing model for a standing army in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The Templars made several important alterations to the castle to better suit their religious and secular needs; including the construction of a signature centrally planned church on the site. The Templars held the castle and defended the southern route to Toledo until 1157, when the rumor of an imminent attack from a new, even more militant North African dynasty, (the Almohades) reached the Templars at Calatrava la Vieja. According to Historian Derek Lomax and others, the death of King Alfonso VII in 1157 convinced the Templars that they would be left without support in their frontier outpost, and compelled to bear the brunt of the Almohad advance.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, the Templars returned the castle to the

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<sup>2</sup> Derek W. Lomax, Reconquest of Spain (London: Longman, 1978) 108.

new King Sancho III (1157-58) claiming that they did not wish to be needlessly diverted from their "true" purpose to defend Jerusalem.

It is not the purpose of this paper to debate whether or not the Templars fled their responsibility due to their lack of investment in the Reconquista as Lomax and his source - Archbishop Rodrigo Jimenez de Rada - believed. However, there is no doubt that the group which answered Sancho III's call to re-garrison the castle had much stronger local connections to the Christian reconquest.<sup>3</sup> The monks of Fitero, the first Cistercian monastery in Spain, abandoned their own construction project in southern Navarre to pick up swords and garrison Calatrava la Vieja. According to the *Bullarium Ordinis Militiae de Calatrava*, the Abbot of Fitero, Reymond, took on the responsibility "to defend (Calatrava la Vieja) against the pagans, the enemies of the cross of Christ."<sup>4</sup> It is unlikely however that the majority of those who became militant defenders of Calatrava were converted monks. Historian Alan Forey suggested that the defenders were mostly composed of the lay brethren of Fitero and crusaders who had responded to the archbishop of Toledo's offer of indulgences to anyone who chose to defend the fortress at La Mancha.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, Archbishop Rodrigo Jimenez de Rada's thirteenth century account states that the mixture of lay brothers, Cistercian monks, and Iberian crusaders quickly took on some form of monastic identity: "...then many who had been inspired by devotion received their Order having modified the habit as military activity demanded."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Theresa M. Vann, "A New Look at the Foundation of the Order of Calatrava," *On the social origins of medieval institutions essays in honor of Joseph F. O'Callaghan* (Leiden [Netherlands]: Brill, 1998) 103.

<sup>4</sup> Catholic Church. Pope., *Bulario de la Orden Militar de Calatrava*. (Barcelona: El Albir, 1981) 2.

<sup>5</sup> Alan Forey, *The Military Orders: From the Twelfth to the Early Fourteenth Centuries* (Toronto: University of Toronto P, 1992) 27.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.



According to historian Joseph O'Callaghan, the conversion from monk to "knight of Christ" did not occur without debate. O'Callaghan noted Bishop Rodrigo Jimenez de Rada's claim that Abbot Reymond believed military action was "foreign to his character as a monk and ought not to be undertaken rashly."<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, O'Callaghan's translation of the *Bullarium Ordinis Militiae de Calatrava* describes a group that eventually joined their new role with their old identities. "... with swords in hand, wearing rough woolen garments and eating a meager diet, they (the new Order) gave themselves up to a life of prayer, vigils, silence, discipline and war for the defense of their country and faith."<sup>8</sup>

### **The Adaptation of the Cistercian Rule to Suit the Military Order of Calatrava**

Although Sancho III only lived to see the first year of the experiment at Calatrava, the King was able to see the new Order flourish quickly. With the help of the King of France (Louis VII) and the Duke of Burgundy, Sancho II and Abbot Raymond managed to secure the confirmation of the Order by Cîteaux in 1158. By 1164, the military Order of Calatrava was granted a *Forma Vivendi* or official rule of life by Cîteaux, and acknowledged as a legitimate monastic order by the Pope. In 1187 the knights of Calatrava were acknowledged as full Cistercian monks and placed under the authority of the Burgundian house of Morimond.<sup>9</sup> However, the first *Forma Vivendi* of 1164 only

<sup>7</sup> Joseph F. O'Callaghan, "The Affiliation of the Order of Calatrava with the Order of Cîteaux," *The Spanish Military Order of Calatrava and its Affiliates* (London [England]: Variorum Reprints, 1975) 182.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* 183.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* 188. "...Pope Alexander III, in a bull of September 26 of that year (1164) addressed 'to his beloved sons, Garcia, master, and the bretheren of Calatrava, both present and future, living according to the Order of Cîteaux', extended to them the protection of the Holy See, confirmed their possessions and sanctioned the regulations set down by the general chapter."



applied to the converted knights of varying monastic and lay origins who had picked up weapons and remained at Calatrava after the departure of Abbot Raymond (c. 1161). According to O'Callaghan, there were Cistercian monks at Calatrava who had translated from Fitero but had not taken up arms. These monks decided to leave Calatrava to the true hybrid knight-monks under the authority of their new Master, Don Garcia (1164-69) and follow Abbot Raymond to the monastery of Ciruelos (where he died in 1161-1164). Before they were recognized as full Cistercian monks in 1187, the Order had to select members of the secular clergy to serve as their chaplains.<sup>10</sup> O'Callaghan notes that after 1187, the Cistercian General Chapter ordered that "two monks from that same monastery [Morimond] after its construction, should live, for as long as may be necessary, with the friars" of Calatrava.<sup>11</sup> These monks ensured that the new militant branch of the Cistercian Order would not shirk its monastic identity, and educated the Calatravan knights in the proper Cistercian life.

Despite the earlier precedents set by the Templars and Hospitalers, the Order of Calatrava was still confronted with the paradox inherent in all military orders. How could a monk, whose life's purpose was to withdraw from the world and focus on his spiritual journey, also reside in a castle, wield weapons, and defend the frontier of Christian Iberia? Given what is known about the Cistercian Order's strict brand of "reform monasticism," they seem an unlikely model for a military Order such as Calatrava. Yet

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 187.

<sup>11</sup> Joseph F. O'Callaghan, "The Interior Life of the Military Religious Orders of Medieval Spain," Malta Study Center Lecture Series, St. John's University, Collegeville, MN, Oct. 2001, 8 Jan. 2009 <<http://www.hmm1.org/centers/malta/publications/lecture2.html>>.

O'Callaghan mentions in the above article that "...the documents speak simply of fraters, or brothers or friars." Due to some confusion concerning the translation, I have substituted "monastic knights" for O'Callaghan's "friars" except when he is translating directly from a source.

one only needs to look at the career and writings of the Cistercian Order's principal theologian, Bernard of Clairvaux to discover the chief proponent of militant monasticism.

In the centuries leading up to the crusades, the title "knights of Christ" was used to describe monks, who lived in self-imposed confinement behind the walls of a monastery and fought spiritual battles against temptation and sin. After the advent of the Crusades, and more importantly, the military Orders, "spiritual combat" became less metaphorical, and more temporal. Bernard of Clairvaux, in his *Liber de Laude Nove Militie*, made a strict distinction between the brutal and secular *militia secularis* and the new *Ordio militie* of the Knights Templar.<sup>12</sup> Taking up St. Bernard's rhetoric, the Cistercian General Chapter of 1164 "praised the intention of Master Garcia and the brethren of Calatrava to convert from the *militia mundi* to the *militia Dei*." Later, the General Chapter of 1187 referred to a change from the *militia mundi* to the *Militia Christi* at Calatrava. The clear support from the Cistercians was based upon their view that the Order of Calatrava represented the extension of Bernard of Clairvaux's proposed "new knighthood" that began with the Templars and culminated in an order with even closer adherence to the Cistercian Rule.<sup>13</sup> Whether it was intended or not, by supporting the Order of Calatrava, the Cistercian Order gained a seat at the table of the most important political and military affairs of the Iberian Peninsula in the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

As secure as Bernard of Clairvaux and the Cistercians may have been in their definition of the new knighthood, in practice, the new military Order had to maintain as strict an adherence to traditional Cistercian monasticism as possible. The monastic

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.the-orb.net/encyclop/religion/monastic/bernard.html>

And: Aryeh Grabois, "Militia and Malitia: The Bernardine Vision of Chivalry," *The Second Crusade and the Cistercians* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992)

<sup>13</sup> O'Callaghan "The Affiliation..." pp. 164-190



knights of Calatrava took the same vows of poverty, obedience, and chastity to which all Benedictine monks adhered. One of the only exceptions to the customs of Cîteaux practiced by the monastic knights was a greater allowance of meat at the frontier. They wore the same plain, "uncolored" habits worn by traditional Cistercian monks, only with shorter length when they were riding. Just as the traditional Cistercian monks gave up all of their worldly possessions when they entered the order, the monastic knights submitted to the same requirements. The *Forma Vivendi* described severe penalties for breaking the vow of celibacy, including the most severe punishment of being deprived of one's horse and armor for a year. Just as the horse and armor were the keys to the power and survival of secular knights, they were equally important to the Calatravan monastic knight, since without them, he was essentially no different than another Cistercian.<sup>14</sup> Unlike several other military Orders, the Calatravan monastic knights also followed the Cistercian custom of a novitiate year, in which new members had to practice and learn the daily routine of the community before they were given the military responsibilities of the dominant class of knights with horses.

The premier group of knights was the most numerous element of the Order, yet there is substantial evidence to suggest that there was also a substantial community of Cistercian monks and Chaplains in the various Calatravan communities or "encomiendas." The Prior was the superior of this traditional monastic community, and was always chosen from among the two required monks from Morimond Abbey.<sup>15</sup> During their consideration by the Cistercian Order, and leading up to the Battle of Alarcos in 1195, the Order of Calatrava could be described as a heterogeneous mixture of

<sup>14</sup> O'Callaghan "Interior Life..." 10.

<sup>15</sup> O'Callaghan "The Affiliation..." 17.

Cistercian monks and monastic knights. Based on the literary evidence, it would appear that, when not in the field, the knights were almost identical to Cistercian monks in appearance and custom. However, as a preface to the later discussion of the plan of Calatrava la Nueva, the two groups were perhaps more segregated than the ideal relationship proposed in their *forma vivendi*.

### **The Effect of Royal Patronage during the Order's Years of Success: (1164-1195)**

It is impossible to know if the presence of the monastic knights and their lay brothers at Calatrava la Vieja acted as a deterrent for the Almohades, yet it is clear that no attack on Calatrava occurred in the first thirty years after their arrival. Instead of the defensive posture that the first members of the Order expected, Calatrava la Vieja quickly became the headquarters for a line of castles that protected the southern road to Toledo and harassed the Muslim border. With the exception of Calatrava la Vieja, little remains of the castles of Alarcos, Piedrabuena, Caracuel, and Benavente that firmly established the Order's indispensable presence in Castile. (Fig. 1) However, it is important to note that unlike their future headquarters at Calatrava la Nueva, each of these castles predated their occupation by the Order.

Modern scholars of 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century Castilian political and religious history largely rely on the account of Archbishop Rodrigo Ximenez de Rada (1209-1247). The Archbishop stood at the center of key events in Castile, recording them in his nine-book account titled *Historia de los Hechos de España*.<sup>16</sup> Sancho III may have set in motion the creation of the Order of Calatrava, but it was his son, Alfonso VIII (1158-1214) who

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<sup>16</sup> Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, *Historia de los hechos de España* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1989)



became the Order's chief benefactor. Unfortunately, Alfonso was only 2 years old when his father died in 1158. Throughout his minority, Castile was governed by two camps, one headed by his Tutor, Gutierre Fernandez de Castro, and the other by his Regent, Manrique de Lara. While these two Castilian courtiers fought over control of the young king, the neighboring kingdom of Navarre exploited the political strife in Castile by invading the Rioja region in the Ebro River valley. When Alfonso's uncle, Fernando II of Leon intervened by taking control of Toledo in 1162, Alfonso became a fugitive in his own kingdom.<sup>17</sup>

In 1166, at the age of eleven, Alfonso sided with the Lara faction and re-took Toledo. On November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1169, 14-year-old Alfonso VIII was declared by his supporters to have reached majority and took over the throne of Castile. This period of instability and combativeness between the Christian kingdoms was matched in Muslim Iberia at the time, and the power vacuum on all sides led to a suspension of the Reconquista. Upon Alfonso VIII's ascendancy, the new king made the renewal of the Reconquista a top priority, yet his approach was subtly different from the type of religious warfare practiced by his predecessors. As early as 1118, Pope Galasius II proclaimed a crusade against the Muslims in Spain. The King of Aragon, Alfonso I "the Battler" made great advances in the Ebro Valley, and even captured Zaragoza (1118) with the help of French knights responding to Pope Galasius II's crusade.<sup>18</sup> In 1147, Alfonso VII of Castile asked Pope Eugenius III to grant crusading privileges to his cooperative assault on Almeria on the Portuguese coast with the naval help of Genoa and Barcelona. Alfonso VII even captured the old capital of the Umayyad Caliphate, Cordoba, sixty

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 284

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. 296

miles south of Toledo that same year, but it was immediately clear that without local support, the city would have to be abandoned.<sup>19</sup>

Alfonso VIII was quick to apply the lessons he had learned during his contested minority. The instability of his minority was directly related to the influence of a powerful aristocracy, who vied for power and nearly split Alfonso's kingdom. His exile after his uncle Frederick II of Leon captured Toledo also reinforced the fact that the Castilian crown's power was irrevocably tied to its possession of this capital city. In addition, the aggressive actions of the King of Navarre and others proved that the spirit of consolidated Christian efforts against the Muslims had waned. Alfonso also must have been aware of the ephemeral nature of independent Castilian efforts against targets in the Muslim South. His grandfather's short occupation of Cordoba was a prime example of this. The most successful Christian efforts against the Muslims were international crusades supported by the Pope and French knights, many of whom had already been on crusades to the Holy Land. Most importantly, Alfonso learned that his kingdom's presence in the arid, battered "Campo de Salvatierra" south of Toledo was too sparse to maintain any successful attacks against the wealthier targets beyond the Morena mountain range. Alfonso needed to populate this area with soldiers who were directly loyal to the Castilian Crown, and not the local aristocracy. This "frontier zone" would have to act as a buffer between the relatively new, more militant and Orthodox Almohad Islamic dynasty, and Alfonso's prize possession: Toledo.

Fortunately for Alfonso VIII, he also inherited the answer to his problem, with the Order of Calatrava. Under Alfonso's father and grandfather, and during his minority, the

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.



knights of Calatrava were successful, but underutilized. Initially, Alfonso VIII wanted Calatrava to protect his "back door" while he first struck back against Navarre on his northern border in 1169. In the years immediately after shoring up his northern border via treaty and combat with Leon and Navarre, Alfonso VIII turned his full attention south. In an abrupt change in the use of the military Orders, Alfonso VIII made the Order of Calatrava the "central core" of his own campaigns in the South.<sup>20</sup> In addition, in 1173, Alfonso VIII granted the Order the possession of every castle they captured from the Muslims. The following year, he granted the order one-fifth of Castile's future conquests, and a tenth of all Royal revenues.<sup>21</sup> In 1177, the Order provided the bulk of Alfonso's force that captured the Islamic city of Cuenca near the Aragonese border.

Calatrava's success in capturing this notoriously inaccessible site influenced the king of Aragon, (Alfonso II, (1162-1196) -who was present at the siege- to give the order of Calatrava the prominent fortress of Alcañiz, which stood on his kingdom's equally contested border with the Almohades. This fortress deferred to the Castilian capital of Calatrava la Vieja as well as the abbey of Morimond like all other *encomiendas*<sup>22</sup> of the Calatran order. However, its geographical distance from the Castilian capital, and the fact that its chief benefactor was the King of Aragon, and not Alfonso VIII of Castile, gave Alcañiz a form of independence. In the years leading up to the battle of Alarcos in

<sup>20</sup> Meldon J. Preusser, "The Role of the Church and the Military Orders on the Southern Castilian Frontier from 1170 to 1214," diss., University of Denver, 1972, .

<sup>21</sup> Joseph F. O'Callaghan, "The Order of Calatrava: Years of Crisis and Survival, 1158-1212," Meeting of Two Worlds Cultural Exchange Between East and West During the Period of the Crusades (Kalamazoo, Mich: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 1986)

<sup>22</sup> *Encomienda* translates directly as "to entrust." In this case, it is used to describe fortresses that were entrusted to the Order of Calatrava by the Kings of Castile or Aragon for the protection of the borders with Islam in Iberia. These satellite fortresses answered to the capital fortress/monastery of Calatrava as well as the Cistercian hierarchy.

