

The eloquence of ruins¹

ESTHER ALMARCHA NÚÑEZ-HERRADOR

Translation by Valerie Magar

Abstract

Ruins have always been and are very present in the environment of human beings. Their presence at certain times and places has been part of the political, social, and cultural discourses, as well as their elimination or concealment. A reflection is proposed, in line with the text by Nicholas Stanley-Price, on two periods of contemporary Spain: the early years of Francoism and democracy. These provide scenarios in which ruins and actions that are made around them lead us from their material aspect to an entire series of signifiers.

Keywords: ruin, restoration, reconstruction, monumental heritage.

Ruins can speak...

In its number 14 of the month of July 1939, the journal *Haz*² published an anonymous article entitled "The eloquence of the ruins." It contained an extensive photographic report of the destruction of the buildings of the university campus of Madrid, which was one of the frontlines during the Spanish Civil War. It appeared accompanied by a series of reflections of what the University had been, and what it should be from that moment onwards. Although the materiality of the buildings is not considered beyond the images, it does open a path for us to reconsider it in line with the text by Nicholas Stanley-Price, with an eye towards the processes of the ruin and reconstruction in Spain during the dictatorship and then in democracy (Figure 1).



FIGURE 1. "LA ELOCUENCIA DE LAS RUINAS". Image: *Haz*, 2ª época, julio 1939: 60

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² *Haz* journal was a university publication linked to the Spanish University Union (SEU) and it was attached to the National Delegation of Press and Propaganda of the Falange, which allowed it to be published on a very high quality of paper, photographs, and layout. It had four periods with different runs (1935-1955).

Everyone knows that the relationship of the human being with ruins has had notable fluctuations, especially from its aesthetic perception (Marí, 2005: 13-21). It is evident that they do not leave us impassive, but in some way their fundamental virtue is to be a physical testimony of the past. They assume multiple values that range from evocation to sadness, from seduction to the apocalyptic gaze of what has happened. To face them we have multiple possibilities of analysis (Gómez de Terreros y Pérez-Prat, 2018), but we are going to limit it here to the reconstruction of ruins in specific cases corresponding to two very different periods in the history of heritage conservation in Spain.

Among all the images of ruins, the ones that move us most vividly are those in which the evidence of the tragedy is recent and the viewer sees it as something personal. Furthermore, as Walter Benjamin indicated, multiple reproduction media can make them present, especially in the case of photographs. The society that is initially overwhelmed by the horror begins to accept them as part of their daily lives, and they become just one more image (Sontag, 2003). Since it is virtually impossible to cover all the cases that arise concerning this topic, for this conversation it is interesting to select a case such as the postcards that circulated in Europe during World War I and the post-war period. They present a clear preliminary record of the moment that we are going to analyze (López Torán, 2017: 299-300). Many aspects were embodied in them and the barbarism of the fight was not set aside; a very large number of postcards were published on both sides. The aim was to show clearly and forcefully the damage caused to cities and monuments (Figure 2). The one that we have selected allows us to venture into a substantial number of the issues that concern us; the destroyed church appears next to the hamlet that surrounds it and the same view is inserted in smaller scale in the upper right corner as it was before the bombing. There were others in which slogans such as “German barbarism”, or other similar words, were introduced.

Thanks to the publication of these images, a dialogue parallel to the conflict in which the belligerent countries participated was established from the start of the war and which undoubtedly constitutes one of the most interesting aspects of those years. At the same time, they allowed Germany to be presented to the entire world as the new barbarians who committed all kinds of atrocities against culture, represented in this case with the direct attack on heritage³ (López Torán, 2017: 299)

