

POWER AND RURAL COMMUNITIES
IN AL-ANDALUS

Ideological and Material Representations

Edited by

Adela Fábregas and Flocel Sabaté



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NASRID FRONTIER FORTRESSES AND MANIFESTATIONS OF POWER: THE ALCAZABA OF MOCLÍN CASTLE AS REVEALED BY RECENT ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Alberto García Porras
Universidad de Granada

Introduction

Scholarship on the administrative and institutional structure of Granada's Nasrid kingdom has generated a prolific bibliography, including some classic works.¹ Most of this research is based on the written record, without the consideration of other sources of evidence. Archaeology, for example, has contributed little to this process of historical reconstruction, at least until a few decades ago. Indeed, archaeological works focusing on the Nasrid period did not start to emerge until the mid-1970s.

In the 1970s, archaeological research focused on only a few settlements and was concerned with recording construction techniques in residential structures

¹ Rachel Arié, *L'Espagne musulmane au temps des Nasrides (1232–1492)* (Paris: Bocard, 1973); José Enrique López de Coca, 'El período nazari', in Rafael G. Peinado Santaella and others, *Historia de Granada, II, La época medieval: siglo VIII–XV* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 1987), pp. 241–368; Miguel Ángel Ladero Quesada, *Granada: historia de un país islámico (1232–1571)* (Madrid: Biblioteca Universitaria Gredos, 1979).

Abstract: This article aims to analyse the transformation of political structures in Nasrid Granada through the archaeological examination of frontier fortresses. This will be particularly relevant with regard to a specific agent of political power, the *alcaide*, which played a highly significant role in the last centuries of the history of al-Andalus. We use the frontier castle of Moclín (Granada), which since 2010 has been the subject of an ongoing archaeological project, as a case study.



Map 5.1.
Nasrid Kingdom
of Granada and
Kingdom of Castile.
Map by the author.

and, fundamentally, settlement patterns and the social organization of space, paying special attention to the relevant geographical conditions, including the exploitation of natural resources and their relationship with productive structures when they could be identified. Little attention was paid to the political organization of the territory. This kind of analysis was useful in complementing the otherwise deficient information available with regard to the socio-economic structure of the kingdom, but could not be stretched to contribute to our knowledge of its political and institutional characteristics. These shortcomings only began to be corrected in the last years of the twentieth century.

The present article aims to analyse the transformation of political structures in Nasrid Granada through the archaeological examination of frontier fortresses. This approach is particularly relevant with regard to a specific agent of political power, the *alcaide*, which played a highly significant role in the final centuries of the history of al-Andalus. As a case study, this article will focus on the frontier castle of Moclín (Granada), which since 2010 has been the subject of an ongoing archaeological project (Map 5.3 and Fig. 5.1).²

² This is not the first archaeological intervention in the castle. During the 1990s, we also intervened in the castle: Alberto García Porras, 'Intervención arqueológica de urgencia en la zona de acceso en el Castillo de Moclín', in *Anuario arqueológico de Andalucía/1994, III, Actividades de urgencia: informes y memorias* (Sevilla: Junta de Andalucía, 1999), pp. 165–71; Alberto García Porras, 'Excavaciones arqueológicas en el castillo de Moclín (Granada): primeros resultados', in *Castillos y territorio en al-Andalus*, ed. by Antonio Malpica Cuello (Granada: Athos-Pérgamos, 1998), pp. 309–35; Alberto García Porras and Sonia Bordes García, 'Moclín:



Figure 5.1. Modín Castle and the foothills of Granada. Photo by the author.

Castles and Power in al-Andalus

The presence of fortified structures and castles in al-Andalus is a well-known phenomenon which has received the attention of archaeologists and historians for a long time. Several research campaigns have contributed to augment the amount of available information on this sort of site. Initially, this involved studies related to art history and architecture, which focused on the architectural features of these structures, especially if they had played a significant role in some relevant historical event. This included classic works, sometimes written by foreign experts and travellers,³ and much more recent publications, better documented but always aimed at compilation.⁴ These works have considerably contributed to the historical-archaeological knowledge of the different periods of Andalusian history. In any case, some of these works must be highlighted for going beyond the mere architectural aspect and attempting to examine the complexity and meaning of defensive structures; for example, those by G. Marçais, H. Terrasse, and L. Torres Balbás.⁵

un castillo en la frontera Nazarí de Granada', in *II Congreso de Arqueología Peninsular. vol. IV: Arqueología Romana y Medieval*, ed. by Rodrigo Balbín and others (Madrid: Fundación Rey Afonso Henriques, 2000), pp. 641–51.

³ For example Georges Pillement, *Palacios y castillos árabes de Andalucía* (Madrid: Gustavo Gili, 1953).

⁴ Basilio Pavón Maldonado, *Tratado de arquitectura hispano-musulmana, II: ciudades y fortalezas* (Madrid: CSIC, 1999).

⁵ Georges Marçais, *L'Architecture musulmane d'Occident* (Paris: Arts et Metiers Graphiques, 1954); Henri Terrasse, 'Les Forteresses de l'Espagne musulmane', *Boletín de la Real Academia*

Another important historiographical milestone materialized in the writings of the 'French School', organized around the institution of learning 'Casa de Velázquez'. These authors followed the innovative principles set forth by the second generation of the Annales School and were strongly influenced by the impact produced by the introduction of concepts such as the social occupation of space, material culture, and of techniques such as landscape archaeology and territorial analysis. Several of these authors made significant contributions to the study of Andalusí fortified structures: P. Guichard, A. Bazzana, and P. Cressier. All of them had a considerable influence on the development of the incipient field of medieval archaeology in the Iberian Peninsula.⁶