1195, Alcañiz was itself a headquarters for the Aragonese chapter of the Order of Calatrava, and made similar advances on the Aragonese border with Islam. During this same period, Calatrava spanned the horizontal length of Iberia from Portugal to Valencia through its affiliation with other new military orders. The order of San Julian de Pereiro (later known as Alcántara) in Leon and the Portuguese order of Evora (later called Avis) both became satellite orders of Calatrava, with similar Cistercian ties and deference to the Master of Calatrava at his headquarters (Calatrava la Vieja).

The Order of Calatrava and its affiliates were exactly what Alfonso VIII and his Aragonese counterpart Alfonso II needed. They were the first true standing armies of the *Reconquista*. Calatrava's garrisons did not leave the frontier when their feudal obligations were up as Alfonso's vassals did; nor did they pose a political threat to Alfonso's power when they captured a new fortress, since the monastic knights were bound to their Benedictine vows. In the hope of curbing a potential Calatravan monopoly of the frontier, Alfonso also supported the Order of Santiago, whose choice of the Rule of St. Augustine and initial role as protectors of pilgrims to Compostela distinguished them from the Order of Calatrava, which was powerless to absorb them. Santiago's Rule and way of life brought them closer to the model of the Hospitalers in the same way that the order of Calatrava's *Forma Vivendi* followed the Cistercian and Templar model. While there were competitions over Tolls in the area east of Toledo, the two orders generally coexisted well, and Alfonso was able to increase the power of each without decreasing his own. Alfonso VIII gave the order of Calatrava more than fortifications; he gave them autonomy to push the frontier of Castile further south as well as the right to control the repopulation of the region. They were able to support themselves through the labor of the



frontier "colonists" from the north who supplied the various encomiendas just as they would a secular local lord in return for protection. Throughout their existence, Alfonso never abandoned the order of Calatrava, and remained grateful for their various abilities on the frontier. According to the often mentioned Chronicler archbishop Rodrigo Jimenez de Rada, "King Alfonso reared them (the Order of Calatrava) and endowed them with many possessions... He relieved the burden of their poverty, and bestowed additional riches upon them. Their growth was the prince's crown."<sup>23</sup>

### **The Years of "Crisis and Survival"**

Were it not for this unwavering support, the Order of Calatrava would have clearly ended after the terrific Christian defeat at the fortress of Alarcos in 1195. Up until that point, Alfonso had proved to be a savvy and heedful ruler. Ever since the Castilian capture of Cuenca in 1177, Alfonso's aggressive campaigns on the southern Castilian border harassed the Almohades. In anticipation of a retaliation, Alfonso moved his force to the newly begun site of Alarcos castle on a rocky spur 13 miles south-east from Calatrava la Vieja, which he intended to give to the Order of Calatrava. Alfonso also requested aid from the kings of Leon and Navarre, but the other Iberian Rulers were either too slow to react, or Alfonso failed to call them in time because they did not arrive at Alarcos until the battle was over. The Moroccan Sultan Yacub ben Yusef I (1184-1199) finally crossed the straits of Gibraltar with a large force of cavalry to meet the Castilian King in 1195.

According to the *Latin Chronicle of the Kings of Castile*, after a brief pause in Cordoba, the Muslim army advanced through the "Puerto de Muradal" and camped on

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<sup>23</sup> O'Callaghan. "Years of Crisis and Survival..." 420. Translation from Rodrigo Jimenez de Rada.

the plain of Salvatierra, where Calatrava la Nueva was later built.<sup>24</sup> According to an Islamic chronicler Ibn Idari writing in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, "... a squad of Christian Cavalry advanced against Calatrava; but (the garrison) came to meet those, who follow the steps of the enemies of God, and were made for them as food for the hungry and drink to the thirsty and stopped at that plain as pastures for the eagles."<sup>25</sup> Another Muslim Chronicler, al-Srifa Garnati claimed that before the Almohades reached the bridge and fortress of Alarcos, the Christian knights of Calatrava and its surrounding castles attacked the Muslim army and were completely annihilated.<sup>26</sup>

Simply based on the geography of the area, and a mistake by Ibn Idari in naming the fortress of "Calatrava," O'Callaghan was able to better decipher the role of the Order at the battle of Alarcos which was confused by the various sources. First, O'Callaghan believes that the castle referred to as "Calatrava" by Ibn Idhari is actually the Muslim fortress of Dueñas, upon whose foundation the Calatravan headquarters of Calatrava la Nueva would be built seventeen years later. This castle is south of the fortress and battlefield of Alarcos, where the two main forces of Castile and the Almohades would meet days later (Fig. 6). The mistake was likely due to the confusion caused by Ibn Idhari's thirteenth century context in which the current site was called "Calatrava" (la Nueva). Secondly, the Latin Chronicle confirms the location of the destruction of the Christian Cavalry as the *Puerto de Muradal* and the Plain of Salvatierra. The pass through the Muradal Mountains was within sight of the future castle of Dueñas/Calatrava

<sup>24</sup> Joseph F. O'Callaghan, "The Order of Calatrava: Years of Crisis and Survival, 1158-1212," Meeting of Two Worlds Cultural Exchange Between East and West During the Period of the Crusades (Kalamazoo, Mich: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 1986) 36-37.

<sup>25</sup> Joseph F. O'Callaghan, "Sobre los orígenes de Calatrava la Nueva," The Spanish Military Order of Calatrava and its Affiliates (London [England]: Variorum Reprints, 1975) 5.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.



la Nueva, and the plain is named after the castle of Salvatierra, which stood only 3km from Dueñas/Calatrava la Nueva. The military Order of Calatrava's well defined role as the front line of defense in this region leads to the assumption they were indeed the cavalry force which was killed before the battle of Alarcos.

Regardless of whether it occurred before or after the battle of Alarcos on July 19<sup>th</sup> 1195, the Order of Calatrava clearly suffered the most of any of the Christian participants at Alarcos. The Latin Chronicle stated that Alfonso VIII refused to wait for his reinforcements from Leon and Aragon, and ordered his army out onto the field in front of the Almohades. The Sultan was more patient, and waited the entire day for the Christian Army to tire under the weight of their armor before he attacked. Alfonso's overheated army, -which included every available knight of Calatrava from the surrounding fortresses- was decimated at Alarcos, and the King was forced to retreat back to Toledo. The Latin Chronicle recounted the aftermath in the following passage:

"The King of the Moors seized the spoils and took certain castles, namely the tower of Guadalerzas, Malagón, Benavente, Calatrava, Alarcos, and Caracuel, and then returned to his own realm."<sup>27</sup>

Each of the castles mentioned above had been possessions of the Order of Calatrava. (Fig. 1) Since the battle of Alarcos occurred in their "backyard" the Order of Calatrava was the first to be defeated, and the hardest hit by the result. Despite their successful raids throughout the countryside in the forty years since the monks of Fitero took possession of Calatrava la Vieja, the Order was utterly defeated when they were tested by the Sultan's massive force. After Alarcos, there were not enough Calatravan knights remaining to protect their holdings, and each one was abandoned without a siege. Most

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<sup>27</sup> Joseph F. O'Callaghan, trans., *Latin chronicle of the kings of Castile* (Tempe, Ariz: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2002) 27.

importantly, the Capital of the Order, Calatrava la Vieja, once again became an advanced Muslim position for attacks against Toledo.<sup>28</sup>

The effect of the loss at Alarcos on the identity of the Order of Calatrava cannot be overstated. Were it not for the continued support of Alfonso VIII, the Order of Calatrava would have been wiped clean from the history of Castile. Their role in the protection of Toledo from the Almohad threat could easily have been written off as a failed experiment. Alfonso's faith in the power of the military orders (specifically, the Order of Calatrava) led him to rashly believe he could succeed without the consolidated effort of pan-Iberian forces, or his neighboring kings. To Alfonso's credit, he did not place the blame on the Order of Calatrava. His support of the Order was unwavering. Alfonso VIII made new grants which represented the new southern border with Castile and in a letter to Nuño (1183-97) the surviving master of the Order of Calatrava, wrote:

... taking pity on your poverty because of the unhappy affair of Alarcos (where you were with me, and where, because of your sins, it did not please the divine power to grant us victory), you lost your chief house of Calatrava, and almost all your possessions.<sup>29</sup>

Master Nuño resigned from the nearly hollow title of Master of Calatrava in 1197, perhaps due to the humiliation of his order's losses. The new Master – who was actually Nuño's surviving predecessor Martin Perez de Siones (1182-1199) – moved the Order's headquarters to a very bold and surprising location: the Castle of Salvatierra (Fig. 7). This meager fortress was much deeper into Muslim territory than any fortress that the Order possessed prior to the battle of Alarcos (Fig. 1). With their former possessions in Muslim hands to the north and the “open door” through the Puerto de Muradal to the south-east,

<sup>28</sup> O'Callaghan “Years of Crisis and Survival...” 422.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.



the knights at Salvatierra were nearly surrounded by Almohad forces. Strategically, this fortress made little sense as a new capital for the Order, since it was essentially cut off from most of Calatrava's remaining possessions.<sup>30</sup> Its scale alone made it hardly ideal for their needs. Symbolically however, Salvatierra, – which means “salvation ground” – represented an intense will to resist the Muslim forces in Iberia. The order's investment in this castle is reinforced by their decision to rename the order of Calatrava “The Order of Salvatierra” in 1198.

The seventeen years between the battle of Alarcos (1195) and the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa were very lean for the Order of Calatrava/Salvatierra. Master Martin Pérez de Siones, who was responsible for the capture of Salvatierra, and its dubious title as the headquarters of the new Order of Salvatierra, either resigned or was deposed in 1199.<sup>31</sup> The new Master, Martin Martinez struggled under Alfonso VIII's truce with the Almohades following Alarcos; especially given the Order's mission of reconquest, and their advanced position in Muslim territory. However meager their numbers were after Alarcos, the Order could not support itself solely on herding sheep in the devastated lands of La Mancha. In 1203, Master Martin accepted Maella castle from Pedro II of Aragon (1196-1213). More importantly, the Master of Salvatierra decided to transfer the headquarters of the Order to their old possession of Alcañiz. This moment signified at least a splintering of the former order, if not its outright suspension. The fortress of Salvatierra remained as it was under its own Master Roy Diaz (1205-1212), while Martin

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<sup>30</sup> O'Callaghan believes that the Muslim castle of Duenas was captured near the same time as Salvatierra, since the latter Castle was within eyesight of the former. However, Duenas was clearly even more insignificant of a fortress as Salvatierra, since it is not mentioned as being in Christian hands until after it was lost again to the Almohades just before the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa in 1211. *Ibid.* 42

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* 424

Martinez was Master of Alcañiz: a true crusading headquarters in Aragon. Pedro II of Aragon's patronage paled in comparison to the earlier relationship between the Master of Calatrava and Alfonso VIII of Castile. Aragon had been the one area in Spain in which the Templars had retained a firm foothold, making the indigenous Order of Salvatierra/Alcañiz less important to the Aragonese reconquest.

In Castile, the Order was composed of the isolated, yet determined defenders of the tiny fortress of Salvatierra, and a few other possessions near Toledo that ensured survival, yet served little strategic purpose. In 1211, Alfonso VIII renewed hostilities with the Almohades following the end of a decade-long truce. The king's actions provoked a massive response from the Almohades, which left the fortress of Salvatierra standing like a sandcastle before the tide. In clear repetition of Alarcos, the Almohad Caliph an-Nasir – known as Miramamolín to the Christians – led his Muslim army through the Puerto de Muradal and camped on the plain of Salvatierra. Yet again, the Muslim and Latin sources both claim that a detachment of knights attempted to attack the Almohades encampment, but they were quickly killed.<sup>32</sup>

The siege of Salvatierra in 1211 defined the future and identity of the Order of Calatrava more than any other event. The castle stands on a rocky spur at the end of a line of high hills overlooking the north-south road to Toledo. The remains of this castle consist of a single tower, and what look like two concentric walls that follow the contours

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid. This group of knights is not specifically identified by the sources or by O'Callaghan as the knights of Salvatierra. Still, Alfonso VIII and his troops were no-where near the Almohad camp at this time. Also, it has also been mentioned that the castle of Salvatierra was deep in Muslim territory at this time, and thus would likely have been the only possible source of Christian "knights."



of the outcropping.<sup>33</sup> Immediately opposite Salvatierra, Dueñas castle stood on a higher, broader hill, yet nothing is known of this castle's shape since it was leveled by the builders of Calatrava la Nueva. Due to their extremely close proximity, Miramamolin must have besieged both castles simultaneously, with Dueñas falling very quickly. The monastic knights of Salvatierra however, defended their headquarters with unexpected determination. The Almohades burned everything that surrounded the walls of Salvatierra, and used siege engines to break down the walls, but the Order held out for 51 days. In the end, the fortress' design withstood the assault, yet it was too small, and contained too few cisterns to survive a summer siege.<sup>34</sup> The monastic knights were allowed to leave the castle unharmed, yet they were forced to watch their second headquarters taken over by the Almohades, and its church transformed into a mosque. Still, Salvatierra had delayed Miramamolin long enough to prevent the Caliph from taking his entire force into Castile. The Caliph proclaimed his triumph in a letter dated the 13<sup>th</sup> of September writing to his subjects that "he had cut off the right hand of the King of Castile."<sup>35</sup>

The immediate consequence of the Siege of Salvatierra was a renewal of the anxiety felt after the battle of Alarcos. The monastic knights of Salvatierra had represented the stubborn determination to reconstruct the frontier as it had been before

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<sup>33</sup> Salvatierra is on private land. With the exception of some pictures taken from the modern road, there has been almost no work done on the site.

<sup>34</sup> The Latin Chronicle describes the siege in the following quotation: "He (Miramamolin) made the journey through Seville and Cordoba, passing through the Puerto del Muradal, and besieged the castle called Salvatierra, then the seat of the Knighthood of friars of Calatrava. It was fortified with many different kinds of arms, with grain and barley and many kinds of vegetables, meats, and vigorous men, the friars, namely, and other nobles and distinguished men. The siege was established and with machines of awesome size they began to assault the castle, which otherwise seemed impregnable."

O'Callaghan, trans., *Latin chronicle...* pp 38

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 39

the Castilian loss at Alarcos. Where Calatrava la Vieja had been a line in the sand, Salvatierra was an oasis of Christianity deep in Muslim territory. When Salvatierra was captured, anxious European leaders believed that the “back door,” –which had been hastily shut by Alfonso’s truce with Cordoba and Salvatierra’s bold presence– was now blown open again. The Order’s continued Cistercian connection helped to spread the story to monasteries throughout Europe.<sup>36</sup> Pope Innocent III granted Crusading indulgences to all knights who traveled to fight against the Almohades the following spring (1212). Alfonso VIII, learning his lesson from Alarcos, waited for his fellow Iberian kings of Navarre, and Aragon, as well as the French Crusaders to assemble at Toledo before heading south to attack the frontier castles once owned by the Order of Calatrava.

After taking the fortress of Malagon on June 24<sup>th</sup> 1212, the composite army of surviving military Orders, Iberians, and French crusaders set upon the old headquarters and namesake of the Order of Calatrava which would soon be called Calatrava la Vieja. In his letter to Pope Innocent III following his victory at Las Navas de Tolosa, Alfonso VIII claimed that his decision to preserve Calatrava la Vieja for the surviving monastic knights of Salvatierra angered the French crusaders, who believed they had been tricked into the campaign with false promises of spoils.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Derek W. Lomax, *Reconquest of Spain* (London: Longman, 1978) 124.

<sup>37</sup> Alfonso VIII of Castile. “Letter to Pope Innocent III” (1212)

[www.deremilitari.org/resources/sources/tolosa.htm](http://www.deremilitari.org/resources/sources/tolosa.htm)

“The King of Aragon and the French held a council about it (Calatrava la Vieja); and knew that the place was strongly fortified with walls and outer defenses, deep ditches and lofty towers, so that it could not be taken unless the walls were undermined and made to collapse; but this would be much to the detriment of the Friars of Salvatierra, to whom it had earlier belonged, and by whom it would not be tenable (the walls being razed) in case of need. For this reason they most earnestly urged that the place should be handed over, to us whole and undamaged with the weapons and great stores of food that were in it, and that the Saracens should be allowed to leave empty handed and without weapons... The French – still



Without the French – who, according to Lomax actually attempted to sack Toledo on their way back north – Alfonso and the Kings of Navarre and Aragon managed to recapture four more castles for the Order of Calatrava: Alarcos, Caracuel, Benavente and Piedrabuena<sup>38</sup> (Fig. 1). The Christian army was forced to pass by the castle of Salvatierra when they learned that Miramamolín had assembled his force again in Córdoba and was beginning to move toward the Puerto Muradal. Rather than wait for the Muslim army to pass through the Muradal mountains and meet him on the familiar battleground on the plain of Salvatierra, Alfonso took the initiative and passed through the mountain on an alternate route which he later claimed was navigated by a local Christian shepherd.<sup>39</sup> The battle of Las Navas de Tolosa commenced on the south side of the mountains near the Despeñaperros Pass on July 14<sup>th</sup>, 1212. Alfonso VIII engaged the Almohades on very uneven terrain and according to his letter to Innocent III, after three days of skirmishes, his outnumbered army crushed the Almohades and forced the Caliph to flee south to the town of Jaén.