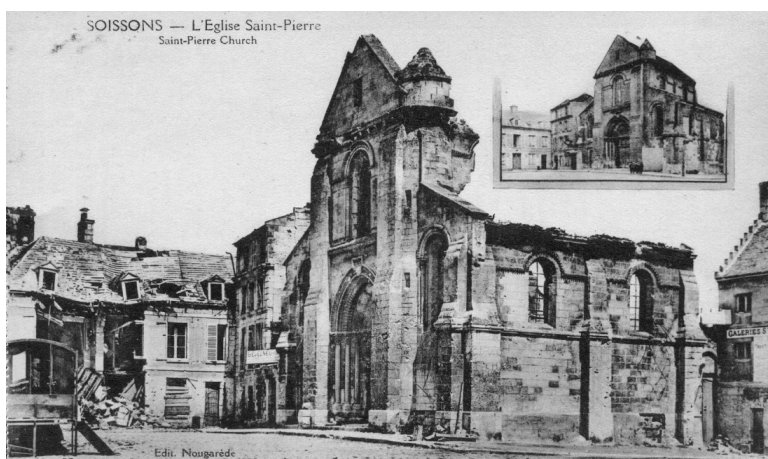


FIGURE 2. SOISSONS. L'ÉGLISE SAINT-PIERRE. SAINT-PIERRE CHURCH. Image: Postcard, Edít Nougarede, private collection.

³ Original quotation: “Gracias a la publicación de estas imágenes se instauró desde el inicio de la contienda un diálogo paralelo al conflicto en el que participaron los países beligerantes y que sin duda constituye uno de los aspectos más interesantes de aquellos años. A la par, permitieron presentar a Alemania ante el mundo entero como los nuevos bárbaros que cometían todo tipo de atrocidades contra la cultura, representado en este caso con el ataque directo hacia el patrimonio.”

We can clearly observe perfectly articulated promotional campaigns, in which both image and text facilitated their impact and also opened the door to reconstruction and restoration policies to “heal” and try to forget.

During the Spanish Civil War, there were especially significant moments that the Francoist government converted into symbols, with their corresponding ruins. The advertising mechanisms were very similar to those of the Great War; they included the “epic” of the Alcazar of Toledo and the battles of Brunete (Madrid) and Belchite (Zaragoza), enclaves of the New State that had to be an example for the New Spain. The memory of what happened during the conflict was addressed antithetically, but for a similar purpose.

After the uprising of July 18 in Spain, a confrontation began in many areas, among which we should highlight an intense war propaganda throughout all media within the framework of strict military censorship. Thus it was possible that, once firmly established in power, a monolithic doctrine loaded with falsehoods, inventions, biased interpretations, and manipulations was achieved. Eighty years after the conflict, they are still present in different media and in historiography. It is not now a matter of analyzing the question of the nature of the Regime, or the suffering it caused, but the use of these symbolic landmarks for decades. The reconstruction of Spain, also accompanied by intense propaganda work, generally achieved its goals, but at a significant cost, especially of a social nature.⁴

The epic of the Alcázar

The events that occurred in Toledo from the beginning of the Spanish Civil War are well documented nowadays, but Franco’s propaganda converted them into an epic and a symbol, until a myth was created. Moscardó, seeing the control of the city by the troops that defended Republican legality, locked himself in the Alcázar (Figure 3), a building that facilitated defense actions, to await the arrival of military units from the rebel side (Almarcha y Sánchez, 2011: 392-416). The occurrences and the misrepresentations, became one of the emblems of the New State; the ruins, restored at an impressively slow speed, were the special stage of multiple events, from the visits of notable characters who arrived in Spain, to the immersion of crowds at military, civil, or religious acts, all for the sake of the “eloquence of the ruins.” Sometimes stage designs were even planned in which pieces of columns were arranged on top of the carpets (Figure 4). All this was nurtured in parallel by postcard albums that showed the building from different angles, with views from before and after the war, as well as brochures, documentaries, etcetera.

The “liberation” introduced the city to a new situation marked by propaganda work, and the “feat” of the besieged took an important role for decades. In a very early normative action of the rebel faction, in the heat of war, the ruins of the Alcazar were declared as a National Monument with the following arguments:

The old Spanish cities are entitled to and have achieved special respect and decisive protection from the State, because they conform moments of our History, with their urban planning and architectural ensembles, as well as in each of their monuments, there is one of them, the city of Toledo, synthesis of our glories, beacon of catholic faith and script of the Hispanic empire, for which such protection and respet must acquire the category of veneration,

⁴ The reconstruction has been studied in the publications by García Cuetos, Almarcha Núñez-Herrador y Hernández Martínez, (2010; 2012).



