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The Alcazar of Seville and Mudejar Architecture

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Abstract

The Seville Alcazar was an Islamic foundation that received significant additions and renovations in the fourteenth century by Alfonso XI and again by Pedro the Cruel. In both cases the changes were realized in a Mudejar style, reflecting the demographic and cultural continuity of Seville and especially of the artisanal class. But the motivations underlying the selection of this style were different for each monarch. Alfonso celebrated the triumph of his Christian coalition over an Islamic coalition, and commissioning a work of Mudejar architecture allowed him to seize and appropriate a subject Islamic culture in much the same way as he had seized Islamic territory. But Pedro's use of the Mudejar style was less antagonistic, for he was advised by Muhammad V of Granada, who was living in exile under his protection. Pedro had grown up in Seville surrounded by Islamic culture. Thus, his decision to adopt the Mudejar style expressed an important aspect of his own identity that emphasized his Andalusian roots and transcended religious associations.

Medieval Iberia from the eighth through the fifteenth century was a crossroads where two powerful cultures met and intermingled. Christian and Islamic cultures have been contraposed in historical literature as well as popular contemporary description, where differences in religion and cultural practices have been emphasized.¹ Although since the 1980s many historians following in the footsteps of Américo Castro have focused instead on the dynamics of *convivencia* (coexistence), the frontier between the Christian north and Islamic south is still demarcated with a solid line when mapped on paper.² But as all Mediterraneanists know, the existence of political domains (by no means as sharply defined as maps suggest) does not necessarily mean a cultural barrier. There were plenty of Muslims in the “Christian” kingdoms, plenty of Christians in Islamic al-Andalus, and minority Jewish communities in both. Moreover, the Muslim and Christian communities themselves consisted of diverse sects, political entities, and ethnic groups.³ This cultural hybridity is reflected in the architecture and art, from Mozarabic churches like San Miguel de Escalada near Leon, to converted and remodeled mosques such as Cristo de la Luz (Bib Mardum) in Toledo, to Mudejar palaces such as the Alcazar of Seville.

The Alcazar of Seville offers an opportunity to study the different political circumstances and motivations prompting the adoption of a visibly Islamic style in the patronage of suc-

cessive Christian rulers. The palace was built in many phases by Muslim and Christian patrons (Fig. 1). In its present state, it is a confusing mix of richly ornamented courtyards and halls, one style added to another so that the palace can, in some parts, be read like archaeological strata. These halls are surrounded by gardens that are identifiably Andalusí although of indeterminate date. Each of the palace's phases differs in date and style: taifa, Almohad, Gothic, Mudejar, late Renaissance. To some extent this mixture is the natural result of construction that went on for five hundred years in which one style naturally succeeded the other, as one decade succeeds the next. But there is an assumption of inevitability underlying this model that I would like to question, asking instead to what degree such style changes are a “natural” or “automatic” consequence of the march of time, and to what degree they reflect conscious shifts in cultural and political values. If style has meaning—in the sense of giving physical expression to human values and identity—then what meaning can we ascribe to the adoption of Islamicate forms and motifs by the Christian patron of the Alcazar of Seville in the mid-fourteenth century?

The original Alcazar was built in the tenth century in an area outside the old Roman walls of Seville. There are no remains from this period.⁴ When al-Andalus fragmented into multiple princely states (taifas) in the eleventh century, Seville became the capital of the richest and most powerful state, ruled by the Abbadid dynasty (1023–1091). Seville was an advantageous site for a capital because it was situated on the Guadalquivir, the only navigable river in Spain. With access upstream to Cordoba (the former Umayyad capital and still a large city in the eleventh and twelfth centuries) as well as downstream to the sea and trade with North Africa and the Mediterranean, Seville thrived economically and politically. In the Abbadid phase, the Alcazar was expanded westward and the new part was named the Qasr al-Mubarak (Palace of Good Fortune). This part of the palace survived the subsequent expansions and remodelings and formed a principal element in the axial organization of the later Gothic and Mudejar phases.⁵

When the princely states proved too weak to defend themselves against the Christian kingdoms of Navarre and Leon, new, more powerful dynasties from Morocco took charge. The second of these was the Almohad dynasty (1147–1237) from Marrakesh, which adopted Seville as its Iberian capital. In this

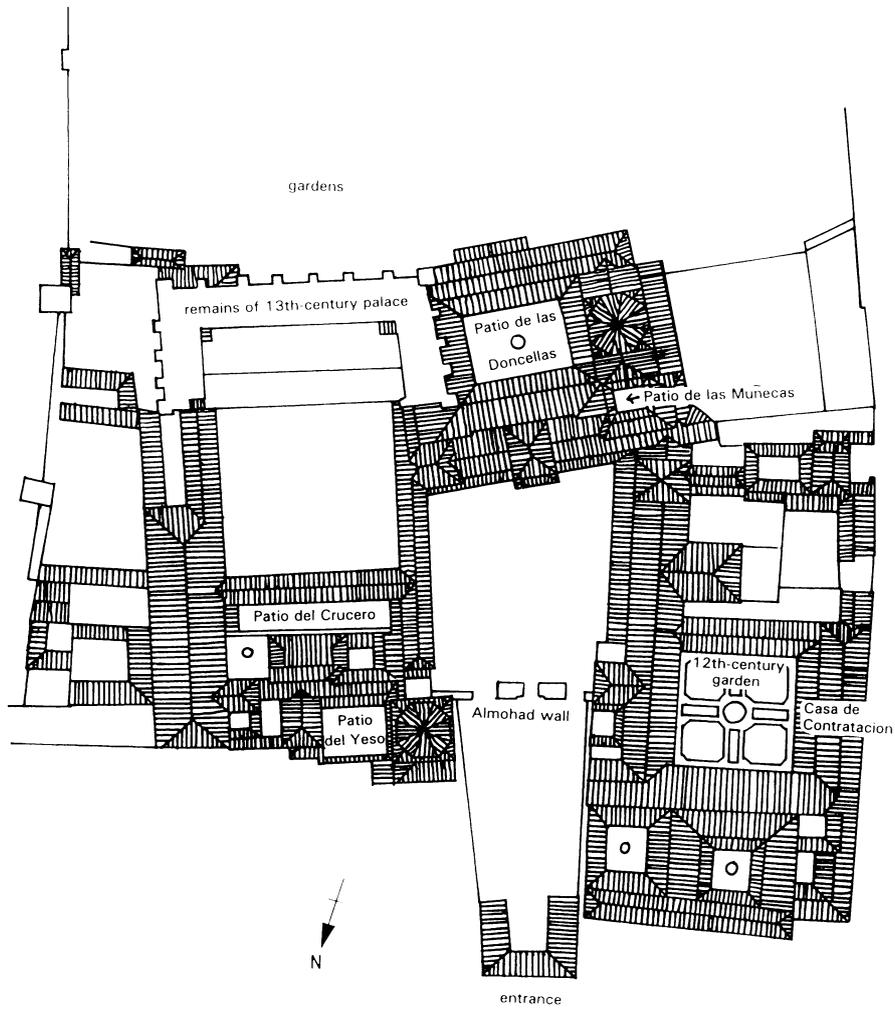


FIGURE 1. Seville, Alcazar, 10th century to present (drawing: author).



FIGURE 2. Alcazar, Islamic garden in the Casa de Contratación, early 12th century (photo: author).