Our Lord slew a great multitude of them with the sword of the Cross. Then the Sultan with a few of his men turned in flight. Others of the enemy for a time bore the thrust of our attacks, but soon, after heavy loss of life, the rest turned and fled. We followed up the pursuit till nightfall, and killed more in the rout than we had in the battle... On their side there fell in the battle 100,000 armed men, perhaps more, according to the estimates of Saracens we captured later – only some twenty or thirty Christians in our whole host fell.<sup>40</sup>

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keen on going home... even though we were willing to go on providing them with necessities in a generous way... all together abandoned the Cross..."

<sup>38</sup> Lomax, *Reconquest of Spain* 124.

<sup>39</sup> Alfonso VIII of Castile. "Letter to Pope Innocent III" (1212)

[www.deremilitari.org/resources/sources/tolosa.htm](http://www.deremilitari.org/resources/sources/tolosa.htm)

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

Alfonso did not stop at Las Navas de Tolosa. His army pursued the retreating Muslims to two towns in Andalucía: Baeza, and Úbeda. When the Christians found Baeza all but abandoned, "He burnt its houses and destroyed its largest Mosque."<sup>41</sup> At Úbeda, they found a large host of the Muslims who had fled from Las Navas de Tolosa. The Muslim Chronicler al-Marrakushi al-Mu'jib wrote in 1224 that Alfonso besieged the town

... for thirteen days, and then took it by force, killing and capturing and plundering. He and his men set aside as prisoners enough women and children to fill all the Christian territories. This was a greater blow to the Muslims than their defeat in battle.<sup>42</sup>

Alfonso's description of the siege of Úbeda to Innocent III generally matches the Muslim Chronicler's account, yet he explains his reasons for taking captives.

By God's grace we captured Úbeda in a short time, and, since we did not have enough people to settle it, we raze it to the ground. Some 60,000 Saracens perished there: some were killed, others were taken as captives into the service of the Christians and of the monasteries which needed to be repaired in the border regions.<sup>43</sup>

It is my belief that the monasteries of the border regions referred to by Alfonso VIII were very likely the newly reacquired fortress-monasteries of the Order of Calatrava. The Muslim chronicler al-Marrakushi al-Mu'jib may not mention male captives, yet Alfonso VIII's letter suggests their fate. Large numbers of unskilled laborers would have been required for the construction of Calatrava la Nueva, and other monasteries in the region, and there is sufficient evidence to assume that the captives Alfonso VIII mentions in his letter were male prisoners of war. The composite labor force that reconstructed the

<sup>41</sup> al-Marrakushi, al-Mu'jib. A 1224 Account of the aftermath of the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa. <http://www.deremilitari.org/RESOURCES/SOURCES/tolosa.htm>

<sup>42</sup> Joseph F. O'Callaghan, trans., *Latin chronicle of the kings of Castile* 49-50.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.



southernmost region of Castile would have been composed of skilled and unskilled captives from Muslim territory, free Muslim masons from the north, and the frontier Christians themselves. Each of these groups combined to create structures that reflected the complex heritage of the region. The "catch-all" term that is often used to describe the style is Mudejar.<sup>44</sup>

### **Memory and the Aftermath of Las Navas de Tolosa**

In the year between the loss of Salvatierra, and the battle of las Navas de Tolosa, the Order of Calatrava, or Salvatierra hardly existed except in the memories and imaginations of its handful of former members. It is impossible to know how many of the monastic knights survived at the end of Las Navas de Tolosa, yet it is fair to estimate that the bulk of them were in Aragon, living in and around the surviving capital of Alcañiz. In Castile, the order retained some possessions surrounding Toledo, but with the exception of Salvatierra, Calatrava had no presence in the area between the Sierra Morena and the Guadiana River. This region, referred to as the Campo de Calatrava, was the entire reason for the Order's existence, and its loss after Alarcos forced the Order to reinvent itself; drawing its identity and name from the meager fortress of Salvatierra (Fig. 7). For seventeen years, the monastic knights of Salvatierra remained holed up in their keep, looking out over the valley in which most of their knights had been killed by the Almohades. In 1211, the loss of Salvatierra must have seemed like an execution after a long prison sentence. The Order lost its second headquarters in seven years, and while the small garrison was allowed to leave with their lives after the siege, many of their

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<sup>44</sup> Gonzago M. B. Gualis, "Mudejar: An Alternative Architectural System in the Castilian Urban Repopulation Model," *Medieval Encounters* 12 (2006): 329.

members had already been killed in the field in a disturbing parallel to their disastrous reconnaissance attempt at Alarcos.

One can imagine however, that once the surviving monastic knights of Salvatierra arrived in Toledo in 1211, they were greeted as heroes. Their determined defense of the well supplied, yet insufficient fortress of Salvatierra prevented Miramamolin from completing his attack on Castile. Alfonso VIII, whose support of the Order had never wavered, clearly wished to reward the Order for its defense of the road leading to his capital. Consequently, the Christian force methodically re-took each of the castles lost by the Order after Alarcos, and by demanding their preservation, Alfonso and the Order risked their alliance with the French troops. In the course of a year, or even a month, the Order transformed from a memory into a material reality again. Still, what historians have failed to explain is how this new skeleton crew of remaining knights of Calatrava managed to repopulate their suddenly returned fortresses. The Order was given a "blank-check" by Alfonso VII, although they would have to address a lot of questions before they could move forward. Did the Order of Calatrava believe that their fortunes had been "reset," or did they wish to alter their Order to better suit their future as well as their past? Which point in the history of the Order of Calatrava did they wish to recall? Did they still hold as much reverence for their initial headquarters, Calatrava la Vieja as Salvatierra: the castle which had sustained them for seventeen years, and engineered their "comeback" although remaining in Muslim hands for twelve years following the battle of las Navas de Tolosa? Most importantly, did the builders of Calatrava la Vieja construct their new headquarters as a beacon of their sudden return to prominence, or is it



anachronistic to assume that they somehow knew that their victory at Las Navas de Tolosa marked the end of Muslim advancement in Iberia?

After Las Navas de Tolosa, the first mention of the Knights of Calatrava at Dueñas castle came from Archbishop Rodrigo de Rada, who claimed to have spent Christmas there in 1214.<sup>45</sup> The castle of Dueñas was captured and restored to the order in 1213 by Alfonso's forces, but at that time it bore no resemblance to the huge complex that stands there today. It is likely however that Dueñas became an immediate construction site, given that Pope Honorius III granted the archbishop of Toledo jurisdiction over the new church at Dueñas in 1217.<sup>46</sup> According to 16<sup>th</sup> century historian Rades y Andrada, 1217 also marked the official move of the headquarters from Calatrava la Vieja to the new castle-monastery at Dueñas.<sup>47</sup> O'Callaghan claims that no such document indicating the transfer of 1217 has been located, and that he is suspicious of the date because the castle is still referred to as Dueñas in the beginning of 1217.<sup>48</sup> The first reference to the name Calatrava la Nueva occurred in 1221, when the Masters of Calatrava and Santiago met there to complete a "mutual aid agreement."<sup>49</sup>

Despite some of the confusion over dates, it can still be concluded that the castle was built quite rapidly, and that it was conceived as a full castle-monastery from the moment it was recaptured by the Order. It is also apparent that the castle became the headquarters of the Order between 1217 and 1221, and that it could have been occupied as the new headquarters long before the entire complex was finished. In short, the

<sup>45</sup> Luis Monreal Y Tejada, *Medieval Castles of Spain* (Germany: Konemann, 1999) 94.

<sup>46</sup> O'Callaghan "Sobre los Origenes..." 9.

<sup>47</sup> Francisco Rades y Andrada, "Chronica de las tres Ordenes Militares y Cavallerias de Santiago, Calatrava, y Alcantara (facsimile of 1572)," *El Abrir* (1980): 33.

<sup>48</sup> O'Callaghan "Sobre los Origenes..." 9.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

construction of Calatrava la Nueva over the site of Dueñas was very early on the Order's agenda after the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa. Still, this sense of urgency to build the new headquarters seems incongruous with the master narrative of the Reconquista, which claims that Las Navas de Tolosa marked the end of anxiety for Christian Iberia, and the beginning of the confident, inevitable advance toward Granada and 1492.

Instead, Calatrava la Nueva reflects an effort to learn from the mistakes of the past by building a much larger, more defensible castle on the frontier in order to disrupt the ease with which the Almohades marched into La Mancha in the previous decades. Under this scenario, the Order of Calatrava did not benefit from a historian's hindsight, and therefore would continue to be driven by the following list of negative events in their recent history: their loss at Alarcos in 1195, the loss of Jerusalem in 1187, their seventeen years of exile from their true headquarters, their valiant but unsuccessful defense of Salvatierra in 1211, and the destruction of their reconnaissance forces in 1195 and 1211. By contrast, the short term euphoria of Castile's success at las Navas de Tolosa would not wipe clean the effects of the Order's years of "crisis and survival."



## Chapter II: Geography, Topography, Memory and Site

Upon Alfonso's return from the sack of Ubeda in 1212, the Order of Calatrava received five of its former possessions south of Toledo, the full financial support and gratitude of the King of Castile, and tens of thousands of Muslim prisoners from Ubeda to rebuild what they had lost since Alarcos. If the Order had wanted to turn back the clock to 1194, before their devastating loss at Alarcos, they could have done so. Calatrava la Vieja, with all of its preserved stores of food and supplies – thanks to Alfonso VIII – would have been an understandable choice for the Order's post-1212 headquarters. Indeed, while Calatrava la Nueva was being built, the Order did reoccupy Calatrava la Vieja, making it their temporary capital. Regardless of the drawing power of the Order's namesake fortress, the Calatravan monastic knights were not governed by nostalgia for a castle which they had never successfully defended. In addition, the territorial center of the Order's identity had shifted south to the plain of Salvatierra, even though in 1213, the Order did not hold a castle which could serve as a headquarters in the area. From this perspective, using their newfound wealth and resources to build a new military-monastic complex on top of their most advanced possession in the frontier (Dueñas) seems an obvious choice.

In terms of owned fortresses, 1213 differed very little from 1194 for the Order of Calatrava. Salvatierra remained in Muslim hands until the end of Castile's truce with the Almohades in 1226. The only "new" Castilian fortress that the monastic knights of Calatrava possessed in 1213 that they did not already have before Alarcos, was the seldom mentioned fortress of Dueñas. Judging by what is known of Salvatierra, it is

unlikely that Dueñas was anything more than a watchtower on the hill opposite Salvatierra. If Salvatierra was regarded as compact, yet defensible, Dueñas must have been even smaller. The Muslim foundations of Dueñas are still unknown, yet it is doubtful that the fortress that stands on the site today occupies a larger footprint than the original castle (Fig. 8). Regardless, the site was not "ready-made" for a huge complex of military and monastic buildings. In the end, the Order's choice of the hill opposite Salvatierra as the location for their new headquarters was inspired by the new political geography of the frontier, the topography of the hill, the view from the summit, and the site's proximity to Salvatierra.

### **The New Geography of the Frontier**

At the start of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the key geographical boundary between Muslim and Christian Iberia was the river Tajo and the Castilian capital of Toledo. The Almoravid power vacuum of the early century allowed Alfonso VII and his grandson Alfonso VIII to push that frontier to a different geographical boundary: the Sierra Morena. Before Alarcos in 1195, the broad, open area of the Tajo and Guadiana River valleys became known as the Campo de Calatrava, due to the Order's many fortresses and the towns under their jurisdiction. After Alarcos, the frontier had been reset to a much narrower cushion of territory near the Tajo. For seventeen years, Alfonso VIII's capital at Toledo was directly on the border with the Muslims. When the Campo de Calatrava was recovered after Las Navas de Tolosa, the frontier did not merely move south to the Sierra Morena again; it widened to encompass all of this space in a permeable, sparsely populated, and war-torn landscape (Fig. 9). The area was "highly militarized" in that the



local militias of frontier settlements, and the religious orders acted as the dominant governing forces of a tumultuous society.<sup>50</sup>

The military Orders were originally placed in this area by Alfonso to combat the permeability of this border, and in essence, to stabilize it until the Castilians were strong enough to push it farther south. The Almohades, and the Almoravids before them represented an increase in Muslim fundamentalism in the South. In the North, the religious-military ideals of the Crusades charged the border with equally aggressive force. Had Alfonso VIII populated this area with the Castilian aristocracy, he would have placed power over an unconsolidated area in the hands of potential rivals. Secular rulers would also have continued the long Iberian history of making independent deals with the Muslims, further softening the frontier. By contrast, the military Orders represented the pinnacle of Crusader ideology. The Orders of Calatrava and Santiago were forbidden to attack fellow Christians, or make independent deals with Muslims. By 1213, the Military Orders had proven to be the logical choice for frontier vigilance, yet they had also proven unsuccessful against full-scale Almohad armies. The nature of the open territory they were trying to defend was not conducive to sharp borders, yet Alfonso and the Order of Calatrava were still determined to create an immovable Christian presence as far south as possible. It was with this concern in mind that the Order chose the site of Dueñas castle for their new headquarters. The new generation of Calatravan monastic knights wanted the central administration of the Order to be as close to the southern "border" of Castile (the Sierra Morena) as possible. Considering the large scale of Calatrava la Nueva, this

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<sup>50</sup> Enrique Rodríguez-Picavea Matilla, "The Kingdom of Castile (1157-1212): Towards a Geography of the Southern Frontier," *Mirator* (2005): 3-4, 7 Jan. 2009  
<<http://www.glossa.fi/mirator/pdf/frontiersofcastile.pdf>>.

new headquarters came closer to drawing a provisional "line in the sand" than even the Order's recently recaptured "string" of castles around the Guadiana River (Fig. 1).

Calatrava la Vieja was a critical castle for Alfonso VII in the mid twelfth-century primarily because of its location. In the early years of the Order, Calatrava la Vieja stood on one of only three bridges or ferries across the Tajo River. In addition, in 1158, when the monks of Fitero and their laymen took over the castle, it was the most exposed and advanced Christian fortress in Castile. It also guarded the principal road between Cordoba and Toledo.<sup>51</sup> In this sense, the location for Calatrava la Nueva followed a very similar model. The fortresses of Salvatierra and Dueñas sat on hills flanking this same road to Toledo, 30 miles south of Calatrava la Vieja. It is likely the Order of Calatrava was aware of the similarities between the two sites on a strategic level, but it is impossible to say that this similarity helped to create a symbolic connection between the old and new headquarters. Still, the similarity of purpose for both fortresses, and the way each site relates to its geographic location cannot be overlooked as a source of common identity between the founders of the Order of Calatrava and their early thirteenth-century counterparts.

### **Topography**

Historical geographer Enrique Rodriguez-Picavea Matilla somewhat blandly describes the region of La Mancha today as "a wide strip of land with common characteristics." The same author, in his more specific description of this region in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries calls it "A large area organized around fortresses and repopulated

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<sup>51</sup> Meldon J Preusser *The Role of the Church...* 12



towns, joined via communication links that clearly represent the political space... From a historical and geographical viewpoint, at its widest, the Castilian frontier zone would appear to be a more or less homogeneous unit."<sup>52</sup> This topographical "homogeneity" likely presented the biggest challenge to the military Orders who were charged with its defense. There are no rivers or continuous mountain ranges between the Guadiana River and the Sierra Morena. Driving through the area today, it appears that nearly every rocky outcropping emerging from the floor of the mesa has a ruined, stone fortress on it. The simple fact that nearly all of the Order of Calatrava's castles either rested on Muslim foundations or were outright occupations of earlier Muslim fortresses leads to the conclusion that there had always been a premium on suitable castle sites in this region.