With the support of detailed analysis carried out at the regional level — specifically on the Levante and the Southeast — these authors approached the role played by the castle or *hisn* from a more comprehensive point of view, and thus challenged the traditional monumental or *événementielle* perspective. Their analysis included not only the fortification but also the rural settlements in their area of influence. This settlement pattern was examined in connection with the social structure established in al-Andalus from the ninth and tenth centuries. This was seen, therefore, as a conscious choice for the social occupation of the territory, rather than as an outcome following certain events or military strategies. In P. Guichard's words:

Si analizamos la cartografía de las fortificaciones andalusíes constataremos fácilmente que estas no ocupan principalmente las zonas fronterizas, sino que se concentran, por el contrario, en las regiones de fuerte densidad demográfica. Tampoco dejan de ser piezas de la organización estatal, como acabamos de ver a propósito de los *alcaldes* y de la posible función de la *celoquía*.⁷

If we analyse the cartography of the Andalusí fortresses, we will easily confirm the fact that they don't mainly occupy the frontier points, but that they are assembled, on the contrary, in regions with a high demographic density. These fortresses are still components of the state organization, as we have just seen in the case of the *alcaldes* and of the possible function of the *celoquia*.

de la Historia, 134 (1954), 455–83; Leopoldo Torres Balbás, *Arte almohade, Arte nazarí, Arte mudéjar, Historia Universal del Arte Hispánico, IV: Ars Hispaniae* (Madrid: Plus Ultra, 1949).

⁶ André Bazzana, Patrice Cressier, and Pierre Guichard, *Les Châteaux ruraux d'al-Andalus: histoire et archéologie des husun du sud-est de l'Espagne* (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 1988).

⁷ Pierre Guichard, *Al-Andalus frente a la conquista cristiana: los musulmanes de Valencia (siglos XI–XIII)* (Valencia: Biblioteca Nueva, 2001), p. 290.

And also in A. Bazzana:

[...] es evidente que no se puede limitar el estudio del fenómeno castral en la Península Ibérica al papel estatal o señorial que juega el castillo en el Occidente cristiano. En las sociedades islámicas del oeste del Mediterráneo, hay que subrayar pues el vínculo que existe entre castillo y poblamiento, en el marco — ya durante los primeros siglos de la época islámica — de una sociedad segmentaria fuertemente marcada por las aportaciones árabes y, sobre todo, beréberes.⁸

[...] it is obvious that we cannot limit the study of the phenomenon of the castles of the Iberian Peninsula to the stately or lordly role played by the castle in the Christian West. In the Islamic societies of the western Mediterranean, we should highlight then the bonding existing between castle and settlement, in the setting — happening even during the first centuries of the Islamic period — of a fragmented society highly marked by Arabic and, above all, Berber contributions.

According to this, the location of castles was not based on defensive criteria alone (hilltops, plateaus, rocky outcrops). Other factors were also taken into consideration; for example, the relationship with the surrounding agricultural landscape and nearby water resources. For this reason, a low hill could sometimes be deemed as suitable as a 400 m high rocky platform.

Another frequently highlighted feature of these castles is their horizontality, which stands in sharp contrast with the verticality of Christian fortifications, even though the latter were in many cases built upon the structural foundations of earlier Islamic ones. They are often divided into two areas built at different levels, and they could function as a temporary or permanent refuge. The problem of water supply was frequently solved through the construction of cisterns in different parts of the complex. The integration of these fortified settlements — which were in most cases collectively managed — into the sociopolitical structure of the state was achieved through the occupation, sometimes sporadic and at other times permanent, of the castle's highest and best protected area or keep (*salūqiya*) by garrisons (*quwwād*) and by military magistrates called *qā'id/es* (*alcaldes*).⁹

Although most Muslim fortifications share a few common features, the new perspective introduced by the French authors mentioned above, most particularly A. Bazzana, has shown that different typologies of fortification can be dis-

⁸ André Bazzana, 'Castillos y sociedad en al-Andalus: cuestiones metodológicas y líneas actuales de investigación', in *El castillo medieval en tiempos de Alfonso X El Sabio*, ed. by Angel Luis Molina Molina and others (Murcia: Universidad de Murcia, 2009), pp. 9–40 (p. 27).

⁹ Pierre Guichard, *Al-Andalus frente a la conquista*, pp. 278–90.

cerned in the Levante on the basis of their function.¹⁰ This includes the urban citadel or *alqasaba*, a walled and raised enclosure separated from the rest of the citadel; the frontier castle, located in strategic spots and around which the rural population tended to concentrate; defensive structures associated with stable rural landscapes; refuge-castles, located in inaccessible mountainous regions or far away from communication routes or important settlements; and finally fortified houses, located in the highest parts of isolated communities for the defence of their inhabitants. The latter were normally associated with some larger castle. The list should include watchtowers placed in strategic spots or regions under Corsair or Christian threat, essentially the coast and open farmlands near the frontier.

The framework presented by these scholars was, however, somewhat rigid, as originally pointed out by M. Acién in his discussion of the earliest Andalusí fortifications. The model was subsequently extended to later periods. Acién's proposal set forth a more diversified and dynamic model over time, with due consideration to the evolution of castles between the earliest stages and the Nasrid period.¹¹ Nasrid castles were, however, still treated from a generalist approach, without attention being paid to the archaeological context presented by each settlement. A more polished scheme has recently been set forth by A. Malpica, who has carried out exhaustive work on this kind of site.¹² These

¹⁰ Bazzana, Cressier, and Guichard, *Les Châteaux ruraux d'al-Andalus*, p. 107.