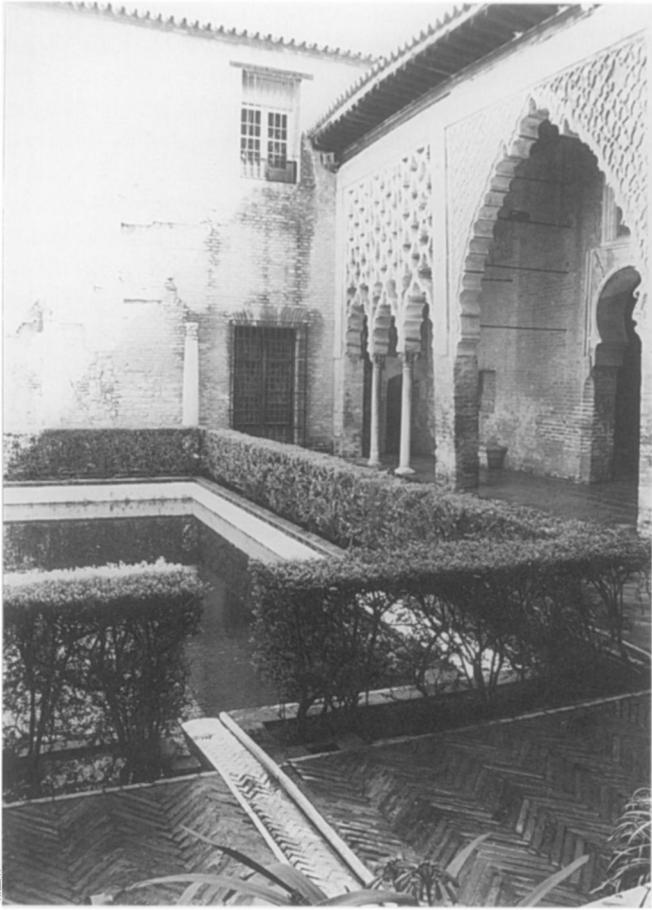


FIGURE 3. Alcazar, Patio del Yeso, late 11th or early 12th century (photo: author).

phase, several handsome gardens were built in the Alcazar, which, together with the outlying gardens, was enclosed by an extensive wall.⁶ One of these was the beautiful four-part garden with deeply sunken quadrants that forms the heart of what is today an office of public works and finances, the Casa de Contratación (Fig. 2). Another is the so-called Patio del Yeso with its rectangular pool and at least two walls preserving their original arches and delicate stucco tracery (Fig. 3). A third garden, now called the Baños de Doña María Padilla, is known archaeologically but buried beneath Gothic vaulting dating to the mid-thirteenth century.⁷ In 1248 Seville was conquered by Ferdinand III of Castile (d. 1252). His son, Alfonso X, called “El Sabio,” made Seville his capital, inhabited the Alcazar, and remodeled it in the Gothic style.⁸

In the mid-fourteenth century a new style was introduced. Alfonso XI (1312–1350), king of Castile-Leon, had won a major victory against the Islamic kingdom of Granada at the Battle of Salado in 1340, and to celebrate he built the Hall of Justice just next to the Patio del Yeso (Fig. 4). This Hall of Justice was an antechamber to the garden and functioned as Alfonso’s throne room. The chamber walls displayed the

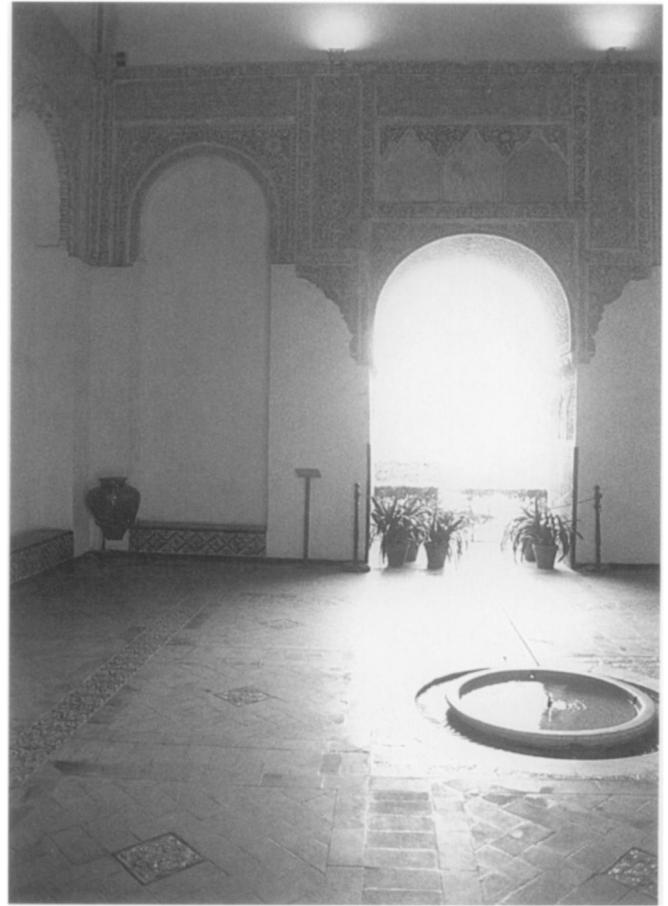


FIGURE 4. Alcazar, Hall of Justice, ca. 1140–1150 (photo: author).

shields of Castile and Leon as well as those of the Order of the Banda, a Christian order of knights created a few years before the Battle of Salado, making the dynastic identity and Castilian patronage affiliations explicit. But the ornamental program of the hall communicated a different association altogether. The walls have a tripartite structure in which either wide central doorways or blind niches are flanked by narrower blind arches. In the center of the chamber there is a low basin with a jet and a channel from which water flows toward the garden and its large tank. The fountain’s intricate stucco with vegetal (*ataurique*) motifs and the arrangement of three arches framed by bands of Arabic inscription were clearly drawn from an Islamic repertoire and would have been read as such by all who visited Alfonso in his throne room.⁹

This use of Islamic motifs in non-Muslim settings is called Mudejar, from the Arabic *mudajjan*, meaning “domesticated,” as in a subject people. The term was first used in 1859 to describe an artistic style, but it derives from a demographic condition caused by the Reconquest.¹⁰ As Christian rulers won larger swathes of territory along the loosely defined frontier



FIGURE 5. *Sahagún, San Tirso, just before 1123 (photo: author).*

that divided al-Andalus from the northern kingdoms of Leon, Castile, Navarre, Aragon, and Catalonia, **entire communities of Muslims stayed on, often governed under surrender treaties.** Although they were subject to new lords, laws, and taxes, not only the individuals but also the social fabric that united them continued intact in many cases. Thus, there was a continuity of marriage practices, names, clothing, cuisine, religious observance, daily economy, city plans, and artisanal expertise.

Significant examples of churches and other structures built in cities with large Mudejar populations evince the ornamental elegance and even the structural typology of Islamic architecture. San Tirso, built just before 1123 in Sahagún (near Leon), is a brick church with a projecting eastern apse whose exterior facade is articulated with stacked rows of blind arches (Fig. 5). This abstract program in which a simple architectural unit—the brick—constituted both the edifice’s structure and its nonfigural ornamentation was typical of Islamic and Mudejar architecture. Similarly, the thirteenth-century church of San Pedro in Teruel (Aragon) has a rectangular brick tower that resembles mosque minarets of al-Andalus. It has bands of sawtooth brick, window arches recessed within multiple frames, and glazed ceramic inlay.¹¹ Such buildings, Islamic in style but built for Christian patrons, are Mudejar.

Among the prevailing explanations for the Mudejar phenomenon, the most sensitive interprets the Christian appropriation of Islamic practices and objects as an act of triumphalism. The question of why Christian kings and church

bishops adopted the visible signs of Islamic culture in their palaces and treasuries has been discussed by Karl Werckmeister and Jerrilynn Dodds, among others, who believe that such appropriations were signs of triumph in which Christianity expressed its domination over a subjugated al-Andalus.¹² This interpretation explains why Christian patrons eagerly adopted Islamic luxury objects and richly colored textiles in such highly charged objects as reliquaries that preserved the remains of Christian martyrs who were killed in al-Andalus for such acts as publicly cursing the Prophet. To use an Islamic silver or ivory box with Arabic inscriptions for the martyr’s relics was a deliberate act of inversion. However, triumphalism does not explain the phenomenon of the Mudejar style, in which Christian patrons did not simply appropriate and convert existing Islamic objects, but actually commissioned new art in the Islamic style.