Calatrava la Nueva is in some ways very typical of the rest of the fortresses in the area. Alarcos, Caracuel, Salvatierra, and Miraflores/Piedrabuena, were all possessions of the Order of Calatrava la Nueva at one time, and each of them stood on a rocky outcropping with views of the broad plain (Fig. 6,7,10a,10b). In his book *Archaeology of the Military Orders*, Adrian Boas attempted to categorize the type of castles occupied by military orders in the Latin East according to either their plan, or the topography of their site. Two of his categories, "spur castles" and "hilltop castles," could be used to describe Calatrava la Nueva.<sup>53</sup> Boas' definition of a spur castle is fairly self explanatory: "... a castle constructed on the end of a mountain spur... protected by steep cliffs on two of its three sides."<sup>54</sup> Calatrava's site was not nearly high enough to be described as a "mountain" since it was only (roughly) 220m higher in altitude from the valley "floor"

<sup>52</sup> Enrique Rodriguez-Picavea Matilla "The Kingdom of Castile..." 5.

<sup>53</sup> Adrian J. Boas, *Archaeology of the Military Orders: a Survey of the Urban Centres, Rural Settlement and Castles of the Military Orders in the Latin East (c. 1120-1291)* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006) 126-148.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* 126

that ran between it and Salvatierra. (Fig. 2-3) Still, the castle-monastery caps the east end of a line of rocky hills that extend for five miles to the south-west. (Fig. 11) The spur dips before rising to the castle-site, making the West the most likely approach by an attacker. Even so, the terrain still provides a strong deterrent from a western approach to the castle. The remaining circumference of the hilltop/spur at Calatrava la Nueva was often cut down in places to increase the slope, and guide the approach along a specific corkscrew path.

Calatrava la Nueva' also resembles Boas' category of a "hilltop castle." Again, the definition is somewhat obvious, yet there were very specific reasons for building hilltop castles. Boas describes the value of the hilltop castle in the following quotation:

The steep slope (of the hilltop castle) on all sides provided the castle with natural defenses which, if steep enough, could effectively prevent the approach of siege machines and even make approach on foot difficult and sometimes impossible... A well positioned hilltop castle constructed on an isolated hill with particularly steep slopes could be even more easily defended than a spur castle.<sup>55</sup>

Calatrava la Nueva resembles both a spur, and a hilltop castle, but it does not display an ideal example of either category. The neighboring hill to the north, and the spur to the west make the site slightly more vulnerable than it would have been had the site been a truly isolated hilltop. Still, the site possesses some of the best qualities of hilltop castles. The castle follows the contours of the hilltop very closely, with its walls jutting out of natural rock formations along the way. The irregularity of the castle plan exposes the influence the natural topography had on the design (Fig. 12). The hill is a conical shape with a rough diameter of 1000m at its base. It is also large enough that the curtain walls only encompass the final quarter of its height. The site therefore provided much more

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<sup>55</sup> *ibid.* 136



space than was available at Salvatierra, whose rocky outcropping severely limited the castle's footprint.

By 1213, the castle of Dueñas had changed hands at least three times, and twice in the final two years. Within sight of Dueñas, Salvatierra had been stormed and taken by the Order of Calatrava in the chaos after Alarcos in 1195-6, then was retaken following a 51 day siege by Miramamolín and his Almohad army. The area within sight of these two castles had been a nearly constant battleground. As a result, it is very unlikely that this area was thought to be fertile ground for agriculture. Even if the land had not been scorched, the nearly constant threat of attack would have made growing crops extremely risky. Consequently, the frontier population which included the Order of Calatrava, would have been almost an entirely pastoral culture. Sheep and cattle could be moved into fortresses or behind town walls when enemies were spotted, but there had to be space to keep them. The top of the hill-site at Calatrava la Nueva was far from flat, yet it was broad enough to allow for a large open space for training on horseback, or protection of animals.

### **To See and be Seen**

The majority of frontier castles in Spain were little more than fortified watchtowers. Thus, one of the most obvious benefits of building on a rocky outcropping surrounded by lower terrain was an increase in the degree and distance of vision it provided. From the top of the keep at Calatrava la Nueva, the north and west are somewhat blocked by the

chain of hills (Fig. 13).<sup>56</sup> Toward the south however, the plain opens up in front of the site and is only blocked by the Sierra Muradal. The "Puerto Muradal" (Muradal door) that is often mentioned as the entry point for the Almohad Armies in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, is due south of Calatrava (Fig. 14). The clear cleft in the mountain range was cut by the Ojailen River, and offered lower terrain and much needed water for the passing army<sup>57</sup> (Fig. 15). While Calatrava la Nueva does not appear to be dominated by a single, directional orientation, the Puerto Muradal must have been a primary focal point. A likely second point of focus was to the southeast, around the back side of the hill formation which supports Salvatierra (Fig. 16). This was the direction of the pass taken by Alfonso VIII and his men prior to the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa, after the Puerto Muradal had been blocked by Almohad forces.<sup>58</sup>

As important as it was for the Order to be able to scrutinize the valley of Salvatierra below them, it is likely that the Order was equally concerned with being seen. At 900 meters of elevation, Calatrava la Nueva stands roughly 100 meters higher than Salvatierra. Even without the fortress that caps it, Calatrava's hill stands out from its surroundings. From the village of Calzada de Calatrava to the north, the hill silhouettes the castle dramatically against the sky. From this direction, Salvatierra is the more

<sup>56</sup> The hill in Fig. 13 appears to have been flattened by quarry work. It is possible that Calatrava la Nueva was partially built by rock quarried from this hill. The quarrying would have had the additional benefit of lowering the hill, allowing for a less obstructed view to the north. It is also probable that a watchtower could have been built on this hill.

<sup>57</sup> The Latin Chronicle of the Kings of Castile mentions the Puerto Muradal several times. While O'Callaghan, Lomax, and others have repeated the term, they fail to mention its exact location, or place it on their historical maps. The location described here is the most likely position for the Puerto Muradal based on the evidence which describes the straight road that ran from Cordoba to Toledo, and passed between Salvatierra and Calatrava la Nueva. The modern road likely follows this same route, and leads straight to a mountain pass that matches the description of the Puerto Muradal.

<sup>58</sup> This pass is now called the Despennaperros pass, [which translates roughly to "the place where the dogs fall off of the rocks"]. It is currently the main route through the Sierra Morena, and leads directly to the battlefield of Las Navas de Tolosa.



prominent of the two castles, despite its ruined state. On the other hand, from the South, Salvatierra is nearly invisible, and Calatrava strikes a much more imposing profile (Fig. 17). The southern façade of Calatrava dramatically displays sheer cliffs along the inside of the spiraling approach to the castle above. Set against the green shrubs that are there today, this road accentuates the height of the hill, and reminds the viewer that a direct approach is nearly impossible.

### **Salvatierra: Land of Salvation**

On a more symbolic level, Calatrava la Nueva was in the perfect position to survey the anvil on which the Order had been shaped since the battle of Alarcos. There was no land in Spain that was more integrally tied to the Order of Calatrava than the valley of Salvatierra at the time Calatrava la Nueva was built. Throughout the construction of Calatrava la Nueva, the Order was forced to stare across the road at their old headquarters and recall their past. Salvatierra remained in Muslim hands until 1224, more than seven years after the Order had officially moved their headquarters to Calatrava la Nueva.<sup>59</sup> In an ironic reversal of fortune, after 1212, Salvatierra became the northernmost Muslim fortress in Castile, just 3km from Calatrava's new headquarters. This must have grated on the order, given their role as the "spearhead" of the Christian frontier, yet they were bound by a treaty between Alfonso VIII and the infant son of Miramamolín in 1213. Still, this same treaty was critical to the construction of Calatrava la Nueva, as it allowed for large-scale construction with relative security against Muslim attack. For their part, the garrison of Salvatierra was forced to become eyewitnesses to the construction of an

<sup>59</sup> O'Callaghan, trans., *Latin chronicle...* 97-98.

imposing Christian fortress. When it was completed, Calatrava la Nueva literally cast its shadow over the fortress of Salvatierra (Fig. 18).

In the trying years between Alarcos (1195) and Las Navas de Tolosa (1212) the Order of Calatrava was in possession of Salvatierra, and the neighboring Dueñas castle. Given the superiority of Dueñas' site, one might wonder why the Order did not begin construction on the site earlier than 1213, when a larger fortress on the scale of Calatrava la Nueva might have better withstood an Almohad siege. The simple answer is that the military and territorial context during this time made construction of a new castle deep in Muslim territory impossible. Still, one can imagine that the years of Calatran occupation of Dueñas between 1195 and 1211 allowed the Order to fully assess the strategic value of this site. When the Order's means caught up to their aspirations, they wasted very little time in choosing the site for their new headquarters.

It is important at this juncture to note the change in the name of the order from the Order of Salvatierra, to the Order of Calatrava. When Alfonso VIII recaptured Calatrava la Vieja in 1212, he referred to its previous owners, - for whom he was attempting to preserve the castle - as "the (brothers) of Salvatierra."<sup>60</sup> It is difficult to know when the name was changed back to Calatrava, but it appears that at least initially, the Order was still using the name of the castle that they had lost in 1211. In light of the Order's reoccupation of Calatrava la Vieja and the construction of their new headquarters it is doubtful that the Order kept the name "Salvatierra" after 1213. Still, the fortress of Salvatierra must have had a strong influence over the order's identity for them to have

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<sup>60</sup> Alfonso VIII "Letter to Pope Innocent III" [www.deremilitari.org/RESOURCES/SOURCES/tolosa.htm](http://www.deremilitari.org/RESOURCES/SOURCES/tolosa.htm)



kept the name during their year of exile. By contrast, the name Calatrava was quickly replaced following the loss of Calatrava la Vieja, and the capture of Salvatierra in 1195-6.

Very little can be deduced from the fortress of Salvatierra in its current, ruined state, yet it is clear that the survivors of the siege of Salvatierra were proud of the 17 years they spent deep in Muslim territory, and were reluctant to abandon the element of their identity that was firmly attached to this fortress. Despite the "blank check" offered by Alfonso VIII, the Order was still too weak after Las Navas de Tolosa to retake Salvatierra themselves, even if the peace agreement hadn't prevented them from trying. In addition, considering the scale the Order had in mind for their new headquarters, Salvatierra's rock outcropping would have been entirely insufficient. From this perspective, the decision to build the new headquarters on top of Dueñas castle may have been the closest feasible alternative to reoccupying Salvatierra. The new fortress of Calatrava la Nueva visually dominated the same landscape that the Order of Salvatierra had looked out upon with anxiety a few years before.

### Chapter III: The Plan and Style of Calatrava la Nueva as Evidence of the Order's Historical Identity

The castle-monastery of Calatrava la Nueva is a material reflection of the Military Order of Calatrava itself. Just as the Order was a hybrid of monastic knights, traditional monks, and lay brothers, their headquarters was a mixture of the architectural traditions associated with each group. The architectural plan strove to serve the needs of constituencies within the fortified monastery, as well as bind the entire community into a self-reliant, spiritually consistent whole (Fig. 4). As a result, many of its architectural spaces reveal the prototypical characteristics of a castle or monastery, yet in its entirety, the site reveals a series of concessions made by each of the Order's constituencies.

Other than the constraints of the site and the desire to build quickly, the construction of Calatrava la Nueva faced few obstacles. Alfonso VIII had been a very generous patron throughout the history of the Order, and although there are no written accounts outlining his contribution, he is the most likely candidate. If he did not pay to construct the castle-monastery directly, he probably did so indirectly through his effort to "reset" the Order back to its pre-Alarcos wealth and position following the victory at Las Navas de Tolosa. Moreover, Alfonso was the only person with the means to construct a fortress of Calatrava la Nueva's scale in the southern Castilian frontier. The Order also had full use of the Muslim captives from Ubeda "...for the service of the Christians and the monasteries which needed to be repaired in the border regions."<sup>61</sup> Finally, while the entire complex bears some evidence of hurried construction, the Order did have the

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<sup>61</sup> Alfonso VIII "Letter to Pope Innocent III" [www.deremilitari.org/resources/sources/tolosa.htm](http://www.deremilitari.org/resources/sources/tolosa.htm)



benefit of relative security during construction. The peace treaty signed after Las Navas de Tolosa allowed work to continue without the risk of Muslim attack from Salvatierra, or from Muslim outposts further south. In summary, the Order of Calatrava not only had a need to redefine themselves architecturally, they also had the financial means, the labor, and the security to build a headquarters exactly as they pleased. Up until this point, the Order had always had to occupy previously constructed castles and alter them to their needs. Just as its name suggests, Calatrava la Nueva was meant to reflect the new, reborn version of the Order of Calatrava which had survived many trials since its foundation and was finally able to express itself under "ideal" conditions.

It is important to note that despite these ideal conditions, the architectural plan of Calatrava la Nueva displays a great deal of compromise and improvisation. Just as the Order had to consider the inherent contradictions of a marriage between Monasticism and Frontier warfare in their *Forma Vivendi*, their architecture at Calatrava la Nueva had to strive to accommodate a complex, hybrid community. The Church, which was integrated into the innermost ring of the concentric plan, was not a "perfect" example of Cistercian architecture, just as the spacing between the bastions on the innermost curtain wall was far from defensively ideal.<sup>62</sup> In its entirety however, the architectural compromises were intended to nurture better monks, and better knights. In the hope of illustrating this dynamic between the parts and the whole, the various buildings at Calatrava la Nueva will be discussed in turn, and then treated as a composite whole.

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<sup>62</sup> Terryl N. Kinder, *Cistercian Europe: Architecture of Contemplation* (Boston: Wm. B. Eerdmans Company, 2002)

In her thorough study of Cistercian Architecture, Kinder explains that while there was a coherent purpose for Cistercian Architecture, there was no singular model or Ideal. The word "perfect" here is used in reference to the architecture's ability to foster contemplation and proper adherence to the Benedictine Rule.

### The Large Enclosure Castle

Calatrava la Nueva resembled two of Adrian Boas' castle types: the spur castle, and the hilltop castle. Still, the complex best fits into yet another type which was popular with military Orders of the Latin East: the "large enclosure castle."<sup>63</sup> According to Boas, this plan was the best suited to fulfill the three main functions of castles built for military Orders:

- (a) To serve as a military base where soldiers could be housed and their supplies stored;
- (b) As a protected place for soldiers to train
- (c) As a fortified convent (monastery) in which the brothers could carry out all the requirements of their communal conventual rule.<sup>64</sup>

In this context, the outer curtain wall of Calatrava la Nueva was defined by the need for a vast amount of "training space." Just like their secular counterparts, the power of the monastic knighthood was intrinsically linked to their ability to fight on horseback. This form of fighting required a substantial financial commitment, time, and most importantly, space to train. Calatrava la Vieja also had a vast enclosed space for this purpose, and Calatrava la Nueva may have repeated this model. (Figs. 19&4)

There are three curtain-walls on the site. The first is located along the eastern side of the complex, and provides the main entrance to the site. The "Puerto de los Arcos" faces north, is the first gate into the complex and opens into a thin inner ward with access to the ruined latrine and "bath-house" foundations. This area contained the gate to the heart of the fortress and monastic complex called the "Puerto de Hierro" [Iron Door] (Fig.20) and a second door which allowed access to the broad, enclosed field where the

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<sup>63</sup> Boas. 113

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.



monastic knights trained (Fig.21). It is worth noting that both of these gates were large enough for a mounted knight to pass through.

The second curtain wall encloses a large triangle-shaped area with the third and final enclosure in the south-east corner. Like the first curtain wall, this wall is of similar thickness (3-4m) and is extremely jagged (Fig. 22). This is mostly due to the topography of the hill, which generally is allowed to control the location of the walls, and occasionally is cut down to increase the height of the walls. By contrast, the innermost wall - which encloses all of the major military and monastic buildings on the site - has straight walls that follow the contours of the buildings within, and several round bastions protruding from the corners (Fig. 23). The open space enclosed by the second curtain wall is roughly twice as large as that of the innermost section. Considering the compact nature of the innermost portion of the castle, this outer enclosure is perhaps the chief reason that the entire complex reveals such a large exterior profile. This large area had the effect of providing an additional buffer between attacking siege engines and the complex's vital core. The final purpose of the large outer bailey was to collect more water. The complex's largest cistern lies in the lowest point of the outer bailey, and would have proven very useful in a siege - such as the one experienced by the monastic knights at Salvatierra just a few years before.