¹¹ Manuel Acién Almansa, 'Poblamiento y fortificación en el sur de al-Andalus: la formación de un país de *ḥuṣūm*', in *Actas del III Congreso de Arqueología Medieval Española*, ed. by Francisco Javier Fernández Conde (Oviedo: Universidad de Oviedo, 1989), pp. 135–50; Manuel Acién Almansa, 'Sobre la función de los *ḥuṣūm* en el sur de al-Andalus: la fortificación en el Califato', in *Actas del I Coloquio hispano-italiano de Arqueología Medieval*, ed. by Jesus Bermúdez López (Granada: Patronato de la Alhambra, 1992), pp. 263–74; Manuel Acién Almansa, 'La fortificación en al-Andalus', *Archaeologia Medievale*, 22 (1995), 7–36; Manuel Acién Almansa, 'Los *tugūr* del reino nazarí: ensayo de identificación', in *Castrum 5. Archéologie des espaces agraires méditerranéens au Moyen Âge*, ed. by André Bazzana (Madrid-Rome: École Française de Rome, 1999), pp. 427–38.

¹² Antonio Malpica, 'Los castillos en época nazarí: una primera aproximación', in *Castillos y territorio en al-Andalus*, ed. by Antonio Malpica Cuello (Granada: Athos-Pérgamos, 1998), pp. 246–93; Antonio Malpica, 'Las villas de la frontera granadina y los asentamientos fortificados de época medieval', *Acta Historica et Archaeologica Medievale*, 20–21 (1999–2000), 279–320; Antonio Malpica, 'Las villas de la frontera granadina ¿Ciudades o alquerías fortificadas?', in *Castrum 8. Le Château et la ville: espaces et réseaux*, ed. by Patrice Cressier (Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 2008), pp. 151–73; Antonio Malpica, 'Las villas de frontera nazaríes de los montes granadinos y su conquista', in *Las Tomas: antropología histórica de la ocupación territorial del reino de Granada*, ed. by Jose Antonio González Alcantud and others (Granada: Diputación,

latest authors have partially drawn inspiration from earlier scholars, such as H. Terrasse and L. Torres Balbás, who pointed out that these castles share a distinct construction technique. In the words of the latter:

Entonces se reforzarían de nuevo no pocas cercas y castillos, envolviendo sus muros y torres de argamasa o sillarejo con otras de mampostería, como se hizo en el castillo de Piñar y en la alcazaba de Málaga.¹³

Then, many fences and castles would get reinforced once again, surrounding their walls and towers made of mortar and rough ashlar with others of masonry, as was done in the Castle of Piñar or in the Acazaba of Málaga'

According to this author, this was due to the introduction of artillery in siege warfare:

En los últimos años del reino granadino, ante el desarrollo de la artillería, fue necesario adaptar las antiguas fortificaciones a los nuevos métodos de ataque[...].¹⁴

In the last years of the Kingdom of Granada, faced with the development of artillery, it was necessary to adapt the ancient fortresses to the new offensive methods [...].

While generally agreeing with this idea, M. Acién and A. Malpica, following Ibn al-Jaṭīb, also connected these transformations with a process of refortification of the Nasrid frontier within the framework of a complex constructive programme implemented in the mid-fourteenth century.¹⁵ This programme, promoted by the Nasrid crown, affected fortifications and other significant urban public buildings. This shows a substantial difference between Nasrid fortifications and those analysed in Levante, where rammed earth was the predominant building technique.¹⁶ In Granada several techniques combine, complicating the analysis but also allowing for the identification of changes over time.

2000), pp. 33–136; Antonio Malpica, *Poblamiento y castillos en Granada* (Madrid: El Legado andalusi-Lunberg, 1996).

¹³ Torres Balbás, *Arte almohade, Arte nazari*, p. 179.

¹⁴ Torres Balbás, *Arte almohade, Arte nazari*, p. 163.

¹⁵ The best description and analyses of this process to date have been provided by Antonio Malpica Cuello, 'Entre la arqueología y la historia: castillos y poblamiento en Granada. Estudio de una política edilicia a partir de la Alhambra', in *XXII Semana de Estudios Medievales. Estella 1995. Tecnología y Sociedad: las grandes obras públicas en la Europa Medieval* (Pamplona: Gobierno de Navarra, 1996), pp. 289–326.

¹⁶ André Bazzana, 'Éléments d'archéologie musulmane dans l'al-Andalus: caractères spécifiques de l'architecture militaire arabe de la région valencienne', *Al-Qanṭara*, 1 (1990), 339–63 (pp. 360–61).



Figure 5.2. Aerial view of Moclín Castle (Moclín Archaeological Project).
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Other innovations, also according to these authors, were the systematic incorporation of certain elements into the fortresses built during this period; for example, new systems to access the enclosure, achieved through having one of the towers integrated into the walled precinct, the so-called Torre Puerta, and the development of keeps. In truth, neither of these elements was new, and some examples from previous periods are attested, especially during the Almohad period. Their more general use is, however, typical of Nasrid defensive building practices (Fig. 5.2).

Many authors believe that such changes were heavily inspired by the fortifications built across the frontier:

Es novedad de esta época, tal vez debida a la influencia cristiana, la existencia de una (torre) prominente, que no aparece en las fortificaciones hispanomusulmanas anteriores. En vez de estar aislada, en el centro del recinto, como en las occidentales, los granadinos la emplazaron en uno de sus ángulos.¹⁷

¹⁷ Torres Balbás, *Arte almohade, arte nazarí*, p. 163.

A novelty in this period, perhaps due to Christian influence, is the existence of a prominent tower, which doesn't appear in the earlier Muslim-Hispanic fortresses. Instead of having an isolated tower in the middle of the enclosure, as happens in the West, the Granadians located it in one of the corners.

In the current work, however, and after carefully considering one of these elements, I argue that more significant factors may have played their part.