Furthermore, in the built environment where astounding instances of the Mudejar style exist, the relation of body to object is very different. The architecture is of a scale that envelops human inhabitants and dominates them, not vice versa. Alfonso XI’s throne room contained him, mirrored him, and served as the physical extension of his body and his identity. It could even, in his absence, stand for him as his most visible sign. So why would a Christian king choose an Islamicate Mudejar style for this expression of self? Did he appropriate this style for architecture in the same way that Islamic objects were acquired and used as emblems of conquest?

In many respects, despite the difference in scale, the triumphalist explanation works perfectly well for Alfonso XI and the Hall of Justice. He had built the hall just after 1340, the year he led a coalition of the kingdoms of Castile, Leon, Navarre, Aragon, and Portugal against the combined forces of the Nasrids of Granada and the Merinids of Morocco in the great Battle of Salado, which ended seven years of conflict and subdued the Nasrids. It also greatly enriched the coffers of Castile-Leon.¹³ His Hall of Justice was built to celebrate the victory of a Christian coalition against an Islamic coalition: Seville versus Granada. If the triumphalist rationale holds true, then he chose the Mudejar style for his victory monument because it allowed him to seize and appropriate Islamic culture in much the same way as he had seized and appropriated Islamic territory. The political history of the Iberian peninsula is rife with such contests; however, the lines were rarely so clearly drawn between Muslim and Christian.

For example, a decade later, when Alfonso XI’s son, Pedro of Castile-Leon (r. 1350–1369), occupied the throne, the Christian kings were at each other’s throats while Granada suffered internal feuds of its own. In 1359 Muhammad V, the Nasrid ruler of Granada, was forced into exile, and he took refuge in the Alcazar of Seville. When he regained his throne three years later, he did so thanks to the support of Pedro. Like Muhammad, Pedro needed allies: his French wife, Blanche, hated him and had an adulterous relationship with his stepbrother Fadrique, and his half brother Enrique was

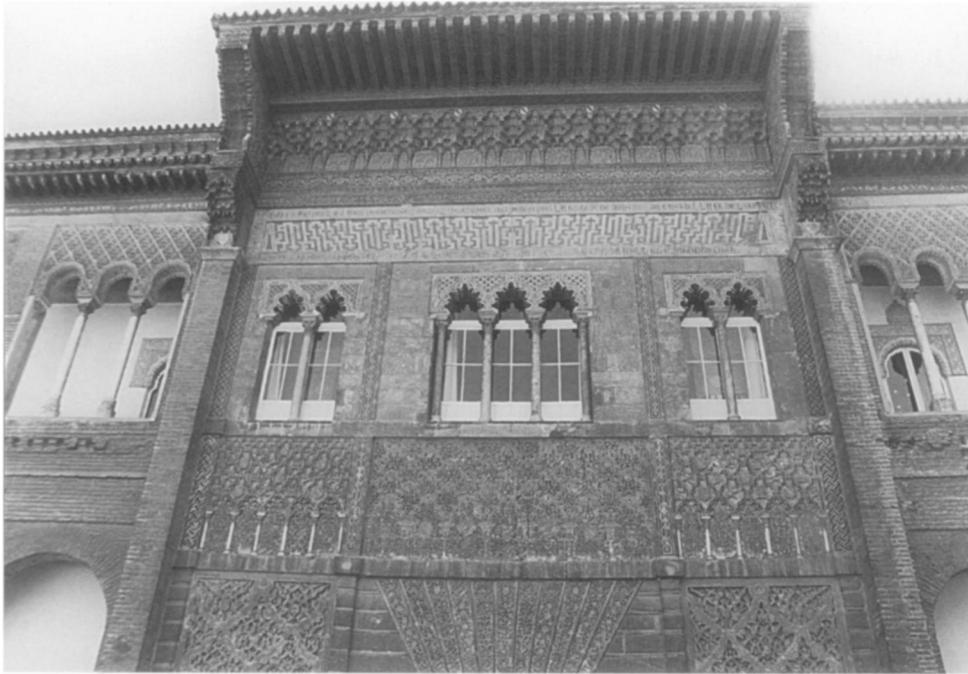


FIGURE 6. Alcazar, Mudejar entrance facade, 1364 (photo: author).

trying to kill him with support from Aragon. The only solution Pedro could seem to find was to try to murder anyone who posed a threat—including Blanche, his aunt, various half brothers, a cousin, and his treasurer. This propensity for using murder to solve political conflict earned him the name of Pedro the Cruel.

In the 1360s Pedro significantly rebuilt the Alcazar. Like Alfonso XI, he too chose the Mudejar style, but unlike Alfonso, he had no triumphalist reasons for doing so. To the contrary, his greatest ally was the Nasrid sultan, Muhammad. Beginning with the Alcazar's monumental facade, whose inscription dates it to 1364, Pedro used a clearly Islamic vocabulary of polylobed arches, splayed vousoirs divided by thin bands of green tile, ornamental stucco in a *sebka* pattern (interlacing arches that extend to suggest a screen), an overhanging eave of wood carved in *muqarnas* (stalactite vaulting), and both Arabic and Latin inscriptions to adorn this entrance into his palace (Fig. 6). The facade is divided into three parts of which the center is largely original while the flanking parts in brick are of later date. The repeating Arabic inscriptions that alternate between the columns of the middle level (between the first-floor door and the second-story windows) read, "The empire for God."¹⁴ In the interlace above are Pedro's emblems: the castle (Castile), lion (Leon), and a sash (Order of the Banda). Above the windows, an Arabic inscription in Kufic script in blue tile reading "There is no Conqueror but God" is repeated four times both right-side up and upside down. Framing this band is a Latin foundation inscription, "The highest, noblest, and most powerful conqueror, Don Pedro,

by God's grace King of Castile and Leon, has caused these Alcázares and palaces and these facades to be built, which was done in the year 1402 [*sic*; 1364]."¹⁵ This provides a beginning date for Pedro's construction. Similarly, an Arabic inscription on wooden doors in the Hall of the Ambassadors provides the end date of 1366. In addition to the date, the long Arabic inscription names Pedro as patron, designates the hall as serving "the honor and grandeur of his ennobled and fortunate ambassadors," and states that artisans from Toledo made the doors.¹⁶

Pedro created for himself a sumptuous palace in the Mudejar style. The fact that it was built in something less than five years suggests that he had a clear vision of what he wanted and that it was carried out according to that well-conceived plan. Everyone who sees the palace is struck by the resemblance to the Alhambra of Granada, from modern visitors to the late-fifteenth-century traveler Jeronimo Münzer, who visited both Granada and Seville in 1494–1495, just a few years after the final conquest of Granada by Ferdinand and Isabel. Indeed, Münzer launched his description of the Alcazar by comparing it with the Alhambra in style and size.¹⁷ The similarity begins with the Alcazar's palace facade, which bears a resemblance to the facade of the Patio of the Cuarto Dorado at the Alhambra (Fig. 7). Although the Cuarto Dorado's architectural frame is older, the stucco decoration of the facade seems mostly to pertain to about 1370—or at least not before 1369.¹⁸ After Muhammad, who had lived at the Seville Alcazar while in exile from 1359 to 1362, was restored to his throne, he sent artisans from Granada to Seville to work on the