### **The Fortress of Dueñas Reconsidered**

Continuing the discussion of the fortified elements of the castle-monastery complex, this section will jump to the only space that was exclusively occupied by the monastic knights: the fortress. Judging by the curtain walls, the entire complex could be called a

fortress, yet the structure which most accurately deserves this title is a much smaller entity. This structure is also unique because nearly all of it was built before the Order came to occupy it. In a basic sense, the fortress that stands on the highest rock outcropping on the site was the entire castle of Dueñas. Once Calatrava la Nueva was built around and above it, this fortification occupied only a small portion of the greater complex. Nonetheless, this fortress was the innermost and most impenetrable defense against attackers. It is hard to imagine the garrison surviving long in this tiny castle if the walls of the innermost curtain-wall were breached, yet the fortress had many other uses.

The fortress was greatly damaged by the earthquake that struck Lisbon in 1755, and according to signs on the site today, the damage to the top floors initiated the abandonment of the entire complex a century later. The surviving fortress is composed of a ring of towers that enclose a courtyard, (Fig. 24a) and join to form a shared space on the top two levels (Fig 24b). There is also evidence of a ruined stair at the top of the highest platform that would have led to the roof and battlements of the keep. The verticality of the entire structure can be attributed to the lack of space on the rocky summit, but it also had the effect of further increasing the degree of vision from the top of the structure. Dueñas was no different from other small hilltop fortresses in that its primary function was to serve as a watchtower. Once the Calatravan Order took over, they may have increased the height of this castle to better see over the neighboring hills, or they may have been satisfied with the fortress they inherited. Unfortunately, the identical construction techniques and materials used by the Order and their Muslim predecessors make it very difficult to separate the different phases of construction.



Below the combined spaces, the towers contain the quarters for the Grand Master, long store-rooms, and spiral stairs. These rooms are invariably barrel-vaulted, with low ceilings and single arrow loops (Fig. 25). The courtyard contains a large stair that rises five feet to a platform leading to two of the single rooms and the continuation of the stair that leads to the 3<sup>rd</sup> storey platform of the keep (Fig. 26a). Like nearly every other element of the fortress, this stair was constructed from flattened rubble stone and mortar quarried directly from the site.

In general, there are very few surviving battlements on the fortress. This is most likely due to the destruction of the top level, which might have had a crenellated wall-walk, and arrow loops below. On the curtain walls, and on the roof of the church, the crenellations seem to be entirely fabricated by a modern reconstruction. In the case of the curtain walls, the reconstructed crenellations were built at the highest extant point, regardless of the true height of the walls, which may have been much higher (Fig. 26b). The crenellations on the church repeat the split, cube-like forms on the curtain walls (Fig. 26c). The height of the fortress is also difficult to discern, yet it is clear that the extant walls are significantly lower than they had been originally. The ruined bases of the windows in the fortress confirm this. (Fig. 27a) The ruined state of the fortress walls, and the observer's ability to view them from a close distance may have prevented the modern reconstructors from adding the false crenellations to this structure. Alternatively, the reconstruction which was still ongoing in 2008, may include plans to complete these walls at a later date.

The main entrance to the fortress contains the highest concentration of surviving defensive details. The gatehouse consists of a double thick block of walls supporting a

large, round-arched doorway which was carefully built of large, red-orange, basalt blocks. (Fig. 27b) This stone, which is used in doorways and windows throughout the complex, contrasts sharply with the lighter, irregular, multi-colored volcanic stone that was used for the massing of the walls. Passing through the first arched doorway, an attacker would have been met by a second, brick doorway at the bottom of a wide flight of stairs, with [currently filled in] murder-holes above. To the right of the stairs, the natural rock formation provides a sheer support for the fortress that seamlessly rises above it. At the crest of the stairs, an immense masonry block measuring four cubic meters juts out from the right, forcing the attacker to pass single file around it to get to yet another large doorway in the keep. (Fig. 27c) This masonry block also makes it impossible for an attacker to get a battering ram in front of the door. In addition, there are also two arrow loops above and to the left of this door.

Passing through this archway of pink basalt stone, one enters a very rough, cave-like vaulted space with extremely thick rubble and mortar walls and yet another ashlar doorway (Fig. 28). This doorway leads to another barrel-vaulted, grotto-like space with wide arches that meet the ground on the right, and arrow slits to the left. Six feet above the floor, there are square holes which provide evidence of a wooden platform from which the garrison could reach the arrow slits, or attack invaders from above. This space also acts as a covered extension of the courtyard to the right, and may have been the inspiration for the grotto-like entry to the castle-monastery complex which was constructed later (Fig. 29a & b).

It is difficult to know how this fortress was adapted for the monastic knights' use; either when they first occupied it in 1195-6, or when they reoccupied it in 1213 with the



intention of integrating it into a much larger complex of buildings. There is very little about the design of this fortress that is particularly noteworthy, other than its ability to use the natural topography of the rocky outcropping to its advantage. The site's irregular footprint was probably the primary influence on the fortress' design, yet it was still a very functional plan. Having been originally built by the Muslims, this fortress bears little evidence of the Order's architectural identity, yet as the only pre-existing structure, the surrounding complex was forced to work around it. In general, the fortress appears as though it could have been built at the same moment as the rest of the complex, due to the identical materials and masonry techniques used to build the walls and archways throughout the castle-monastery complex. As such, there seems to have been no ideological conflict for the Christian builders to build in a style that was identical to their Muslim predecessors in the "secular" areas. However, as I will demonstrate below, the church deviated from this functional construction technique in order to distinguish itself as a spiritual space.

### **Cistercian Austerity and Camouflage of the Church**

The church at Calatrava la Nueva is by far the most carefully articulated building on the site (Fig. 30). While it is difficult to extract a sense of the Order of Calatrava's identity from the individual secular buildings, the Church appears to assert itself distinctly. However, despite the clear effort to create a spiritual threshold when one enters the church, the exterior often blends in seamlessly with the surrounding fortifications (Fig. 31). The combined result is a fortified church that has no delusions about its role within a complex devoted to the reality of frontier defense. Thus, the church serves as an

architectural manifestation of the needs and identity of the warrior monks of Calatrava. On the exterior, the church and the monastic knights are clad plainly and defensively. On the interior, the church and the monastic knights attempt to embrace the Cistercian ideal as close as their circumstances will allow.

In her book *Fortress-Churches of Languedoc: Architecture, Religion and Conflict in the High Middle Ages*, Prof. Sheila Bonde defines the presence of *ecclesiae incastellatae* in medieval Europe. Through her focus on the churches of Languedoc in southern France, Bonde explains that medieval audiences found the combination of church and fortress less paradoxical than modern audiences do.<sup>65</sup> The church at Calatrava la Nueva displays many unique differences from the urban, machicolated churches that Bonde explores, yet it shares a category of scholarship with these churches.<sup>66</sup> (Fig. 32, 33) Like Languedoc, central Spain has failed to find a place in the narrative of regional schools of Church design. Both regions are considered “backwaters” and frontiers where hybrid forms predominate at the expense of more “pure” examples of Gothic or Romanesque architecture. Calatrava la Nueva’s church reflects the same adaptation and improvisation that characterize Bonde’s fortress-churches. For all of its similarities however, the key difference between Calatrava la Nueva and other fortress-churches is that it was never intended to communicate its purpose as a singular entity. The Church at

<sup>65</sup> Sheila Bonde, *Fortress-Churches of Languedoc Architecture, Religion and Conflict in the High Middle Ages* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2009) 1-4.

<sup>66</sup> Bonde Describes fortress churches in the following quotation: “...churches may be fortified by the addition of a number of elements, including precinct walls, towers, or other protective devices. The fortress church, by contrast, fuses military elements with the church so that it forms a single unit. The fortress-churches that are the subject of this study are single-naved buildings wrapped with machicolated arches.”



Calatrava la Nueva placed integration with the surrounding curtain walls of the complex as one of its primary architectural considerations.

From inside the narrow strip of land between the Puerto de los Arcos, and the Puerto de Hierro (Fig. 4) a viewer who was uninformed about the layout of the monastery would never know that the façade in front of him was the outer wall of a church (Fig. 32). The two arrow loops, high above the viewer's head are actually windows for the three semi-circular apses of the church. Above this wall, the castle defenders would have been poised on the roof of the church, ready to shoot arrows or hurl rocks at the invaders below before they could storm the Puerto de Hierro (Fig. 33).<sup>67</sup> Even on the inside of the complex, the exterior of the Church never reveals its contents until a viewer passes through or around the cloister and sees the Church's imposing west façade (Fig. 34). The enormous rose window on the west façade was paid for by Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain in the late-fifteenth century after they visited the monks of Calatrava and decided that the original rose window was not nearly grand enough for the Order's headquarters.<sup>68</sup> The rest of the façade remains the same as it was when it was first built in 1213-21. The new Rose window, which was perfectly suited for the monastery's role in the final days of the *Reconquista*, would have been tragically ill-suited for a frontier fortress-castle (Fig. 35). The aesthetic motivation behind this enormous window is clearly illustrated by the fact that it is off-center from the exterior, and thus cuts through the round strip-buttresses that support the structure of the church (Fig. 36). These buttresses further exaggerate the

<sup>67</sup> The modern reconstruction effort at Calatrava la Nueva has completed the battlements on the east side of the church. However, since this wall is fully integrated into the second curtain wall, it seems likely that the crenellations which appear elsewhere on the curtain walls would have been repeated in this area. Examples of the crenellations on the south side of the church can be seen in figure 33.

<sup>68</sup> Monreal y Tejada 94-95.

Church's military aesthetic because they so closely resemble the bastions on the nearby third curtain-wall (Fig. 31).

The church at Calatrava la Nueva was far from the first fortified frontier church attached to the Christian Reconquest of Spain. In 1070, Sancho Ramirez, the King of Aragon built Loarre castle on top of a rocky promontory on the south side of the Pyrenees mountains. The parallels between this castle and Calatrava la Nueva seem endless, yet aesthetically, they are very different. Like Calatrava la Nueva, Loarre was an exposed outpost on the southern border between Christianity and Islam. It was also built with a full-scale church (as opposed to a chapel which was very common in medieval castles) inside it, which was intended to help serve the needs of a new community of Augustinian Canons who chose to live alongside and administer the sacraments to the soldiers who garrisoned the fortress. Just like Calatrava la Nueva, Loarre was within sight of another Muslim fortress called Bolea, which lie far below in the wide open Ebro River valley. Finally, like Calatrava, the church at Loarre was placed very near the entrance to the castle, in a very critical strategic position.<sup>69</sup>

However, unlike Calatrava la Nueva's church, the church at Loarre is immediately readable as a church from the exterior. The clearly readable, Romanesque façade was connected to the fortress walls, yet its design was intended to stand out from these walls, and boldly state the Christian faith of its inhabitants to the Muslim-controlled plain below.<sup>70</sup> By contrast, Calatrava la Nueva did not assert its Christian identity on its exterior walls. Calatrava's monastic knights may have hung banners from its walls, or

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<sup>69</sup> Kinder 12-13.

<sup>70</sup> Peter Harrison, *Castles of God: Fortified Religious Buildings of the World* (Woodbridge: Boydell P, 2007) 48-49.



flown flags with the crest of the Order of Calatrava, (Fig. 37) but the recognizable vocabulary of church facades was not used to proclaim the religion of Calatrava la Nueva's inhabitants to the valley below. At Calatrava la Nueva, the architects decided to cloak the location of the church, revealing the paramount concern for integration of religious and defensive structures. This decision would not have been perceived as an acknowledgement of weakness or fear on the part of the monastic knights of Calatrava, yet it was clearly motivated by caution and prudence. At the time of Calatrava la Nueva's construction, the Order's losses and struggles were not distant memories, nor was the Order sufficiently clairvoyant to know that their new headquarters would never be attacked, and that the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa marked the end of Muslim advances in Spain. With the future possibility of invasion clear in their memory, the designers of Calatrava la Nueva could not afford to make aggressive architectural "statements" that might jeopardize the defense of the castle-monastery complex.

In order to reconstruct how the west façade looked before the intervention of Ferdinand and Isabella, one only needs to look at the church attached to the monastery of Fitero. (Fig. 38a) Nearly sixty years had passed since the Order of Calatrava was founded by the Navarrese monks who left this monastery, and since then, Fitero had built a new monastery church which was roughly contemporary with the construction of Calatrava la Nueva between 1187 and 1247.<sup>71</sup> While the materials used for the two monasteries were vastly different, the massing and proportion of the two façades is quite similar. The simple, small rose window was very typical of Cistercian architecture, and came to be

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<sup>71</sup> <http://www.fcpatrimoniodenavarra.com/externos/fitero/>

one of the only unifying features of Cistercian architecture throughout Europe.<sup>72</sup> In plan, Fitero reveals little of the restraint or concessions required of the frontier church at Calatrava la Nueva (Fig. 38b). The radiating chapels, large cloister and prototypical location of the monastic buildings at Fitero are evidence of a monastery that was not forced to make any concessions due to topography or defense. However, the interior of the nave and aisles at Fitero express a similar sense of austerity found at Calatrava la Nueva (Fig. 38c, d, e). Of particular note is the use of rectilinear ribs in the vaulting of the nave and aisles at Fitero, and its complement in volcanic stone at Calatrava la Nueva. The lack of elaborate sculptural details that is often recognized as typical of Cistercian churches is found in both of these churches.

The western portal into the church at Calatrava la Nueva was known as the *Door of Stars*, after the subtly repeated pattern across outermost arch of the entrance (Fig. 39a). Like most of the other doorways and “edges” in the complex, the western portal composed of meticulously cut and red basalt that contrasts with the lighter, rougher volcanic stone used to build the walls. Once inside the church, it is immediately apparent that a great deal more effort went into its construction than any other building in the complex. The quickly – and sometimes sloppily – made walls of the exterior of the church give way to ashlar masonry, high composite piers with simple colonettes, and simple stone cross vaults with intricate brick fills. (Fig 39b & 40) The floor, piers, arches and ribs are all of the same type of multi-colored volcanic stone found throughout the complex and surrounding the hillside, yet in these cases, the stone was carefully cut and placed with thin strips of mortar. The contrasting red basalt found in the doorways

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<sup>72</sup> Kinder. 218



throughout the complex is most commonly used on the square ribs, but it is also randomly employed for the bases of capitals, or mixed in with the other lighter colored volcanic stone. (Fig. 41)

For all of the unique considerations and obstacles at Calatrava la Nueva, the Church is not entirely resistant to art-historical categorization. If a single style were to be attributed to the Church, the closest option would be "Cistercian." Even this category is problematic, since according to Terryl Kinder, Cistercian architecture was open to many different influences and did not promote a definitive model or style that was repeated in the hundreds of houses affiliated with the Order. Nonetheless, Kinder and others have managed to extract the defining principles of simplicity and austerity in the Cistercian rule that helps to explain the forms chosen in many of the Order's monasteries. In Bernard of Clairvaux's *Apologia*, he discusses art in a way that historians and art historians of the middle ages have found greatly influential to their study of medieval perceptions of the function of art.<sup>73</sup> The most important aspect of the treatise to the formulation of a Cistercian style of architecture is St. Bernard's view that excessive ornament and color are antithetical to a contemplative life. While the treatise is certainly more complicated than this simple statement, in essence, the supreme emphasis on contemplation was critical to the creation of an aesthetic which has been characterized by "...simplicity, harmonious proportions, and meticulous craftsmanship."<sup>74</sup> Calatrava la Nueva's church interior displays these characteristics through its overall lack of

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<sup>73</sup> Conrad Rudolph, *The "Things of Greater Importance" Bernard of Clairvaux's Apologia and the medieval attitude toward art* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990) 6.

<sup>74</sup> Kinder. 25

elaboration on the ribs, its characteristically plain capitals, (Fig. 42) the simple geometric form of the three apse plan, and the repeated rosettes on the window sills (Fig. 43).

The Church's architectural plan divides the church into four bays, with a wide central nave, and two side aisles which are half the width of the center (Fig. 4). The hexagonal central apse is flanked by two more semi-circular apses with three windows each. The Church is oriented along the east-west axis, with the apse in the east, yet there is very little attempt to capture particular qualities of light. The majority of the light is supplied by the large, later rose window, and the clerestory windows at the highest point of the central nave on the north and south sides. The two exterior windows in the central apse, and the corresponding windows in the north and south apses appear to be arrow-slits from the exterior of the church, and while they are generously articulated on the interior, they still provide no more light than any other arrow-loop. The contrast between the interior and exterior of the windows on the east end of the church further reveal a desire to camouflage the location of the church. Had the exterior windows been the same size on the exterior as the interior, an attacker may have been able to distinguish this area as a weak point in the castle's exterior defenses. More than any other feature in the complex, these features reveal the overall defensive, insular posture at Calatrava la Nueva.