At any rate, and following A. Malpica, it should be pointed out that the changes undergone by these fortresses were not restricted to the introduction of new architectural elements, but also extended to a shift in how these structures were conceived, which probably occurred before the constitution of the Nasrid frontier and which involved the incorporation of urban elements into the fortresses. These transformations did not go unnoticed by the Christians, who thereafter often recorded such fortifications as '*villas*'.¹⁸

The Alcaldes at Nasrid Frontier Fortifications: The Keep at Moclín Castle

Moclín Castle

The name Moclín Castle refers to a double-wall circuit. The outer, which encircles the southern face of the hill, marks the location of the medieval village, where remains of different types of buildings (houses, granaries, etc.) have been found, especially towards the eastern side, less affected by the road which gives access to the church and the castle's upper precinct. The inner (upper) circuit, on the other hand, encircles the hilltop. Some partially visible features stand as a first indication of the spatial distribution within (Fig. 5.3). The presence of two different constructive techniques, representing two different phases, is also easily discernible.

The first of these techniques involved the use of rammed earth, apparently reinforced with lime plaster. As it is found only in the upper circuit this is almost certainly indicative of the earliest construction phase. The second technique made use of masonry courses intercalated with rubble and reinforced with large ashlar blocks. A parapet built with lime concrete ran along the top of the wall. This construction technique was used for the erection of the lower and most of the upper circuits. This technique, which gives the castle remarkable structural homogeneity, is in our opinion connected to a second construction phase aimed at the refortification of the castle.

¹⁸ Malpica, 'Las villas de la frontera granadina', p. 169.

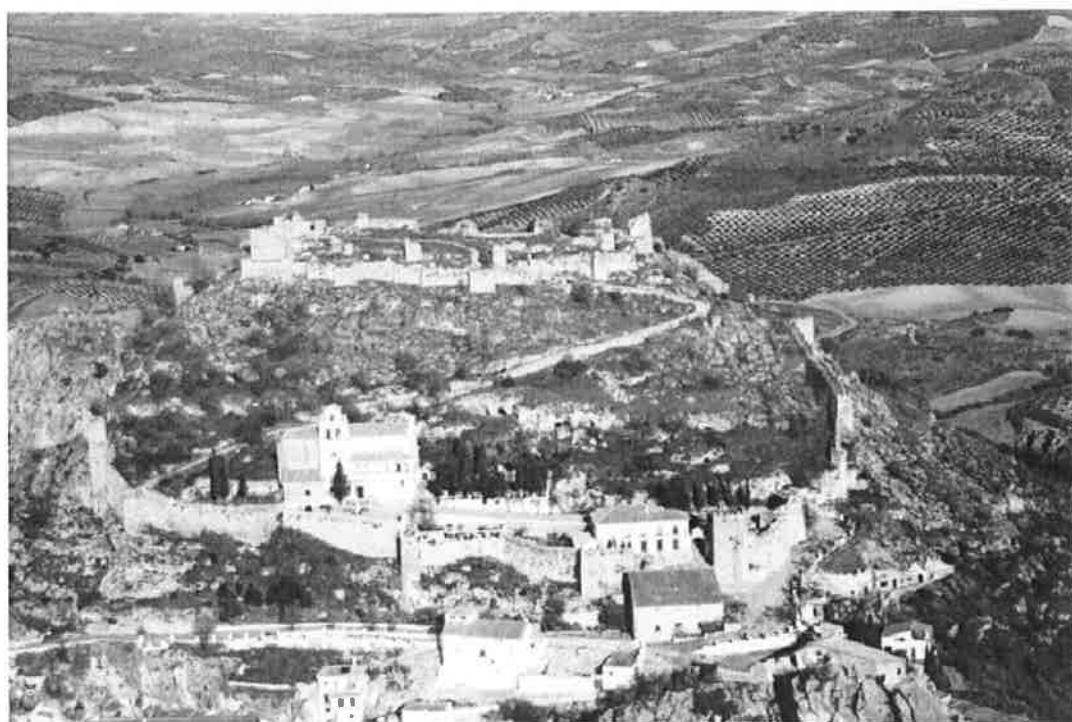
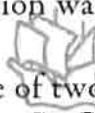
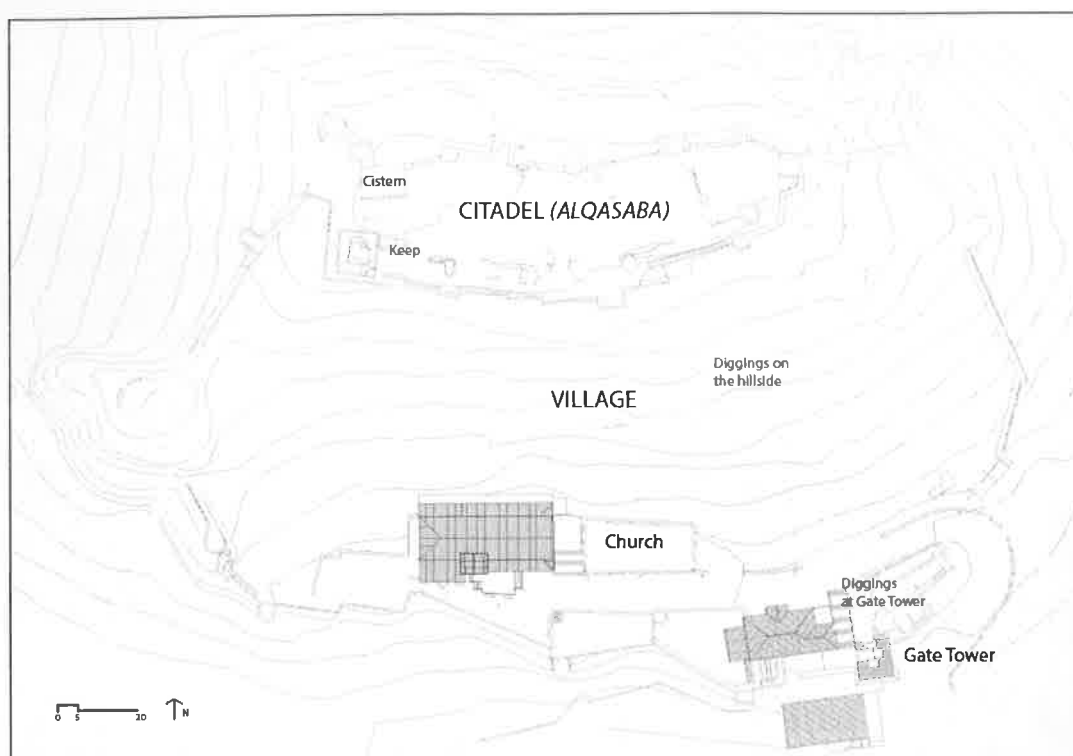