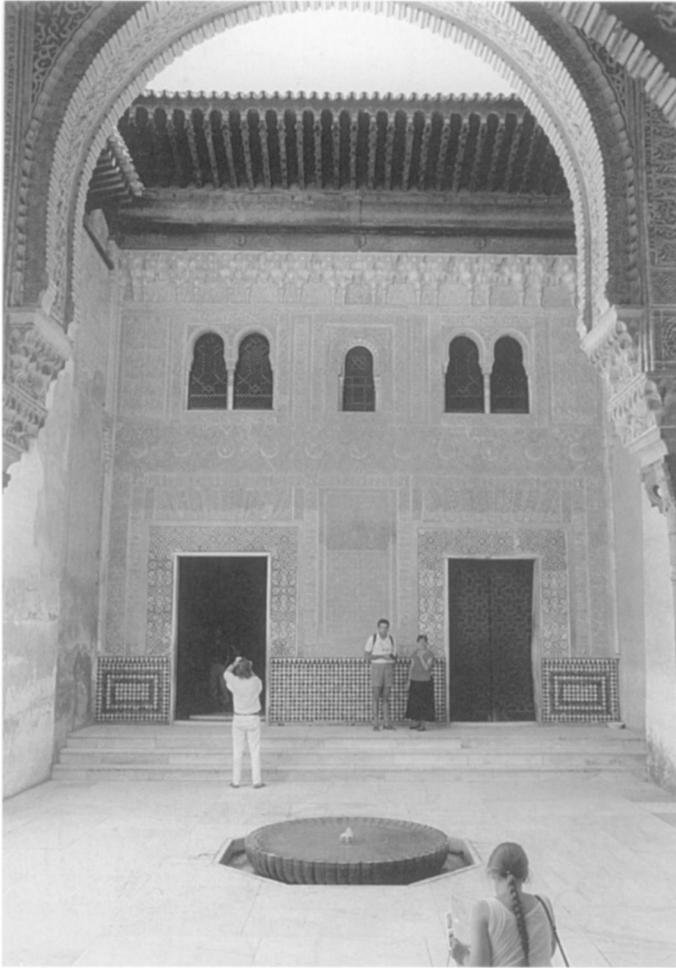


FIGURE 7. Granada, Alhambra, Cuarto Dorado, facade, ca. 1370 (photo: author).

Alcazar for Pedro. It is tempting to identify the Seville facade as a derivative of the Alhambra facade, but since both Pedro and Muhammad were engaged in remodeling their antiquated palaces, it is quite possible that the Seville facade predated comparable works at the Alhambra. Comparisons are complicated by the fact that many of the Alhambra's halls and gardens were remodeled or redecorated not only by Nasrid but also by later patrons, making it nearly impossible to assign a single date to any of the Alhambra's palaces.

The respective chronology of the Alhambra and the Alcazar is complicated and occasionally runs counter to the received wisdom that the Alhambra (and, by extension, Islamic culture) "influenced" the Alcazar (Christian culture playing a passive role as receiver).¹⁹ Some of Muhammad's patronage at the Alhambra clearly occurred *after* Pedro's remodeling of the Alcazar, making it difficult to state precisely which parts of the Alhambra may have served as models for the Alcazar. For example, the Alcazar's Hall of the Ambassadors (Fig. 8),

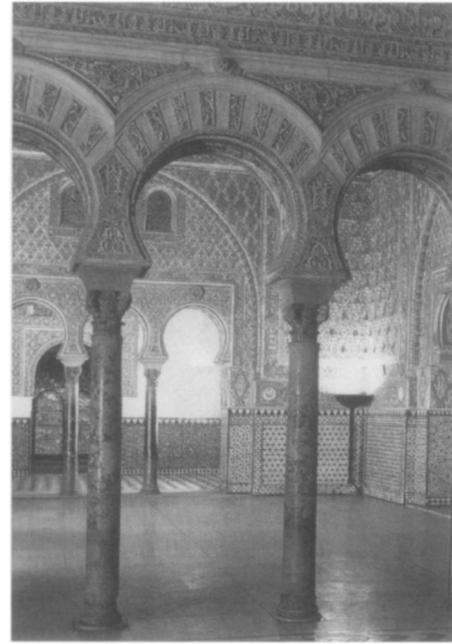


FIGURE 8. Alcazar, Hall of the Ambassadors, redecorated 1366 (photo: author).

which was redecorated by Pedro in 1366, resembles the Alhambra's Hall of the Ambassadors (Fig. 9), which was begun by Yusuf I and completed by Muhammad V. In the Alcazar a colorful glazed tile dado runs along the lowest portion of the walls, the upper portion of which is revetted with richly patterned stucco. At the center of each wall, a rectangular frame encloses a half-round arched frame that encloses a smaller rectangular frame surrounding three horseshoe arches on marble columns. A row of regularly spaced small windows with delicate stucco tracery runs along the uppermost part of the walls. The balconies were added in the sixteenth century and the *muqarnas* dome, which dates to 1427, replaced an earlier dome constructed for Pedro.²⁰ The hall conforms to the architectural typology of an Islamic *qubba* (a domed square, usually open on four sides). With respect to the typology, the balance of tile dado and stucco walls, and the framing of the tripartite scheme of the wall openings, the Alcazar's Hall of the Ambassadors and the Alhambra's Hall of the Ambassadors clearly follow the same or similar models.

At the Alcazar, as at the Alhambra, there is the same reliance on a modular unit of a large, open courtyard surrounded by smaller, roofed chambers. These include the Patio del León and the Patio de las Muñecas, which received two upper stories and a glass roof in the nineteenth century. Principal among these, the Court of the Maidens (Patio de las Doncellas; Fig. 10) has a close architectural relationship with the Alhambra's Court of the Lions (Fig. 11). This hall, as well as others in the Alcazar, has stucco with *sebka* designs, stellar

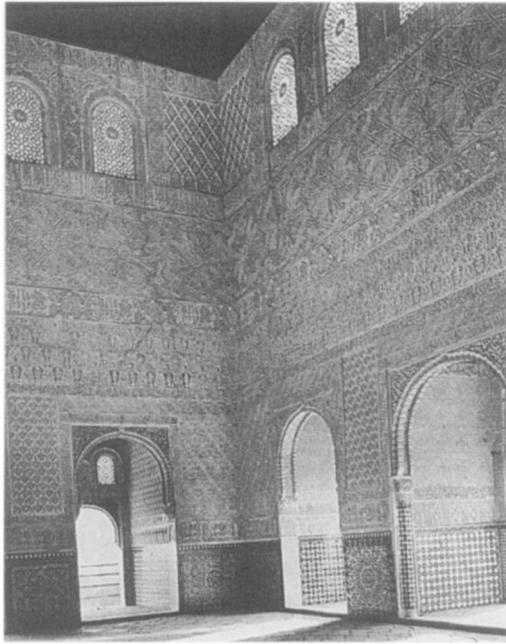


FIGURE 9. *Alhambra, Hall of the Ambassadors, 1354–1370 (photo: author).*

geometry, lozenges with inscriptions, windows with stucco tracery, and *muqarnas* vaulting. The large rectangular courtyard is open to the sky and surrounded by an arcade of pointed polylobed arches resting on double columns that are tripled where extra support is needed in the corners.

Ana Marín Fidalgo, the Alcazar's principal historian, had speculated that the courtyard was originally divided by water channels in a quadripartite (*chahar bagh*) plan and was paved in the sixteenth century when the palace was altered to conform to the taste for Italianate style.²¹ Excavations in 2002 confirmed that the pavement of 1583 covered a Mudejar sunken courtyard from Pedro's era, which in turn replaced an earlier Islamic garden. The Mudejar garden was bisected by paved walkways with a broad channel running down the center and terminating at each end in a rectangular pool (Fig. 12). The walkway was sunk about a meter below the level of the sixteenth-century pavement, and the two symmetrical beds were recessed by an additional four meters.²² The unusual depth and the blind polylobed arcade that wrapped around the inner face of the beds bear a close resemblance to the garden in the Casa de Contratación, which has been dated on the basis of textual and stylistic evidence to the early twelfth century.