Around the same time that the rose window was enlarged, two interior windows connecting the three apses were added to help light the central apse. (Fig. 44) It is also likely that the remaining windows of the two apses were rebuilt to correspond with the new interior windows. What is most striking about all of these "new" windows is that they are blatantly Islamic or "mudejar" in appearance, and seem somewhat out of place



with the rest of the church's simplified aesthetic.<sup>75</sup> (Fig. 45) It is important to note however, that the design of Calatrava la Nueva was never immune to Islamic influence. The concentric brick vaulting technique is patently "mudejar" in its style, and while it is certainly unique in its juxtaposition with the plain ashlar stonework that supports it, the concentric bricks were anything but antithetical to the ideals which governed Cistercian style. (Fig. 41) In fact, the repetition of the concentric brickwork may have been seen as beneficial to the Cistercian ideals of contemplation and meditation. In short, elements which art historians have labeled "Islamic" were not automatically associated with "enemy," even for a community whose identity was as integrally tied to warfare against Muslims as the Order of Calatrava was.

Like the rest of the complex, and the monastic knights of Calatrava themselves, the church was not inspired solely by its affiliation with the Cistercian Order. However, the apparent dedication to the Cistercian style displayed in the church, and its overall scale in relation to the rest of the complex reveals that the Order of Calatrava wished to be taken seriously as a true monastic order. Chapels had been included within the walls of fortresses since the early middle ages, yet the church at Calatrava, for all of its concessions to defense and austerity, is expressive of a much more intimate relationship between religion and militancy than that found in the simple chapels of earlier fortresses. While secular knights could fulfill the requirements of worship within a simple chapel designed to house a fraction of the garrison at a time, Calatrava's warrior monks clearly believed that their hybrid community required full communal participation in Christian ceremony. The Church was the more than a location for prayer, it was the space in which

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<sup>75</sup> Monreal y Tejada. 95.

the monastic knights and monks engaged in "spiritual warfare." As Kinder points out, ecclesiastic cathedrals were intended to express "the stability and longevity of the church." By contrast, the message of an abbey church was much more private; valuing prayer, contemplation and liturgy.<sup>76</sup> Moreover, the universal and easily recognizable form of the basilica served as a reminder of the greater Christian world beyond the frontier, and its support of the Order's efforts against the "infidels." All of the other monastic buildings which surrounded the complex, including the cloister, the refectory, and the chapter house were meaningfully placed in relation to their association with the church. Without it, these buildings would have been as hollow as a curtain-wall without a keep.

Beyond its mere inclusion in the overall plan of the complex, the interior aesthetic of the church, [which has been described as "Cistercian"] reveals a very particular posture for the Order in 1213-1221. The austere, meager sculpture, thick masonry, and cave like qualities of the interior help to express an overall sense of permanence and insularity that fits the defensive posture of the Order at the time the structure was built. Even the masonry itself, which matches that of the fortress would have acted as a constant reminder of the church's location on the frontier, where seriousness of purpose eclipsed desires for material comfort. The church occupied the symbolic role of the fortress for the Cistercian monks at Calatrava la Nueva, which would protect them from the very real threat of Muslim attack, as well as the battleground for their monastic occupation. The Monastic knights would have viewed the church similarly: as the spiritual equivalent of the adjacent fortress where instead of directing one's view out toward the Puerta Muradal in search of enemies, the monastic knight's thoughts were

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<sup>76</sup> Kinder. 142-143



directed inward to the spiritual fight against his own temptation and sin, and Christianity's greater battle against Islam.

### **The Cloister as the Key to Segregation at Calatrava la Nueva**

The scant remains of the brick cloister at Calatrava la Nueva date from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and thus reveal very little with regard to how the order displayed its identity through architectural form. However, much can be deduced from the fact that this ruined cloister was built over top of another 13<sup>th</sup> century cloister.<sup>77</sup> Its mere inclusion in the original plan supports the idea that the complex was conceived as a "full" monastery from the beginning. In general, the military Orders rarely included cloisters in even their largest castle-monasteries. It was relatively common for Military Orders to choose a plan with a central courtyard, such as the Hospitaller headquarters of Krak de Chevaliers in Syria, (Fig. 46) yet this space was at best a symbolic representative of the monastic cloister.<sup>78</sup> With the inclusion of a cloister at Calatrava la Nueva, the Order further asserted that it was not willing to rely on a symbolic nod to the monastic side of its identity. Instead, the Order asserted that in all possible ways, Calatrava la Nueva would be as much as monastery as it was a fortress.

If the church was the centerpiece of a monastery, the cloister was its heart.<sup>79</sup> On a purely practical level, the cloister served as the connecting space between the church, and the other monastic buildings including the chapter house, the refectory, and the dormitory. The cloister had ancient origins, and it is impossible to pinpoint the exact

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Boas. 113

<sup>79</sup> Kinder. 141

moment that it became irrevocably associated with monastic architecture, yet by the twelfth century, monastic theologians began to impress very specific allegorical meanings on space.<sup>80</sup> The most important of these theologians to a discussion of Calatrava la Nueva's cloister was Bernard of Clairvaux. St. Bernard believed that the cloister prefigured the Holy Jerusalem.<sup>81</sup> From within the square garth or open green space of the cloister, or its covered portico, a monk was capable of spiritual pilgrimage to the Holy Jerusalem. The fact that the cloister was completely surrounded by the buildings of the monastery provided more than security; it deprived the senses and insulated against thoughts of the sinful, material outside world. Given his strong emphasis on contemplation, it not surprising that Bernard of Clairvaux promoted the cloister as an appropriate space for meditative study.

The cloister did have one clearly divergent quality from the norm which may have provided a visual reminder of the slightly "skewed" comparison between military Orders, and traditional monasticism: it wasn't square. It is difficult to know how this may have affected the monk's perception of the space, but in the end, the slightly off-center quality of the cloister is most revealing of the power of the church to govern the design of the remaining monastic buildings. Because the church was built on a perfect east-west axis on the site, all of the other buildings, and in particular the cloister, had to improvise in order to abut the church properly and still fit in with the uneven topography of the site. Judging by scars on the exterior of the south wall of the church, the cloister probably was covered, and fit snugly against the Church, but it had to angle itself on the south wall-

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<sup>80</sup> Christiana Whitehead, "Making a Cloister of the Soul in Medieval Religious Treatises," *Medium Aevum* 67 (1998): 3-6.

<sup>81</sup> Dee Dyas, "Medieval Patterns of Pilgrimage: A Mirror for Today?" *Explorations in a Christian Theology of Pilgrimage* (Grand Rapids: Ashgate, 2004) 96.



walk in order to allow the refectory and the Kitchens to follow the contours of the hill.  
(Fig. 47a&b)

The monastic knights may have been bound by the same vows of poverty, silence, chastity and obedience as the "traditional" Cistercian monks at Calatrava la Nueva, but the hours required for training and military activity likely left very little time for contemplative prayer in the cloister. In fact, since Calatrava la Nueva was one of only two possessions of the order to have a cloister, it is not written in their *Forma Vivendi* whether or not they were even allowed to enter the cloister.<sup>82</sup> However, based on the overall plan of the monastery complex, it would have been impossible for the monastic knights to enter essential buildings such as the refectory and the chapter house without entering the cloister. (Fig. 4) Nonetheless, the plan also appears to make an attempt to curb the monastic knights' access to the cloister by providing a separate door for the monks to enter the church directly into the south aisle, (Fig. 48) while making a clear path for the knights to exit the fortress and enter through the west portal – the traditional entrance for laymen.<sup>83</sup> Inside the church, the choir screens section off the eastern-most bay, defining the space as solely for monastic use. Entering through the west portal, the monastic knights likely occupied the second and third bay, with the laymen entering last and therefore furthest from the altar.<sup>84</sup>

The "conventual brothers" at Calatrava la Nueva likely perceived the cloister as a welcome haven from the bustle and distraction of the rest of the castle complex. By

<sup>82</sup> The other complex to have a cloister was the headquarters of the Order of Calatrava in Aragon: Alcañiz. (Fig. 52)

<sup>83</sup> This door was curiously painted with red and white voussoirs, which may or may not have been a visual reference to the great mosque of Cordoba.

<sup>84</sup> O'Callaghan "The Interior life..." 8.

giving them their own entrance into the church, the architects of Calatrava la Nueva completed a closed circuit of monastic buildings that very closely resembled that of other monasteries. While inside the church, the conventual brothers would act as instructors in proper Cistercian observance. While in the cloister, they were provided with the means to practice it themselves.

### **Off the Cloister**

Of the remaining monastic buildings at Calatrava la Nueva, only the chapter house rises above its foundations today.<sup>85</sup> Like the cloister, the refectory and the kitchens barely rise more than four feet above the ground. The dormitory was rebuilt in brick in the eighteenth century, but the stone outer walls still frame the original location of the two-storied dormitory. This area must have served as the sleeping quarters for both the monks and the knights, and is the one building which drastically differs from the “typical” Cistercian monastery plan. Ordinarily, the dormitory would open directly into the cloister in order to ease the movement of the monks into the church for daily prayer. Still, at Calatrava la Nueva, the dormitory entrance is down a short corridor from the cloister, and was likely placed where it was due to site concerns rather than any purposeful divergence from the traditional plan. (Fig. 4) By contrast, the refectory and kitchens were placed in their more traditional locations: perpendicular to the southern cloister walk. In general, the entire monastic complex of buildings must have operated very smoothly. It prevented laymen from entering the cloister, discouraged the monastic

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<sup>85</sup> Unfortunately, the Chapter house was boarded up when I visited, and so I have very little to say about it other than that it existed in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and likely was the location of various ceremonies for the Order.



knights from mingling too closely with the conventual brothers, and allowed for a way of life that was far more than a “simulation” of the Cistercian Rule, as it was a subtle adaptation with few concessions.

### **Historical Memory and the Field of Martyrs**

The cemetery at Calatrava la Nueva was located immediately south of the western entrance to the church. (Fig. 49) It was called the *Field of Martyrs*, since it contained the translated remains of the knights who had died at Calatrava la Vieja in the aftermath of the battle of Alarcos. It later became the location for the burial of several of the grand masters of the Order including Martin Fernandez de Quintana (1216-1218). Little remains of the arcade gallery that once surrounded it, or the iron gate that once controlled access to it, but there is no doubt that the area was an integral part of the castle-monastery plan from the beginning. Its location and size were quite remarkable – roughly the same size as the cloister – considering the tight ordering of the rest of the buildings, and the rarity of flat ground on the rocky site.

The cemetery’s location inside the innermost complex of buildings, rather than in the more spacious outer ward further reveals the importance the Order placed on its past. On their way from the fortress into the west portal of the Church, the monastic knights would have passed by the relics of their fallen brothers every day, and been reminded of their sacrifice, and the hardship the Order had faced for so many years before they were given the opportunity to build their new headquarters. In this sense, the *Field of Martyrs*, like the outer ward, and the Cistercian cloister, was a training ground for the new brothers – many of whom had not shared in the experiences of the survivors from Salvatierra, or

the lean years after the battle of Alarcos. Whereas the outer ward was devoted to the teaching of the knight's militant occupation, and the church and cloister were devoted to the spiritual teachings of the Cistercian monks, the *Field of Martyrs* taught the new brothers about their historical identity, and the order's intimate connection to the land on which they stood.

### **Lay Buildings of the West Range**

The lower area to the west of the fortress was partitioned for the daily realities of life in the castle-monastery complex. This included the mills, ovens, foundry and cistern. The laymen who worked in these areas lived in the "old village" north of the church in the outer ward. They entered the castle through a gate which gave them easy access between their homes and their occupations, as well as kept them separate from the rest of the community.

On the south side, another archway was built abutting the 16<sup>th</sup> century library which was wide enough for a horse or other pack animal to get through with grain or fuel for the mills and ovens below. Among the remains of the mill area, a recent excavation dug up several mill stones. (Fig. 50) The ovens are actually one of the few areas which were built with thick enough walls and vaulting that the ceiling remains intact, as does the hollowed-out shape of the brick ovens themselves. With the outer ward as its only boundary, this area was also one of the most vulnerable to attack. Consequently, it appears that there was a considered effort to make use of the upper floors of these buildings to serve as battlements. (Fig. 51)



The lay buildings reveal that despite several clear attempts at partitioning the space, the three major spheres of influence - militant, spiritual and domestic - were thoroughly interconnected at Calatrava la Nueva. For all of the need to label buildings as being "solely" occupied by monastic knights, monks, or laymen, the entire complex was never intended to support three separate communities. The true intention for the plan of Calatrava la Nueva was not necessarily to create an ideal model for use by future houses of the Order, but rather to create an efficient training ground for future soldiers of the Reconquista. Just a year before Calatrava la Nueva was conceived, the Order was nearly extinct. In order for the Order to fill out their newly reacquired castles with garrisons who understood their composite identity, they would need a training ground that allowed the "recruits" to witness the perfect combination of knighthood and monasticism. The Order had to invest architectural space for every aspect of their identity in their new headquarters, and prove that these elements did not contradict each other when put into practice.

#### IV. Conclusion

Calatrava la Nueva represents more than the crowning architectural achievement of a military Order. Despite the attempt to integrate all definable groups within the Order on a grand scale, the fortress/monastery that was constructed after the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa should not be interpreted as a "quintessential" architectural model for military Orders in general, or even the Order of Calatrava itself. To do so would ignore the unique historical context that shaped the choices of site, plan and style at Calatrava la Nueva.

Above all other factors, the historical memory of the surviving members of the Order appears to be the primary influence on the castle/monastery's design. Given the chaotic nature of those memories, and the obvious concessions to the reality of life on an uncertain and violent frontier, the castle would not have been conceived as a trophy of their most recent victory, nor as a perfected model to be repeated throughout their "inevitable" advance into Muslim territory. The Order's new headquarters was a reflection of their identity at a very specific moment; an identity that actually changed as soon as the structure was completed.

With a firm foothold within sight of the Puerto de Muradal, and a new geopolitical center, the order no longer resembled the meager survivors of Alarcos and Salvatierra whose memories of past invasions from the south caused them to build a headquarters with a clear defensive posture. Once the headquarters was completed, the circumstances in the region allowed for a more offensive posture than the Order had ever had before. This reversal is best illustrated by the events which led up to the conquest of Cordoba by Alfonso VIII's grandson, Fernando III (1217-52).



The Latin Chronicle of the Kings of Castile describes an important moment in the life of Frederick III in which the new king, having finally defeated his rivals for the throne, voiced his desire to turn his attention to defeating the Moors in the south. Speaking to his mother, Queen Berenguela, Fernando regretted the time he had wasted fighting off the Christian usurpers in his own land, and wished to pick up where his grandfather had left off after Las Navas de Tolosa:

The door is open indeed and the way is clear. Peace has been restored to us in our kingdom; discord and deadly enmities exist among the moors; factions and quarrels have broken out anew. Christ, God and Man, is on our side; on that of the Moors, the infidel and damned apostate Muhammad. What is to be done? Most kind mother... I beg that it may please you that I wage war against the Moors.<sup>86</sup>

Berenguela replies to her son that he seek the council of his vassals, who had already been assembled. Their advice to him was to immediately seek out the local "experts" in religious warfare: the military Orders.

Without delay the commander of Ucles was sent to the archbishop of Toledo and the master of Calatrava... to attend personally upon the king, without any delay... His barons and the archbishop and the friars of the Orders gathered with him (in Toledo). In the following September around the feast of St. Michael they moved their forces against the Moors. *Passing through the Puerto del Muradal*, they hastened along the road toward a town called Quesada. When they came upon it they entered the town in an instant...<sup>87</sup>

While the author does not mention Calatrava la Nueva directly, the location of the Castilian advance in September 1224 places the action on the doorstep of the new Calatran headquarters. It is unknown whether the fortress/monastery hosted the king himself, yet it is likely that as long as the Christian forces had to gather north of the Puerto de Muradal, Calatrava la Nueva would have been the most strategic staging point. It was built to enclose large numbers of soldiers and horses, emphasized training space in

<sup>86</sup> O'Callaghan, trans., "The Latin Chronicle..." 88

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. 90 (*emphasis added*)

its plan, and was in direct view of the pass. It is for this reason that it can be assumed that the lives of the inhabitants of Calatrava la Nueva in 1224 were very different from the lives and desires of its architects in 1213.