Figure 5.3. Aerial view of the Citadel or *Alqasaba* of Moclín Castle (Moclín Archaeological Project). Reproduced with permission.

The present work is mostly concerned with the upper circuit, which in itself consists of a double-walled precinct. One of these is entirely built of masonry and rubble, whereas the other includes several structures erected with rammed earth. The latter is fully encircled by the former. The outer complex must be divided into several sectors, one towards the south, the rectangular towers of which are set slightly ahead of the line of the walls (zigzag disposition), and another towards the north, supported by solid towers with alternate circular and rectangular planes. Regarding the inner circuit, mention has already been made of the presence of the rammed earth technique in the walls and also in other elements, such as the quadrangular keep and the large cistern, which abuts the northern face of the wall (Map 5.2). Access to the cistern is gained through a small barrel vault open in the cistern's southern side. The inner walls preserve the remains of the partition wall that divided the space within two parallel vaults.

Finally, mention must be made of two relevant elements within this inner precinct: a polygonal flanking tower, at the westernmost end of the northern wall, and the pre-wall located under the latter. The interior is once again divided into at least two easily discernible parts. One covers the westernmost





Map 5.2. Moclín Castle. Map reproduced with permission of the Moclín Archaeological Project

two thirds of the complex, and is built over a higher rocky outcrop which often rises above the surface. The most important features are located in this area, including the keep, the two cisterns and the polygonal tower. This is also the area where the rammed earth technique is most common (it is found in the keep, the largest cistern and the southern towers). The easternmost sector, on the other hand, contains fewer significant elements, at least at first sight. A thick wall, today almost invisible, sharply separates both sectors.

The Keep and its Environs

The following pages record the still preliminary results of the ongoing archaeological project on the castle. The project is being funded by the Spanish *Ministerio de Fomento*, within the framework of the programme '1% Cultural'. The direction of the project is split between Mr José Manuel López Osorio, in charge of restoration and architectural work, and the author of the present article, in charge of the archaeological tasks. The archaeological team has also included Luca Mattei, Manuel J. Linares Losa, and Moisés Alonso Valladares, all of them from the University of Granada, and other members and volun-



Figure 5.4.
The masonry wall
attached to the front west
of the great cistern at
Moclín Castle (Moclín
Archaeological Project).
Reproduced with
permission.

teers within the research group 'Toponimia, Historia y Arqueología del reino de Granada', attached to this same university. The archaeological works were started in late December 2010 and are yet to be completed. The methodological approach closely followed the restoration strategy, since the project involves a constant interaction between both areas. This includes the superficial cleaning of an ample sector to the north of the northern wall, between the wall and the so-called pre-wall, the structural analysis of walls and other features, and excavation around the keep. The preliminary results show several constructive and occupation phases, which will be described presently.¹⁹

¹⁹ Alberto García Porras and others, *Intervención arqueológica en la alcazaba del Castillo de Moclín (Granada). Antemuralla y alrededores de la Torre del Homenaje: informe preliminar* (unpublished, Granada, Delegación de Cultura. Junta de Andalucía, 2011).