Crossed axes in the courtyard are articulated on the arcade by taller, wider arches. These openings lead to side chambers that are axially connected to the courtyard yet spatially separate. Like the side chambers, the arcade is spatially ambiguous, for it defines neither interior nor exterior space but a kind of third space, simultaneously interior and exterior,

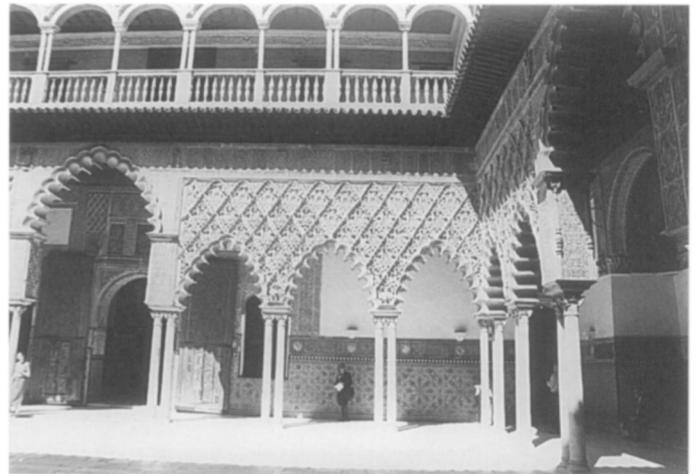


FIGURE 10. *Alcazar, Court of the Maidens before excavation, 1359–1369 with later additions (photo: author).*

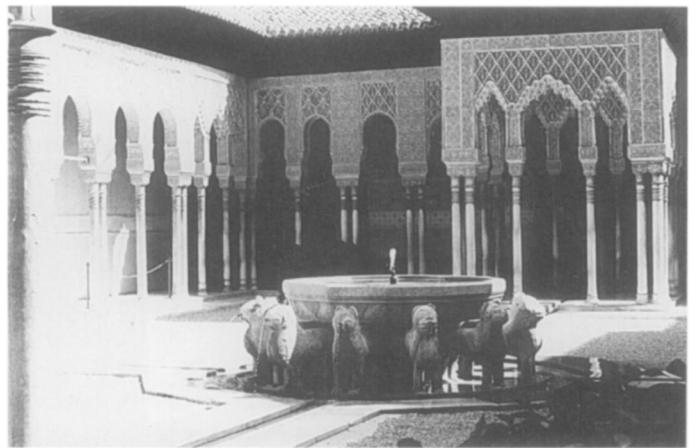


FIGURE 11. *Alhambra, Court of the Lions, between 1370 and 1390 (photo: author)*

that, while typical of Islamic and Mediterranean architecture, was not at all characteristic of the dark, enclosed castles of the Iberian north. The recently excavated courtyard and surrounding architecture resemble not only the garden in the Casa de Contratación but also the Alhambra's Court of the Lions, which also was originally sunk by a depth of at least a meter and a half.²³ The Patio of the Maidens and the Court of the Lions are alike with respect to their surrounding arcades of slender columns in groups of two and three, lacy pierced stucco, the relation of roofed to open space, and the axial relation to side chambers. Here again the chronology is a surprise: the Court of the Lions was built by Muhammad between 1370 and 1390, at least four years *after* Pedro's addition to the Alcazar.²⁴ Hence, the Court of the Lions could not have served as the model for the Court of the Maidens. Instead, the model



FIGURE 12. *Alcazar, Court of the Maidens, excavation revealing Mudejar garden, 1359–1369 or earlier (photo: author).*

could have been the Generalife or the Alhambra's Partal Palace, both built in the first half of the fourteenth century by Muhammad V's predecessors.

The chronology of the halls highlights the complexity of the interchange between these two patrons. Pedro was surely emulating Muhammad, whose Alhambra was an enormous palace that set the standard for opulence, beauty, and comfort in the fourteenth century. Indeed, there are many instances of Christians copying the luxurious architecture and style of living of their Muslim neighbors.²⁵ Unlike smaller Islamic palaces, like the Aljaferia of Saragossa and the Castillejo of Monteagudo, or enormous palace cities like Madinat al-Zahra' that lay in ruins, the Alhambra was a palatine city that continued to dazzle Muslim, Christian, and Jewish visitors for more than two hundred years.²⁶ Moreover, it grew from a plain fortress guarding a small palace to a densely built yet elegant precinct of multiple palaces with courtyards and gardens set within an enclosure wall capped with tower-miradors. There was nothing of such magnitude and luxury in the Christian-ruled kingdoms of the north. However, in the south, Pedro and Muhammad were building roughly at the same time; so much so that it is possible to see the Court of the Maidens as a rehearsal or even progenitor of the Court of the Lions, not as a copy.

One distinctive feature of the Alhambra that the Alcazar lacked was the exploitation of elevations to cause water to flow from one hall to the next. This is a profound difference that most historians and architects do not even notice. But the traveler Münzer mentioned it, noting that while the Alhambra was built on a high hill in a mountainous landscape, the Seville Alcazar sat on a flat plain. This affected not only the flow of water within the palace but also the relationship of the palace with the surrounding landscape. The Alhambra's many gardens and halls had specially designated alcoves (miradors)

for viewing the landscape panorama surrounding the palace. These architecturally constructed views were strategically placed so that the sovereign could look down on the agricultural landscape that he supervised and beyond to the horizon of the kingdom that he ruled.²⁷ At the Alhambra, the view became a metaphor for political centrality and sovereign power. However, the Seville Alcazar was more self-contained. Although this palace complex included extensive gardens, it lacked topographical elevation and thus offered limited opportunities for viewing the landscape from a panoramic perspective. Second-story windows looked into the enclosed courtyards below, and it is possible that the Court of the Maidens enjoyed a horizontal view along the central garden axis that extended into the Hall of Ambassadors at its west end, through the outlying gardens and perhaps beyond, unimpeded by the walls of the modern barracks added long after Pedro's day.²⁸ But it is clear that, because of its site, the Alcazar's architecture could not position Pedro, its Castilian patron, in the same way that the Alhambra's architecture elevated Muhammad and his immediate predecessors. Consequently, Pedro did not gain the actual *performative* strategy of the Alhambra from his Mudejar palace, but rather an associative resonance. In other words, the Alcazar succeeded because its inhabitants had already seen the Alhambra's Cuarto Dorado, Partal, Hall of the Ambassadors, and Generalife and could read it in those terms, despite the difference in landscape and other spatial disparities between the two.

Many visual signs prompted the association between the Seville Alcazar and Nasrid architecture: arcaded courtyards with pools, arches with stucco, the ambiguous inside/outside spaces, and brilliant tile in geometric designs. Both palaces displayed the Nasrid motto in Arabic, "There is no conqueror but God." Finally, Arabic inscriptions in the Alhambra praised the Muslim patron whereas in the Alcazar they praised Pedro. And one of the capitals in the Alcazar, a piece of *spolia* reused from one of the earlier Islamic palaces at the site, was inscribed with part of a Quranic verse (sura 3) that begins "In the name of God: There is no God but God, the living, eternal, self-subsisting, ever sustaining. . . ."²⁹

The inscriptions at the Alcazar are puzzling. Why would a Christian monarch wish his palace to communicate in Arabic and sing the praises of the Muslim god? Such inscriptions are found in other Mudejar environments, as in the Cordoba synagogue (first half of the fourteenth century), where they seem equally out of place. While the Hebrew text clearly dominates on the walls, in less prominent places brief Arabic inscriptions state, "There is no God but God" (Fig. 13). Likewise, at the "El Transito" synagogue in Toledo, built about 1357 by Pedro's Jewish treasurer, Samuel ha-Levi, the shields of Castile and Leon are interwoven with Hebrew and short Quranic verses.³⁰ While from a modern perspective the intrusion of a Quranic verse in a Jewish synagogue appears startling, for the medieval viewer—including Jews who identified themselves as Andalusian—there was nothing contradictory

in the presence of such formulaic phrases that, after all, supported the monotheistic doctrine of Judaism. Similarly, in the Alcazar, the phrases “There is no conqueror but God” and “There is no God but God,” written in Arabic, were perfectly in accordance with Christian beliefs.