The need for psychological and spiritual insulation characterized by the design of the full-scale church and monastic spaces must have diminished when the headquarters became a spearhead for advancement into the Muslim South. This is not to say that these spaces ceased to be used, yet it would seem that as the entire site became more offensive and extroverted, the anxiety that helped to explain the inclusion of these buildings in the first place would have lifted, altering the identity of the castle/monastery's occupants.<sup>88</sup>

Calatrava la Nueva was never tested by the Almohades or any other Muslim dynasty after it was built. The identity of its occupants changed so dramatically that by the end of the Reconquista, the Catholic monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella paid to have the rose window of the church enlarged to better suit the dignity of the monks who worshiped there. The Muslim frontier had long since shifted south to Granada at this time, and Ferdinand and Isabella may have wished to transform Calatrava la Nueva into a monument to a time in which Christianity was on the defensive in Spain.

Not all of the architectural features of Calatrava la Nueva speak as clearly to their purpose as the enlarged rose window of the Church. The fact that much of the massing of the monastic complex is indistinguishable from the earlier, Islamic fortress presents an interesting obstacle for interpretation of the Order's architectural identity. Add to this the largely ruined state of many of the structures, and it becomes even more difficult to understand what the overall composition was intended to communicate. In the future, it

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<sup>88</sup> In fact, the monastery was occupied by monks until the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



would be beneficial to reconstruct the building in three-dimensional space in order to get a better feeling for the way the elevations, as well as the plan attempted to either mix or segregate the community. Such a model could also help to determine if the true height of the castle communicated a more imposing silhouette than the relatively stunted walls do today. Finally, for all of the unique features at Calatrava la Nueva, it should not be treated as an island. Future efforts should strive to place the Castle in a broader art-historical context by comparing it to the castles of other military orders, as well as the contemporary mudejar-style buildings of Castile. Calatrava la Nueva will never fit firmly within a single art-historical style, yet it is also insufficient to simply refer to it as a hybrid. Hopefully, more can be learned about the identity of the military Order of Calatrava by taking a closer look at which architectural forms they associated with Christianity, and which with their Muslim enemies.

It is important to note that the Order of Calatrava did not have a single origin by the time it was in the position to express itself at Calatrava la Nueva. Fitero monastery was likely little more than a distant memory. Even Calatrava la Vieja was thought to be unnecessary to the order's future identity. The right to declare which ground was most sacred to the Order belonged to the survivors of the difficult seventeen years at Salvatierra; a castle which symbolized their greatest heroism, and the trough of their power. Upon the completion of Calatrava la Nueva, one can imagine these surviving knights contentedly watching the shadow of their new headquarters creep toward Salvatierra in the setting sun.

### Appendix: Relevant Chronology of Medieval Spain

- 711- Arab invasion
- 1002- Death of Al-Mansur
- 1020- Loarre Castle established
- 1031- Caliphate of Cordoba collapses
- 1085- Alfonso VI of Castile takes Toledo
- October 27, 1086- Alfonso VI defeated at Sagrajas, north of Badajoz-halted Christian advance for four generations
- 1094- El Cid entered Valencia
- 1095- Urban II calls for Crusade in Holy Land
- 1118- Zaragoza falls to Christians
- 1118- Order of Knights Templar founded
- 1126- Reign of Alfonso VII of Castile begins
- 1128- Templars receive their Rule
- 1139- Almohades enter Iberia from Morocco
- Jan 1147- Alfonso VII takes Calatrava Vieja- gives it to the Templars
- 1147- Alfonso VII takes Almeria
- 1148- Tortosa falls to Christians
- 11 Nov 1155- Future Alfonso VIII is born
- 1156- Mother of Alfonso VIII dies
- August 1157- Alfonso VII dies; reign of Sancho III in Castile
- 1157- Moors re-take Almeria
- Jan 1158- Sancho III agrees to give Calatrava La Vieja to Cistercians of Fitero Monastery
- 1158 Military Order of Calatrava established
- 1158- Sancho III dies; minority of Alfonso VIII begins
- 1164- Order of Calatrava cements affiliation with Citeaux
- 1169- Alfonso VIII comes of age
- 1170- Military Order of Santiago established
- 1173- Beginning of Martin as Grand Master of the Military Order of Calatrava
- 1176- Military Order of Santiago Established
- 1177- Order of Calatrava helps Alfonso VIII and Alfonso II of Aragon take Cuenca
- 1179- Alfonso II of Aragon gives Alcañiz to Order of Calatrava
- 1183- Beginning of Grand Master Nuño of Order of Calatrava
- 1187- Calatrava affiliated with Cistercian Abbey of Morimond
- 1190- Alfonso VIII agrees to truce with Almohad Muslims
- 1193-94- Christians raid Muslim South in spite of truce
- Spring 1195- Almohad caliph crosses over from Africa to Cordoba, passes through Puerto de Muradal



- 11 July 1195- Almohades defeat Alfonso VIII at Alarcos; occupy castles at Calatrava La Vieja, Caracuel, Benavente, Malagon and Guadalézas
- 1195-6- Surviving members of Calatravan Order occupy Salvatierra
- 1196- Pedro II of Aragon's reign begins
- 1197 Grand Master Nuñez of Calatrava dies
- 1203- Pedro II gives Maella to Calatrava
- 1210- Alfonso VIII- Christian/Muslim truce ends
- 1211- Alfonso VIII's forces raid Almohad territory
- October 1211- Salvatierra surrenders after 51 day siege
- Spring 1212- Alfonso VIII gathers forces from Christian kingdoms and France
- 24 June 1212- Alfonso VIII takes Matagon
- 1 July 1212- Alfonso 8 takes CV- French go home
- 5-6 July 1212- Alfonso VIII takes Alarcos, Piedrabuena, Benavente and Caracuel
- 16 July 1212- Alfonso VIII and his allies defeat Almohad army at Navas de Tolosa
- late July 1212- Alfonso VIII briefly occupies Baeze and Ubeda
- 1213- Construction begins on Calatrava la Nueva
- 1214 Alfonso VIII dies. Enrique I succeeds as a minor
- 1217 Enrique I dies – Months of Civil war until the ascension of Fernando III
- 1217- Calatrava La Nueva becomes official headquarters of the Order
- 1217- Ferdinand III of Castile, grandson of Alfonso VIII, reaches majority
- 1226- Salvatierra returns to the Order of Calatrava
- 1233- Úbeda captured by Ferdinand III
- 1236- Cordoba captured by Ferdinand III
- 1246- Jaén captured by Ferdinand III
- 1248- Seville captured by Ferdinand III
- 1490's- Ferdinand and Isabella commission a new rose window for Calatrava la Nueva
- 1492- Conquest of Granada

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(Fig. 1) Satellite map of the possessions of the Order of Calatrava South of Toledo. Also included are key battles and mountain passes. Image taken from Google Earth.





(Fig. 2) East side of Calatrava la Nueva from valley floor. Image by author.



(Fig. 3) East side of Calatrava la Nueva from valley floor. Image by author.





(Fig. 4) Plan of Calatrava la Nueva. Composite of author's survey and a plan made available to visitors.





(Fig. 5) Calatrava la Vieja. Ciudad Real Province, Spain. Image by author.

(c) garcilanga  
[www.castillosnet.org](http://www.castillosnet.org)



(Fig. 6) Alarcos Castle, Ciudad Real province, Spain. Image by Juan Antonio Cuevas.  
[www.castillosnet.org](http://www.castillosnet.org)





(Fig. 7) Salvatierra Castle. Ciudad Real Province, Spain. Image by author.





(Fig. 8) Calatrava la Nueva. View of the fortress and its rocky base. Image by author



(Fig. 9) View of the area south of Calatrava la Nueva leading to the Sierra Morena. Image by author.





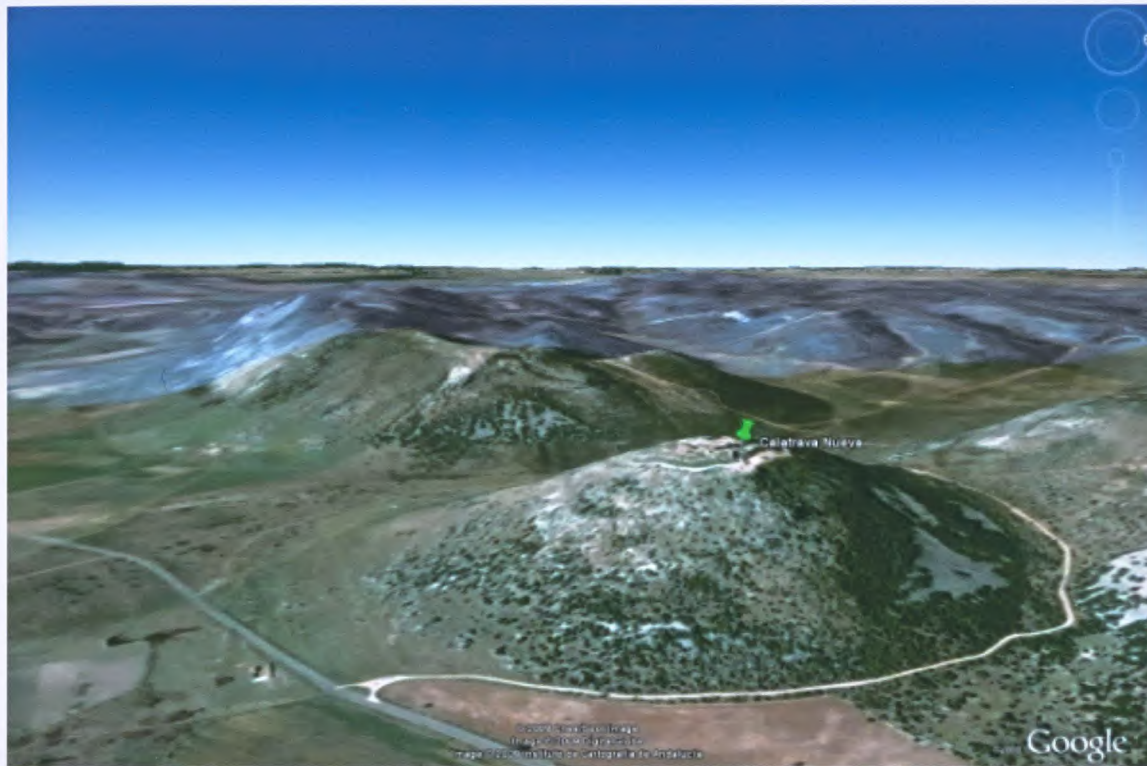
(Fig. 10a) Caracuel Castle, Ciudad Real province, Spain. Image by Juan Antonia Cuevas.  
[www.castillosnet.org](http://www.castillosnet.org)

(c) garcilanga



(Fig. 10b) Castle of Miraflores/Piedrabuena. Ciudad Real province, Spain. Image by Juan Antonia Cuevas.  
[www.castillosnet.org](http://www.castillosnet.org)





(Fig. 11) 3D topography of the site of Calatrava la Nueva looking East. Image from Google Earth.



(Fig. 12) The rock outcroppings on the site and the "Iron Door" at Calatrava la Nueva. Image by author.





(Fig. 13) View from the top of the fortress of Calatrava la Nueva looking North-West. Image by author.

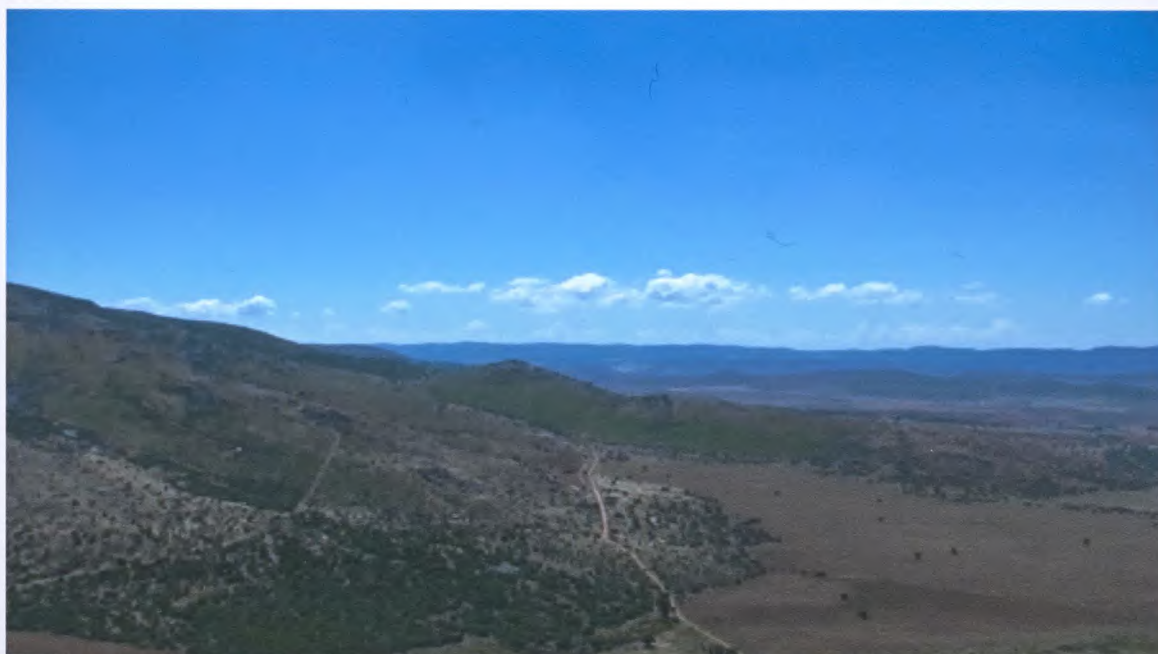


(Fig. 14) The "Puerto Muradal" Due South of Calatrava la Nueva. Image by author.





(Fig. 15) The Ojailen River, 15 miles south of Calatrava la Nueva. Image by author.



(Fig. 16) View from Calatrava to the south-east. Salvatierra is Left of the frame. Image by author.





(Fig. 17) Calatrava la Nueva from the south, looking north. Image by author.



(Fig. 18) The shadow cast by Calatrava la Nueva on the plain below. Salvatierra stands on the rocky outcropping on the right side of the image. Image by author.





(Fig. 19) Satellite image of the ruins of Calatrava la Vieja. Image from Google Earth





(Fig. 20) The "Iron Door" and its corresponding ruined gatehouse. Calatrava la Nueva. Image by author.





(Fig. 21) The gate leading to the open area of the outer ward (to the right). Calatrava la Nueva. Image by author.