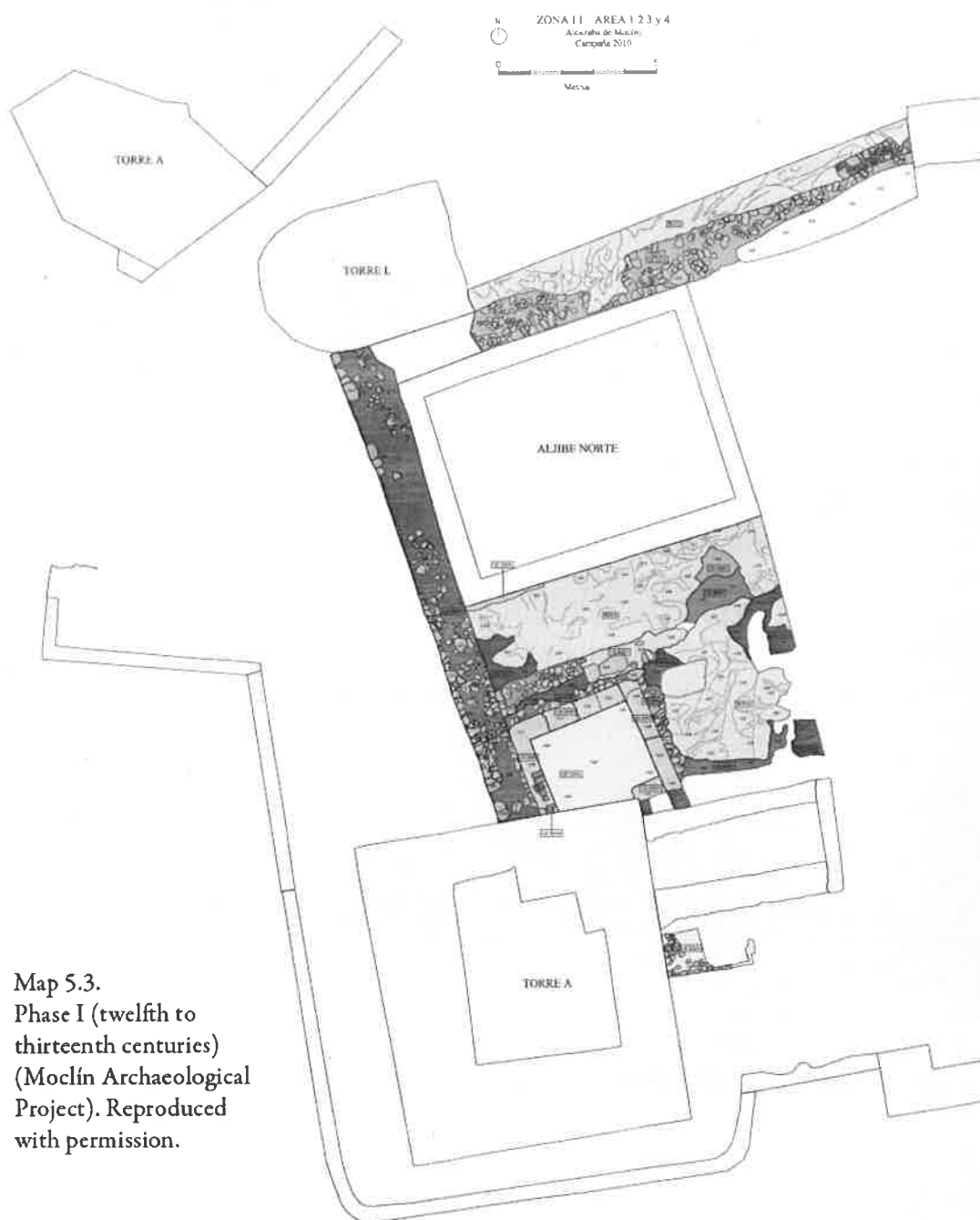
Phase I. Initial constructive stage (late twelfth to early thirteenth centuries)

The archaeological works carried out on the northern wall of the castle have shown that this wall was abutted by the northern face of the largest cistern. Therefore, the northern wall was built before the cistern, which preserves the marks of the former feature's masonry. The western wall of the cistern preserves similar marks. Excavation has shown that another wall, built with simple masonry, runs along this western front of the cistern, joining the northern tower and the keep (Fig. 5.4). A fragment of this wall remains attached to the northern tower, approximately 1.50 m high in the southernmost half, near the cistern, and barely one course high towards the north. This masonry wall penetrates the keep, turning at an angle within. All this suggests that the construction of the keep, and of the large cistern, used the support of the pre-existing masonry wall. The wall turns at this point by 45° towards an east-west orientation. The aperture by which access to the tower is gained today is merely the result of the collapse of the wall. The foundations of the collapsed stretch have been found in excavation (Fig. 5.5).

Therefore, the excavations carried out around the keep have ruled out the possibility of two fully dissociated phases, characterized by the use of two completely different constructive techniques. Instead, both techniques — simple



Figure 5.5. Aerial view of the Moclín Castle keep (Moclín Archaeological Project).
Reproduced with permission.



Map 5.3.
Phase I (twelfth to
thirteenth centuries)
(Moclín Archaeological
Project). Reproduced
with permission.

masonry courses and rammed earth reinforced with lime — appear to have been used in combination in an initial phase of construction. The perimeter of this earlier 'castle' ran from the towers K and L, turning to the south towards the rammed earth foundations of the keep, from which it turns to the east. Several structures have been found within this earlier fortified precinct. An unidentified structure, with a quadrangular plan, built with masonry and a very

solid lime mortar, and attached to the keep. The presence of a substantial layer of mortar suggests some sort of water reservoir, but the already confirmed existence of two other cisterns casts some doubt over this interpretation. It could also be a silo or a gaol, but it will be necessary to wait until further work has been done for confirmation of this. The large cistern was built with rammed earth, probably during this first phase.²⁰

No evidence as to the date of this initial constructive phase has been found thus far. It is certain that construction must have predated the fourteenth century, since the keep was at that time reinforced with a folding structure erected with simple masonry courses and rubble. At any rate, and according to the chronology of other examples of the use of this rammed earth technique — used for the keep and the large cistern, as stated above — the construction of this initial phase cannot be pushed back further than the late part of the Almohad period, if not the beginning of the Nasrid period. As found during the campaign, the rammed earth keep was based upon formwork foundations containing concrete and blocks of stone. The second layer, over which the perimeter walls were built, consisted of rammed earth reinforced with lime. All these elements were laid down within a single constructive phase. Access to the upper stories (although material evidence for this remains elusive) must have been gained through the parapet running along the eastern wall. The dimensions of the keep are substantial, and the rooms within must have had a residential use (Map 5.3).

Phase II. Construction of Moclín frontier castle (mid-fourteenth century)

The next construction phase involved the erection of a castle designed to defend the Nasrid frontier against the Castilian threat, in the mid-fourteenth century. After the conquest of Alcalá de Benzaide, later renamed Alcalá la Real by Alfonso XI in 1341, the Castilian offensive came to a halt for a considerable period. This gave the Nasrid monarchs the opportunity to undertake a programme for the refortification of the frontier which took place throughout the central decades of the fourteenth century and which included the fortress at Moclín.²¹ L. Torres Balbás, making reference to this process, pointed out that many formwork walls and towers were reinforced with masonry, for example in the castle of Píñar and the *alcazaba* in Málaga.²² In our case, the

²⁰ Basilio Pavón Maldonado, *Tratado de arquitectura hispano-musulmana, I, Agua* (Madrid: CSIC, 1990), p. 61.