The big question here is not why Pedro tolerated Arabic religious phrases in his palaces but why he preferred the Mudejar style and why he chose it for his seat of government. One explanation for the adoption of Islamicate forms is the “default theory.” According to this, Pedro adopted the Mudejar style simply because the artisans of Seville, who were trained traditionally from father to son, knew how to build it.³¹ In other words, he employed the best labor in town—*mudéjares*—who knew how to make elegant stucco, wooden *muqarnas*, delicate arcades, glazed ceramic tile, and sunken gardens with ornamental pools because they belonged to a continuous tradition that dated to the era of Islamic rule. This hypothesis supposes that Arabic theological inscriptions appeared simply because they were in the repertoire of the artisans Pedro employed. But arguing against this is the fact that artisans both from Toledo, who made the doors to the Hall of the Ambassadors and other wooden fittings, and from Granada also worked at the Alcazar. In other words, Pedro did exercise choice in selecting the best among diverse groups of Mudejar artisans skilled in crafts such as stucco work, wood carving, and tile making. The default argument implies a lack of selectivity, whereas the evidence points against this.

The “triumphalist theory,” which we examined above, points out that Pedro’s father, Alfonso XI, had built the Hall of Justice, the first Mudejar portion of the Alcazar immediately after winning a major battle against combined Islamic armies. For Alfonso, Mudejar was a means of appropriating Islamic art to show its subjugation and domestication. However, while the triumphalist argument may explain the initial phase of Mudejar remodeling of the Alcazar, it does not account for the motivations of Pedro. Muhammad was, after all, his ally who had lived at the Alcazar and sent him artisans in an amicable exchange, albeit one in which the respective positions of dominance were well understood. The sultan’s sojourn at the Alcazar seems to have prompted the renovation that occurred two years after his visit. The triumphalist explanation, which persuasively accounts for the use and meaning of Mudejar art objects, does not explain the Mudejar phenomenon in architecture because it cannot logically be argued that Mudejar was a sign of both hostile subjugation and friendly accord.

This suggests another explanation: the Alcazar was really the idea of Muhammad and should be regarded as the Alhambra’s architectural progeny. But we have seen that this explanation, while partially correct, does not work chronologically because the Mudejar phase of the palace was begun earlier under Pedro’s father, and Pedro’s patronage predated much of Muhammad’s patronage at the Alhambra. It also does not explain the enthusiasm with which Pedro embraced the Mude-

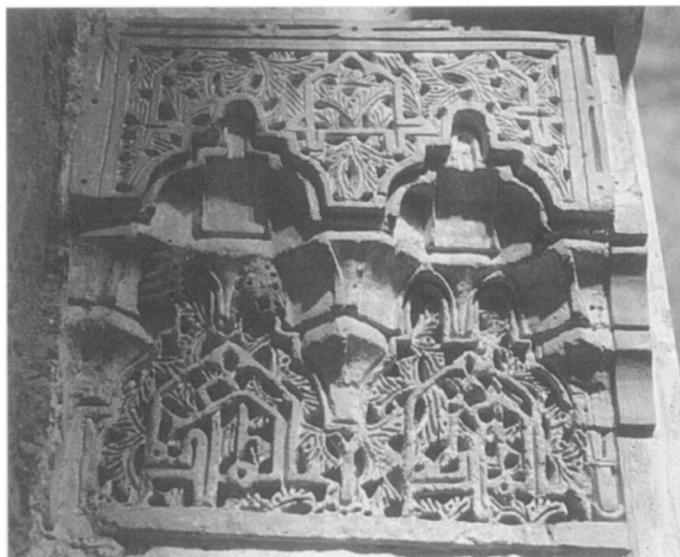


FIGURE 13. Cordoba, Synagogue, Arabic inscription, first half of 14th century (photo: author).

jar, because Pedro remodeled not only the Alcazar of Seville but also the Palace of Tordesillas near Valladolid in northern Spain. The Palace of Tordesillas was built by Pedro’s father between 1340 and 1344 and was remodeled by Pedro contemporaneously with the Seville Alcazar.³² Like the Alcazar, it has delicate stucco, polylobed arches, tile, and many of the decorative features associated with the Alcazar and the Alhambra. Tordesillas shows that Pedro was deeply committed to the Mudejar and that he chose it for reasons of personal taste and meaning.

What an architectural style means suggests yet another explanation. **The Mudejar style may have been attractive to Pedro not only for what it was but also for what it was not: it was not Gothic.** In the thirteenth century Alfonso the Sabio had chosen the Gothic for his renovation of the Alcazar because it was a visible sign of both religious and cultural difference. By choosing the Gothic, Alfonso the Sabio identified himself with the Christian north, the Reconquest, and particularly the pilgrimage trail to Santiago. That road, which stretched from France across northern Spain to the shrine of Santiago de Compostela, gave rise to a chain of churches, cathedrals, and monasteries under the patronage of Cluny, the earlier ones built in the Romanesque style and then, beginning in the late twelfth century, the Gothic style. Gothic cathedrals such as those at Burgos and Leon were impressive works of architecture in which structure and ornament were harmoniously combined, but they reflected the style of Paris more than specifically Iberian architectural conditions. Unlike the Romanesque, Gothic owed little or nothing to Islamic al-Andalus. It was an import whose cultural roots were northern and unequivocally Christian. Alfonso the Sabio, despite his

reputation for great learning and his interest in Islamic knowledge, had a lot at stake in being Christian: after all, when he took the throne in 1252, Seville, which was politically important, and Cordoba, which was ideologically meaningful, had been conquered (or “reconquered” in Christian eyes) only a few years earlier.

In contrast to Alfonso, Pedro was more secure in his role as Christian ruler, perhaps because by the time of his reign, Seville had been in Christian hands for a century. His enemies were not his Muslim neighbors but his own family members, many of whom wished to kill him. Although a hundred years earlier Alfonso the Sabio had espoused the Gothic for its northern Christian associations, Pedro may have spurned it because of its French, non-native, associations. Both Pedro and his father hated the French and had fought bitterly with the church leaders of Castile and the Avignon papacy over their respective marriages and illegitimate children. Pedro had battled for the right to succeed his father as king of Castile and had thoroughly alienated the French when in 1353, after two days of marriage, he abandoned his Bourbon wife, Blanche, and returned to his mistress, María de Padilla. Thereafter the French supported his half brother, Enrique de Trastámara, in a successful campaign to unseat and ultimately assassinate Pedro.³³

Mudejar as an official style for churches and palaces began at the same time that Gothic emerged. Mudejar churches were typically built just off the pilgrimage route, where church patronage was more local, more Spanish than French. In Teruel (Aragon), for example, several churches were built with rectangular brick towers that looked like minarets. The Church of San Pedro (1319, apse begun 1383) had facades adorned with recessed blind arches in *aljimez* pairs set within rectangular frames, *sebka* interlace, and sparkling glazed ceramic inlay (Fig. 14).³⁴ In distinction to the Leon Cathedral (second half of the thirteenth century), which closely resembled such French prototypes as Reims Cathedral with flying buttresses, groin vaulting, stained-glass windows, and tripartite portals with didactic sculptural tympana, the Teruel towers persuasively expressed the idea of “Spanish” identity.³⁵

Nationalism as a concept is generally attributed to the rise of nation-states in the modern period, but in Spain the anxieties about cultural, or “national,” identity began much earlier when, in the ninth century, the Islamic threat had provoked the ideology of the Reconquest with St. James (Santiago) the Moorslayer as its emblem. The saint served not only an evangelical purpose; his figure became a sign of Christian identity and resistance in the face of the more politically powerful and culturally attractive Islamic culture in the south.³⁶ The French invasion in the twelfth century elicited similar anxiety, even though the religion and church politics were Christian. The alternative to the dominance of French culture was to seek an indigenous Iberian identity, and that proved to be Andalusí. This shift in anxieties can be attributed to changes in the domestic political balance that occurred between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. By the mid-thirteenth