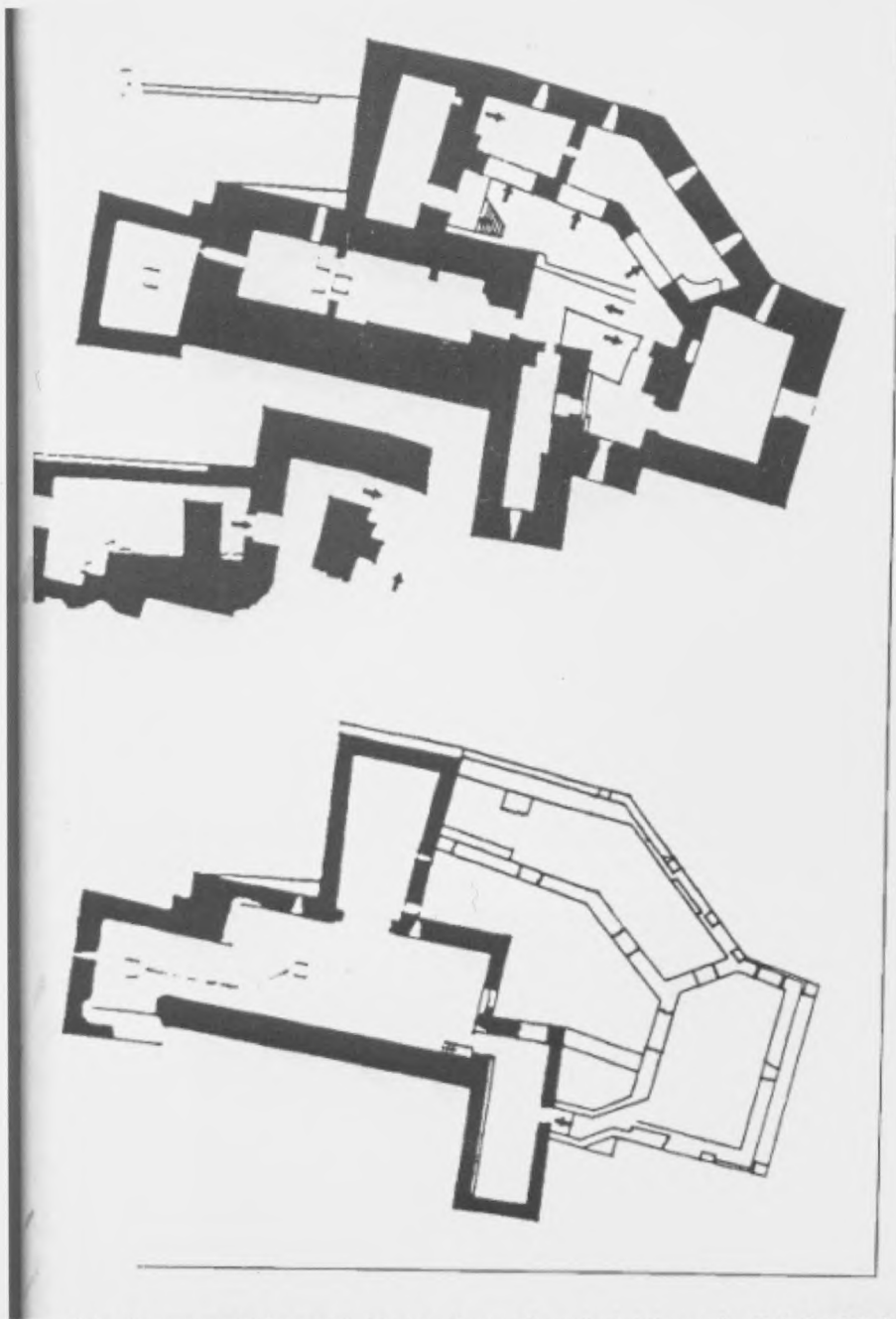
(Fig. 22) The jagged edge of the second curtain wall at Calatrava la Nueva. Image by author.





(Fig. 23) The smooth walls of the third curtain-wall. Shot from top of the second curtain-wall, looking east.  
Image by author.





(Fig. 24a) Plan of the fortress at Calatrava la Nueva. Image from Luis Monreal y Tejada. *Medieval Castles of Spain*. (Koneman: 1999)



(Fig. 24b) The highest level of the fortress at Calatrava la Nueva. Image by author.



(Fig. 25) The re-plastered interior of the grand master's quarters. Calatrava la Nueva. Image by author.





(Fig. 26a) The multi-level staircase inside the courtyard of the fortress at Calatrava la Nueva. Image by author.





(Fig. 26b) Reconstructed crenellations with arrow loops on the outer-most curtain wall. Image by author.



(Fig. 26c) Crenellations on the roof of the church at Calatrava la Nueva. Image by author.





(Fig. 27a) Cut off windows at the top of the fortress at Calatrava la Nueva. Image by author.



(Fig. 27b) Gate and stairs leading to the fortress. Image by author.





(Fig. 27c) The second doorway into the fortress. The masonry block to the right would have prevented a battering ram from getting in front of the door. Image by author.



(Fig. 28) View of Masonry cube from inside the fortress at Calatrava la Nueva. Image by author.





(Fig. 29a) Grotto-like entry into the fortress courtyard at Calatrava la Nueva. Image by author.





(Fig. 29b) The first barrel-vaulted, Grotto-like space that one enters after passing through the *Iron Door*. This space lies directly underneath the enlarged dormitory for the monastery and is very similar to the earlier within the fortress (Fig. 29a) Image by author.





(Fig. 30) Interior of the south-west corner of the Church at Calatrava la Nueva. Image by author.



(Fig. 31) The third curtain wall and the church at Calatrava la Nueva. Image by author.





(Fig. 32) Exterior of the east end of the Church at Calatrava la Nueva. The square towers roughly correspond to the north and south apses, and the windows appear as arrow-slits. Image by author.



(Fig. 33) The fortified roof of the church at Calatrava la Nueva. Image by author.





(Fig. 34) Straight ahead, the south wall of the Church at Calatrava la Nueva continues without hinting at its contents. Image by author.



(Fig. 35) The late 15<sup>th</sup> century rose window at Calatrava la Nueva. Image by author.





(Fig. 36) Image showing how the enlarged window cuts into the side of the right buttress on the western side of the church at Calatrava la Nueva. Image by author.

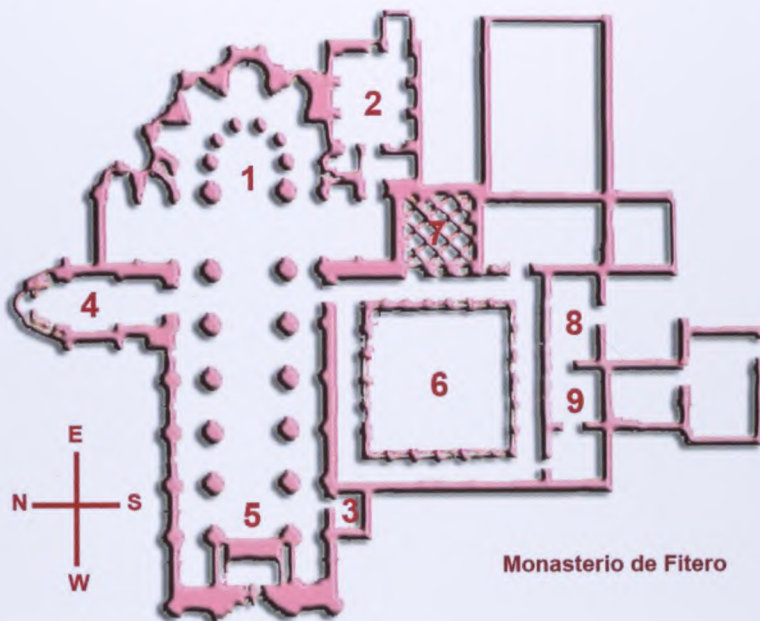


(Fig. 37) Crest of the Order of Calatrava. Image taken from: [www.en.wikipedia.org](http://www.en.wikipedia.org)





(Fig. 38a) Fitero Monastery (1187-1247). West façade. Image by author.

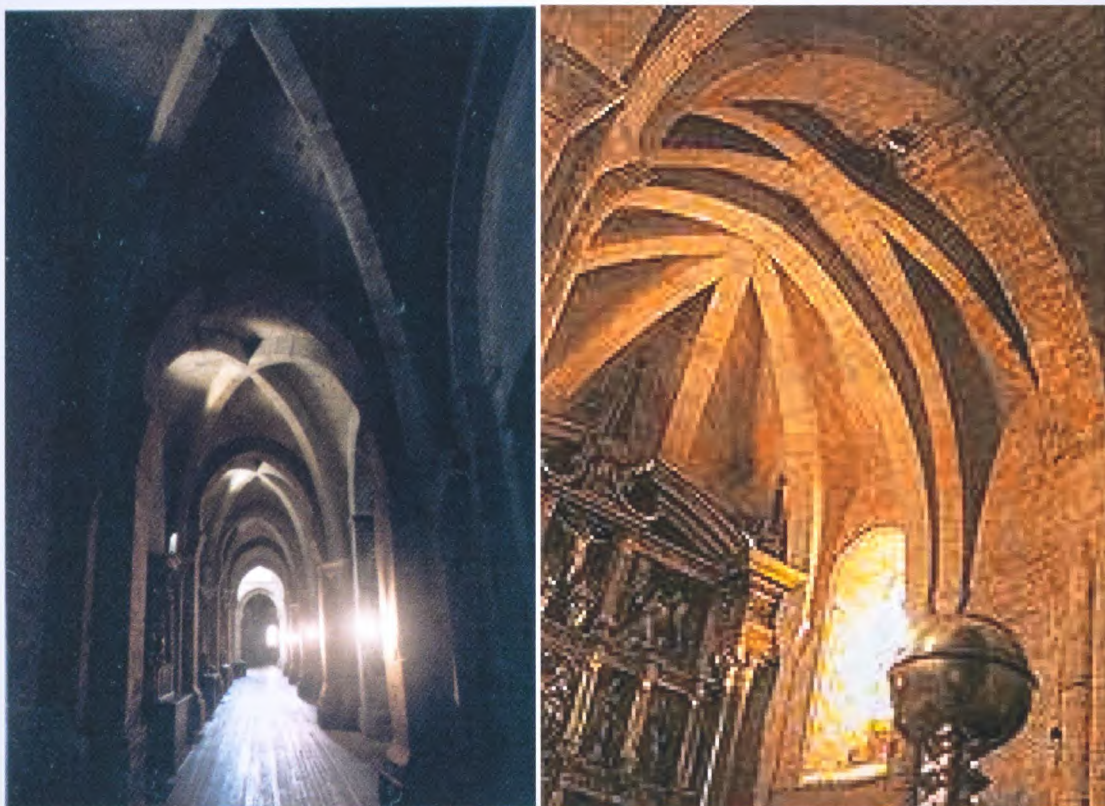


(Fig. 38b) Plan for Fitero Monastery Image from:  
[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Monasterio\\_de\\_Fitero](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Monasterio_de_Fitero)





(Fig. 38c) Central Nave of Fitero Monastery. Image by author.



(Fig. 38d&e) Nave-aisle and apse vaulting at Fitero. Images from Serafin Olcoz Yanguas, Memorias Del Monasterio de Fitero: del Padre Calatayud (Pamplona [Spain]: Gobierno de Navarra, 2005) 44.





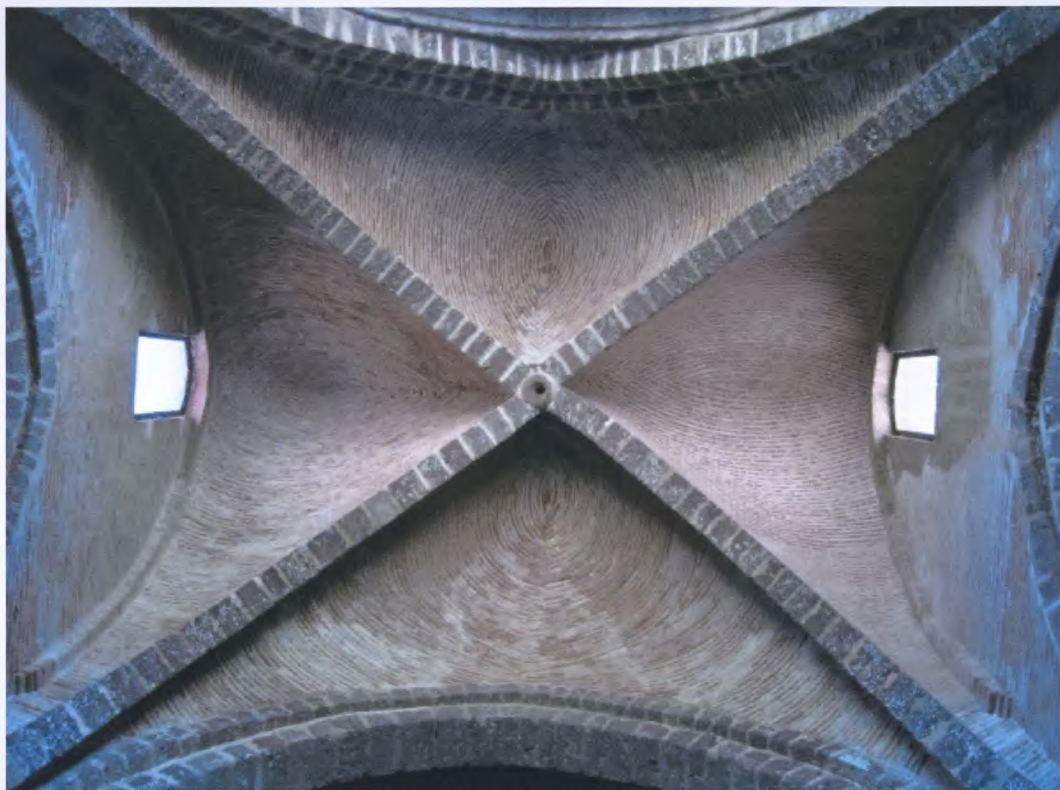
(Fig. 39a) *The Door of Stars*. This is the western Portal to the Church. Image by author.





(Fig. 39b) The central nave of the Church at Calatrava la Nueva. Image by author.





(Fig. 40) Cross vault. Central nave, 2<sup>nd</sup> bay. Church at Calatrava la Nueva. Image by author.



(Fig. 41) South apse ceiling. Church at Calatrava la Nueva. Note the multi-colored stone. Image by author.





(Fig. 42) Plain, undecorated capital and corbels  
at Calatrava la Nueva. North aisle. Image by author.





(Fig. 43) repeated rosettes on the window tracery of the west end of the church at Calatrava la Nueva.  
Image by author.



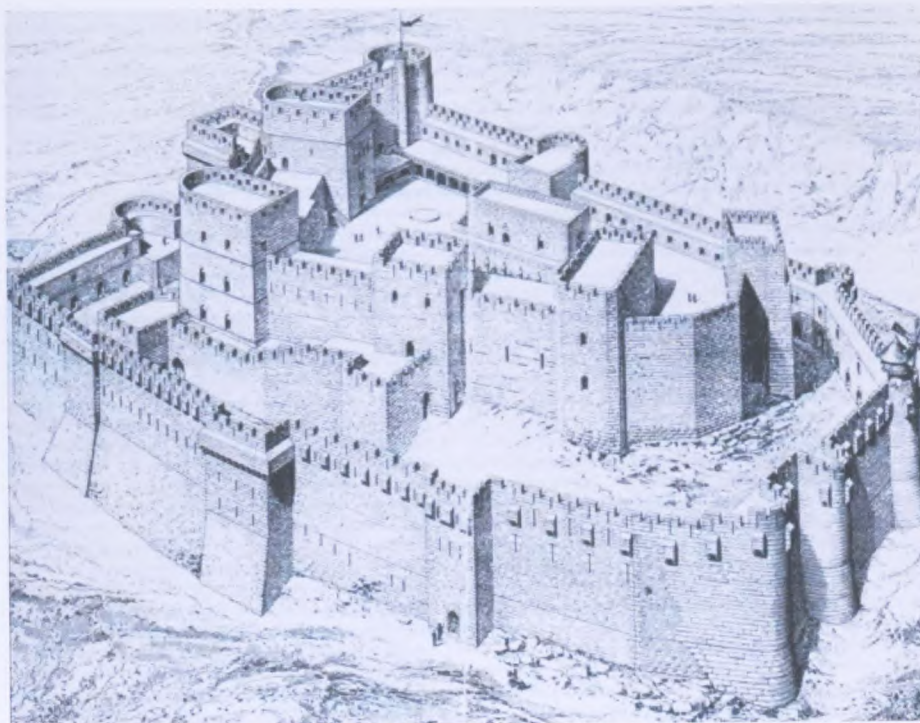
(Fig. 44) Mudejar-style window connecting the north apse to the central apse. Calatrava la Nueva. Image by author.





(Fig. 45) Mudejar tile-work in the window connecting the south apse with the central apse. Calatrava la Nueva. Image by author.





(Fig. 46) Artist Rendering of Krak de Chevaliers. Image from: Enrique G. Blanco, ed., The Rule of the Spanish Military Order of St. James 1170-1493 (Leiden [Netherlands]: E.J. Brill, 1971).



(Fig. 47a) View of the cloister and surrounding monastic buildings from the top of the fortress at Calatrava la Nueva. Image by author.





(Fig. 47b) The scars on the masonry of the south exterior wall of the church at Calatrava. The “monk’s door” is to the right of the frame. Image by author.



(Fig. 48) "Monk's door" into the south aisle of the church at Calatrava la Nueva. Image by author.





(Fig. 49) "The field of Martyrs." The cemetery for the order. Calatrava la Nueva. Image by author.



(Fig. 50) Mill stone excavated from the site of Calatrava la Nueva. Image by author.





(Fig. 51) Roof of the Ovens. Calatrava la Nueva. Image by author.



(Fig. 52) The Cloister at Alcañiz in Aragon, Spain. This was the headquarters of the Order of Calatrava in Aragon. Image by author.