²¹ Malpica Cuello, 'Entre la arqueología y la historia.'

²² Torres Balbás, *Arte almohade, arte nazarí*, p. 179.

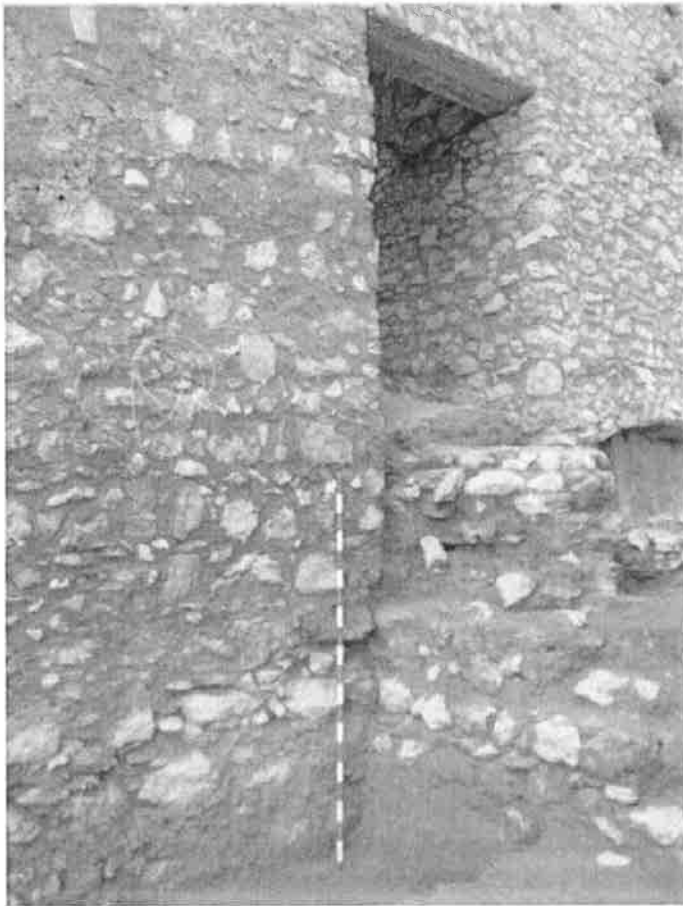
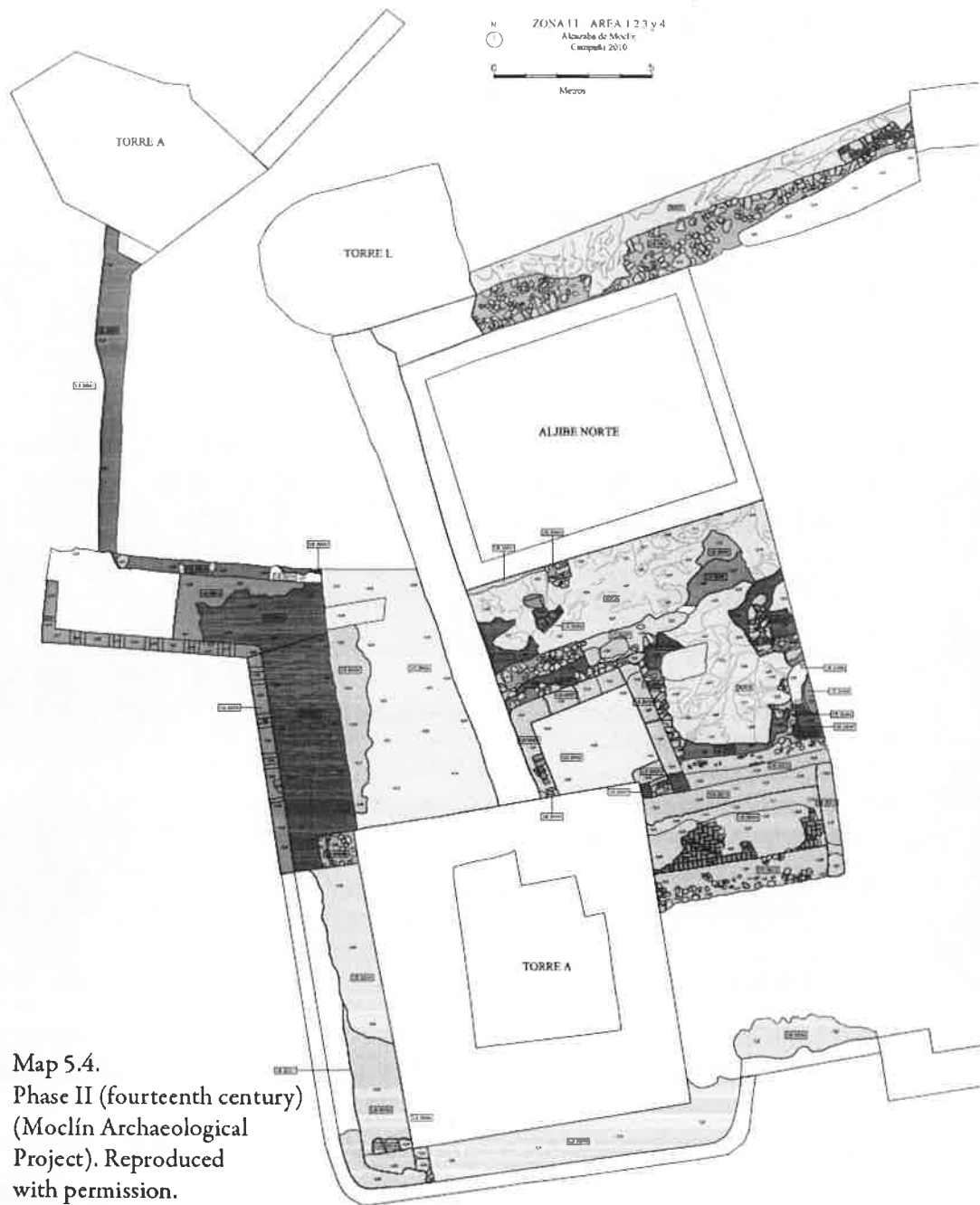