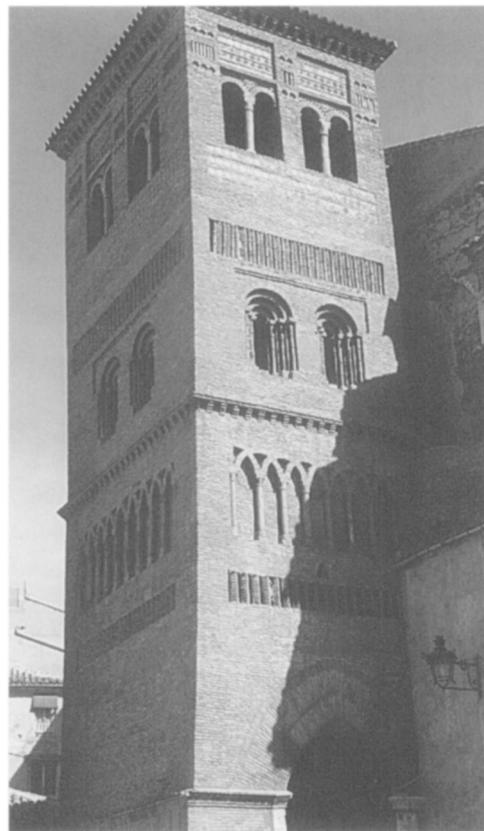


FIGURE 14. Teruel, Church of San Pedro, tower, 1319 (photo: author).

century, much of the Iberian peninsula had been conquered, the political threat of Islam was greatly diminished, and the rulers of newly conquered territories found themselves the stewards of built landscapes that were profoundly Islamic in character. Rather than erase the well-constructed fortresses and city walls and the handsome palaces and mosques that they encountered, the new Christian rulers appropriated these works and converted them to their own use. The degree of respect shown for Islamic buildings is remarkable. For example, after the conquest of Seville in 1248, the prayer hall of the Seville Mosque was not replaced by a cathedral until 1519, and even then the Giralda minaret was preserved and used as a bell tower. And when the Cordoba Mosque was disastrously remodeled beginning in 1523, the architect who gutted part of its interior was severely criticized for poor judgment by his patron, Charles V.³⁷

The Mudejar style was probably adopted in northern Castile, Leon, and Aragon as a form of resistance to increasing French dominance and may reflect divisions in political allegiance among the Christian royal families. As noted above, Pedro may have admired the Mudejar style because it was not Gothic and therefore not imbued with French identity; however, it is also possible that he chose Mudejar because it was identifiably Andalusí—like Pedro himself. By his time, the

Islamic kingdom of al-Andalus had shrunk to Granada and its surrounding lands. The rest of what had formerly belonged to Muslim kings was ruled by the kings of Castile-Leon and by Portugal in the far west, and the surviving Islamic buildings had been converted to Christian use. Pedro himself had lived most of his life at the Seville Alcazar in the shadow of the great Giralda minaret; indeed, he worshiped in a church that still bore the physical form of a mosque, and he had every right to think of himself as Andalusí. In the Alcazar he entertained in gardens from the Islamic period that were laid out in the four-part *chahar bagh* plan, with channels of running water, fountains, and sunken beds with orange trees that grew from cuttings cloned from cuttings that had been brought to the Iberian peninsula by Muslims centuries earlier.

However, although Pedro's architectural taste was for Mudejar, he was willing to patronize the Gothic style in other forms of art. For example, the *Crónica Troyana*, which was begun for Alfonso XI by the court illuminator Nicolas González, was completed in the reign of Pedro.³⁸ This manuscript has Gothic-style paintings illustrating the classical Latin story of the siege of Troy. Clearly, while Pedro enjoyed the Islamic style of opulent living among garden-ed courtyards, he continued to perceive his own historical roots in Europe's classical past. This willingness to patronize different styles in different media indicates that Pedro did not insist on a single artistic policy. On the one hand, the patronage of the French Gothic style in manuscripts can be attributed to the traditional training of workshop masters: artists were skilled in that style and produced accordingly (the "default theory" of artistic production). But on the other hand, the discrepancy between painting style and architectural style can be explained by the difference between the portability of manuscripts and other art forms and the fixity of architecture and landscape. Because architecture belongs to a specific geographic site from which it does not move, it is firmly identified with that place.

And while architectural style can and does move, it often retains its place-specific association.³⁹ Thus, the adoption of Islamicate forms in the architecture of both Teruel in the north and Seville in the south gave those buildings a specifically Andalusí identity. They referred to territory, regional identity, and history—terms that together define "patrimony." Furthermore, architecture can be more localized and particular than a portable object, despite the difference in scale, in the sense that a palace provides the spatial frame for the king as a specially designated individual and his performance of sovereign rule.⁴⁰ As the physical extension of his body, the palace is a unique and, especially when the palace was built by the inhabitant himself, even a personal representation of him.

Pedro's reasons for choosing to model his palace in an Islamic and specifically Nasrid style were complex and manifold. It is important to recognize that in his reconstruction of the Alcazar, Pedro exercised choice. The Alhambra's patron was his vassal and an ally who offered design advice and sent expert artisans for the desired stucco work. But Seville also had good artisans of its own, and experts in wood could be obtained from Toledo. Although the Seville Alcazar lacked the dramatic landscape of the Alhambra, nonetheless the architectural affiliation with the Alhambra was unmistakable. Finally, in addition to the specific local resonance between Granada and Seville, there was the question of how to represent Iberian Christian identity without seeming like a poor French imitation. Pedro's decision to adopt Mudejar was not made by default; rather, it expressed an important aspect of his cultural identity that transcended any religious associations. By the fourteenth century, the Islamicate artistic forms of Mudejar were perceived, not as religious signs, but as cultural expressions that conveyed an emerging sense of "national" identity that, even today, finds its strongest expression in Andalusia.

NOTES

1. A recent example is New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, *The Art of Medieval Spain, A.D. 500–1200* (New York, 1993). The exaggeration of cultural polarities—European versus Arab—is analyzed in S. Fanjul, *Al-Andalus contra España*, 4th ed. (Madrid, 2003), and again in *La quimera de al-Andalus* (Madrid, 2004).
2. A. Castro, *España en su historia; cristiano, moros y judíos*, 2nd ed. (1948; Barcelona, 1983); P. E. Russell, "The Nessus-Shirt of Spanish History," *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, XXXVI (1959), 219–225; T. Glick and O. Pi-Sunyer, "Acculturation as an Explanatory Concept in Spanish History," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, XI (1969), 136–154; New York, The Jewish Museum, *Convivencia* (New York, 1992), ed. V. Mann et al.; New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Al-Andalus: The Art of Islamic Spain* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1992), ed. J. D. Dodds; M. Menocal et al., eds., *The Literature of Al-Andalus* (Cambridge, 2000). However, Jerrilynn Dodds has noted that, until quite recently, historians of the medieval period have marginalized Iberian culture or ignored it altogether (*Architecture and Ideology in Early Medieval Spain* [University Park, PA, 1990], 3 and 118 note 17). For a critique of the most recent books on Andalusí *convivencia*, see M. Fierro, "Idealización de al-Andalus," *Revista de libros*, XCIV (October 2004), 3–6.
3. On ethnicity, see T. Glick, *Islamic and Christian Spain in the Early Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1979); on gender and religious identity, see D. F. Ruggles, "The Mother Tongue: Race, Gender, and Acculturation