Figure 5.6.
The masonry wall emerging
from the front east of the keep
(Moclín Archaeological Project).
Reproduced with permission.

previous rammed earth buildings were reinforced with masonry structures. The most significant feature of this new phase is the technique employed: simple masonry courses combined with rubble, crowned with a formwork parapet and reinforced with ashlar blocks at the corners. The external lining left the stones visible. This is the technique followed for the whole lower area and the new sections of the upper circuit (Fig. 5.6). Regarding the excavated area, numerous and significant structures were built during this period. These new buildings involved the laying out of a double external wall precinct and the conversion of the rammed earth keep by the addition of an external layer of masonry, as well as the creation of a larger residential space on the top (not preserved). At the same time, the space available for storage was increased with the construction of a new rectangular cistern attached to the eastern face of the keep.

The newly built stretch of wall ran in a zigzag across the southern face of the upper fortification, embracing the keep. These new walls, along the full length of which ran a well-defined parapet, followed in parallel the outline of the previous inner wall around the keep and the western face of the upper castle, creat-



Map 5.4.
Phase II (fourteenth century)
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Project). Reproduced
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ing an extra outer line with the construction of the pre-wall. This conclusion requires further confirmation, which we expect to achieve in the future. The new keep grew out of the previous one, using its rammed earth solid foundations and the masonry wall which still ran across the tower for support. The new phase involved the addition of a masonry outer layer laid in horizontal courses. With the new structure, the tower gained in height and created enough room

for a larger domestic space on the top which is not preserved. Only the scattering of large formwork blocks among the debris suggests the existence of such a structure. All this involves the transformation of a medium-sized tower, integrated within the original wall precinct, into a residential tower with a much more prominent position within the complex, which would also operate as the residence of the *alcaide*. How access to this upper room was gained remains unknown, although the passageway along the top of the wall may have been used for this purpose.

These transformations also involved a considerable increase in the number of vital structures within the castle: two cisterns (the construction of additional cisterns finds many parallels in Andalusí fortresses), silos, etc. This also extends to the area behind the towers, in the westernmost sector of the castle, although we must await completion of the excavation for due confirmation. The larger space reserved for domestic purposes in the keep, plausibly for the *alcaide*, and the increase in storage facilities, which would be vital for the survival of the fortress, seem to point towards a type of building with substantial power over the village and the surrounding landscape (Map 5.4).

Phase III. Transformation after the Christian conquest (sixteenth and seventeenth centuries)

Some partially published written records suggest that the fortress in Moclín was reoccupied after the conquest.²³ The Catholic Queen dwelled in the castle prior to the final victory over the Nasrid kingdom. The names of the Castilian *alcaldes* appointed by the crown are also known. These documents, which are currently under study, also record the buildings which existed during this period (Mirador de Alcalá, Sala del Príncipe, kiln, mill, etc.) and what reforms the Catholics implemented. At any rate, they suggest a bustling activity after the conquest, which must have left traces in the archaeological record.

Indeed, our excavation has been able to confirm the presence of several strata containing material from after the conquest. This suggests the reoccupation of the upper castle during the modern period, although the evidence is insufficient to ascertain the scope of the structural changes introduced. At first sight, they seem to involve the elimination of defensive structures and the transformation of the inner spaces. A more detailed description of these changes would, however, be beyond the scope of the present paper.

²³ Alfonso Gámir Sandoval, 'Reliquias de las defensas fronterizas de Granada y Castilla en los siglos XIV y XV', *Miscelánea de estudios Árabes y Hebráicos*, 5 (1956), 43–72 (p. 62).

Conclusion

The results presented in this paper must at all times be understood as preliminary. The archaeological work, both in the field and the laboratory, is still in progress. This paper set out to show that the Nasrid political structure, especially through its local agents, had an impact on defensive architecture. The implementation of a centrally promoted programme clearly suggests the wish to control territory, population, and resources. The construction of new buildings, such as gate-towers and keeps, is a consequence of the new role attached to these fortifications in the organization of Nasrid landscapes, at the very least along the frontier.

In Moclín Castle, and very likely in other Nasrid frontier fortifications too, the upper structures also served as the almost permanent residence of the local representative of this same central power, as clearly shown by the domestic structures found. On the other hand, the concentration of vital infrastructures around the keep becomes equally evident. The remaining space would be reserved for the military garrison. From our perspective, these changes need not be directly related to the transformation of the power accumulated by these political agents, which seems to predate them. Their economic and political power over the castle's jurisdiction was considerable, but not as absolute as it was across the border.

The role played by the *alcaldes* in the Nasrid kingdom remains to a large degree unknown. The scope of their military, legal, and economic power is not known in detail, although the material manifestations of their power seem to point towards a considerable freedom in the management of their frontier territories. In the specific case of Moclín, we know that a few years prior to the conquest, in 1463, the position of *alcaide* was in the hands of a prominent family from Granada, the Banū al-Qabšanī,²⁴ who possessed properties in the *vega* around Granada and who had previously held the office of *alcaide* in other fortresses (Baza, Ronda).²⁵

²⁴ Rafael G. Peinado, 'Los Banū al-Qabšanī: un linaje de la aristocracia nazari', *Historia, instituciones, documentos*, 20 (1993), 313–53.

²⁵ Miguel Jiménez Puertas, *Linajes y poder en la Loja islámica: de los Banu Jalid a los Alatares (siglos VIII–XV)* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2009), pp. 178–79.

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