- in an Andalusian Dynasty,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, XXXIV (Winter 2004), 65–94.
4. A. Marín Fidalgo, *El Alcázar de Sevilla* (Seville, 1990), 37.
 5. *Ibid.*, 39; A. Marín Fidalgo, “Sevilla: los reales Alcázares,” in C. Añón and J. L. Sancho, *Jardín y naturaleza en el reinado de Felipe II* (Madrid, 1998), 338–343.
 6. Marín Fidalgo, “Sevilla,” 335.
 7. Marín Fidalgo, *Alcázar*, 62; on these gardens, see D. F. Ruggles, *Gardens, Landscape, and Vision in Islamic Spain* (University Park, PA, 2000), 141–147. The dating of the garden in the Casa de Contratación is speculative: it may belong to the late Almoravid period or—especially in light of the recent excavations in the Alcazar’s Court of the Maidens—may possibly belong to the palace’s Mudejar phase.
 8. This part was remodeled again in the sixteenth century so that the Gothic character of the palace, which must have been pronounced in the thirteenth century, was obscured.
 9. The inscriptions are “Allah is the refuge,” “bliss,” “eternal prosperity,” and “Praise Allah for his goodness,” translated in J. C. Hernández Núñez and A. J. Morales, *The Royal Palace of Seville* (London, 1999), 8.
 10. A. de los Ríos, *El estilo mudéjar en arquitectura*, ed. P. Guenon (Paris, 1965).
 11. D. F. Ruggles, “Representation and Identity in Medieval Spain: Beatus Manuscripts and the Mudéjar Churches of Teruel,” in *Languages of Power in Islamic Spain*, ed. R. Brann (Cornell University, Occasional Publications of the Department of Near Eastern Studies, no. III) (Ithaca, 1997), 77–106.
 12. O. K. Werckmeister, “Islamische Formen in spanischen Miniaturen des 10. Jahrhunderts und das Problem der mozarabischen Buchmalerei,” in *Settimane di Studi del Centro Italiano di Studi sull’Alto Medioevo*, special issue, *L’Occidente e l’Islam nell’Alto Medioevo*, XII (Spoleto, 1965), 933–967; J. D. Dodds, “Islam, Christianity, and the Problem of Religious Art,” in *Art of Medieval Spain*, 27–37.
 13. T. Vann, “Salado, Battle of,” in *Medieval Iberia*, ed. E. M. Gerli (New York, 2002), 723; J. C. Ruiz Souza, “Santa Clara de Tordesillas. Nuevos datos para su cronología y estudio: La relación entre Pedro I y Muhammad V,” *Reales sitios*, CXXX (1996), 32–34.
 14. Hernández Núñez and Morales, *Royal Palace of Seville*, 45.
 15. *Ibid.*, 45.
 16. *Ibid.*, 58.
 17. J. Münzer, *Viaje por España y Portugal, 1494–1495*, trans. J. López Toro (Madrid, 1951), 62–64.
 18. M. Jacobs, *Alhambra* (New York, 2000), 87.
 19. For critique of the term “influence,” see Dodds, *Architecture and Ideology*, 3.
 20. Hernández Núñez and Morales, *Royal Palace of Seville*, 58–65.
 21. Marín Fidalgo, “Sevilla,” 342.
 22. M. Á. Tabales Rodríguez, “Investigaciones arqueológicas en el Patio de las Doncellas: Avance de resultados de la primer campaña (2002),” in *Apuntes del Alcázar de Sevilla*, no. 4 (2002) (www.patronato-alcazarsevilla.es; consulted May 2004).
 23. Observed by Manuel Gómez Moreno and reported by J. Dickie, “The Islamic Garden in Spain,” in *The Islamic Garden*, ed. E. Macdougall and R. Ettinghausen (Washington, DC, 1976), 100.
 24. Ruggles, *Gardens, Landscape, and Vision*, 191.
 25. Jerrilynn Dodds has shown that Islamic culture was the envy of northern Spaniards from the tenth century onward, and that the brilliance of the arts, literature, science, and architecture was as much a threat to the north as the religion of Islam or its expansionist political agenda; *Architecture and Ideology*.
 26. For a description of these palaces, see Ruggles, *Gardens, Landscape, and Vision*, chaps. 4 and 7.
 27. *Ibid.*, 181–191; *idem*, “The Eye of Sovereignty: Poetry and Vision in the Alhambra’s Lindaraja Mirador,” *Gesta*, XXXVI (1997), 182–191.
 28. This hypothesis was suggested to me by Mercedes Maier, president of the Spanish chapter of the Mediterranean Garden Society. It is untested, but by plotting the line of vision against modern construction on an urban map, it should be possible to determine where the view stopped.
 29. *Al-Qur’an*, trans. A. Ali, rev. ed. (Princeton, 1988), 51.
 30. F. Cantera y Burgos, *Sinagogas de Toledo, Segovia y Córdoba* (Madrid, 1973).
 31. The names of some of the Mudejar bricklayers are recorded, such as Master Halí and Master Mahomad Agudo. See Marín Fidalgo, *Alcazar*, 89, citing E. Llaguno y Amirola, “Noticias de los Arquitectos” (source of article not given).
 32. The Tordesillas palace thereafter became a convent. On Tordesillas, see V. Lámperez, “El Real Monasterio de Santa Clara de Tordesillas,” *Boletín de la Sociedad Castellana de Excursiones*, X–XI (1912–13); C. García-Fría Checa, “El Palacio mudéjar de Tordesillas,” in *Los Alcázares reales*, ed. M. Á. Castillo Oreja (Madrid, 2001), 73–97; C. Robinson, “Mudejar revisited,” *Res*, XLIII (2003), 51–77.
 33. C. Estow, “Pedro I the Cruel, King of Castile,” in *Medieval Iberia*, ed. E. M. Gerli (New York, 2002), 633–635.
 34. Ruggles, “Representation and Identity in Medieval Spain”; G. M. Borrás Gualis, “El arte mudéjar en Teruel y su provincia,” in *Castillas turo-lenses* (Instituto de Estudios Turolenses, III) (Teruel, 1987).
 35. Similarly, in sixteenth-century Aragon, where the prevailing fashion in private palaces was the Italianate style, Mudejar was the style adopted for public architecture because it expressed the idea of Aragonese patrimony. See G. Barbé, “Mudejarismo en el arte aragonés del siglo XVI,” in *Simposio internacional de mudejarismo, I Actas* (Teruel, 1975) (Madrid, 1981), 166.
 36. J. D. Dodds, “Spaces,” in *The Literature of Al-Andalus*, ed. M. Menocal, R. Scheindlin, and M. Sells (Cambridge, 2000), 89, citing *Crónica general, España sagrada*, ed. E. Flórez et al. (Madrid, 1747–1918), XIX, 331. On the growth of the cult of St. James in general, see P. Linehan, *History and the Historians of Medieval Spain* (Oxford, 1993), 95–127; R. A. Fletcher, *Saint James’s Catapult* (Oxford, 1984). On the continued resonance of the Reconquest in modern Spanish thought, see S. Fanjul, *Al-Andalus contra España: la forja del mito* (Madrid, 2000), esp. 24–54.
 37. L. M. Ramírez de las Casas-Deza, *Indicador cordobés* (Córdoba, 1837), 197.
 38. F. M. Tubino, “Historia Troyana. Códice Historiado del Rey Don Pedro I de Castilla,” *Museo español de Antigüedades*, V (1875), 187–205; P. García Morenos, *Crónica Troyana* (Madrid, 1976). On the subject of manuscripts, I am very grateful to Professor Michael Batterman who sent me a photocopy of the Turbino article and, at the symposium where this paper was presented, posed the question of whether or not artistic patronage is typically consistent across the different media.
 39. For example, the terms “Egyptian,” “Italianate,” and even “Mudejar” refer to styles that are firmly associated with geographic places.
 40. E. Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies* (ca. 1957; rpt. Princeton, 1997).