FIGURE 3. ALCÁZAR OF TOLEDO. Image: Rodríguez, 1943. Archivo General de la Administración.



FIGURE 4. EVENT IN THE COURTYARD OF THE ALCÁZAR. Image: Rodríguez, no date. Archivo General de la Administración.

*since they can never be proportionate to their exceptional merits. [...] Article 3. Without prejudging the subsequent destiny of the glorious Alcázar and as temporary protection, its ruins are declared a NATIONAL MONUMENT, and in the meantime, no more works can be done in them than those necessary to consolidate what exists, and to enable accesses essential for the respectful visit of the public*⁵ (Decreto, 1937: 497-498).

In this manner, it assumed a variety of epic visions, not only related to the country's history, but also as a reference for other values of the ancient world, as reflected repeatedly in the illustrated journal *Reconstrucción*, published by the Dirección General de Regiones Devastadas y Reparaciones:⁶

*But a new Acropolis has been born into the world with another Parthenon, towards which crowds will come to surrender in humiliation, abiding by the empire of the superhuman. A new Acropolis in which the peaks of courage will be contemplated, and in which the abysses of abjection can be measured. The prodigy of heroism will be admired and understood by the cruelty of the besiegers*⁷ (Arrarás, 1941:7).

On March 9, 1940, Toledo, together with Santiago de Compostela, was decreed a "historical-artistic monument," and on November 9 the Board of Trustees of the ruins of the Alcázar of Toledo was established. The new regime did not have a clear policy regarding the reconstruction of the building. If we carry out a detailed study of the process, we can see very different proposals within the government structure regarding the projects and rhythms of the works, which, in a way, allow us to understand the paradoxes of the period. From an early date, very expensive tasks for the removal of debris were carried out by forced labor, with the purpose of adapting the ruin to make it accessible for visits that allowed the continuous presence in the media, and thus achieving a first-order element in the creation and maintenance of the myth. Finally, the decision was made to rebuild the building, based on the assumptions of an image of the Alcazar dating from the 19th century in a stylistic restoration similar to many carried out in that period (Almarcha, 2015: 108-113). The project and works were organized by the Army Corps of Engineers in a very slow process that leads us to wonder about the reasons, if they were of an economic nature or if they evidenced an express desire to maintain a scenery of the ruins in order to reinforce the myth; thus the visitors, high dignitaries or humble citizens, could contemplate the ruin and its laborious recovery (Figure 5).

⁵ Original quotation: "Si las viejas ciudades españolas merecen y han de lograr especial respeto y decidida protección del Estado, por ser ellas con sus ordenaciones urbanas y conjuntos arquitectónicos, así como en cada uno de sus monumentos, instantes de nuestra Historia, hay entre todas una, la ciudad de Toledo, síntesis de nuestras glorias, faro de la catolicidad y guion del hispánico imperio, para la que tales protección y respeto deben adquirir categoría de veneración, ya que nunca podrán ser proporcionados a sus excepcionales merecimientos. [...] Artículo tercero. Sin prejuzgar el ulterior destino del glorioso Alcázar y como protección temporal, se declaran sus ruinas MONUMENTO NACIONAL no pudiéndose hacer en ellas, entre tanto, más obras que las precisas para consolidar lo que existe, y de habilitación de accesos indispensables para la respetuosa visita del público."

⁶ General Directorate of Devastated Regions and Reparations (note from the translator).

⁷ Original quotation: "Pero ha nacido al mundo una nueva Acrópolis con otro Partenón, hacia el que vendrán las muchedumbres para rendirse humilladas, acatando el imperio de lo sobrehumano. Una nueva Acrópolis en la que se contemplarán las cumbres del valor y en la que se podrá medir los abismos de la abyección. Se admirará el prodigio del heroísmo y se comprenderá éste por la crueldad de los sitiadores".



FIGURE 5. VISIT OF A GROUP OF FRENCH TOURISTS TO THE ALCÁZAR, 1951. Image: Centro de Estudios de Castilla-La Mancha (UCLM).

The project was there, down to the last detail since 1944, as we can see in the different documents: memories, plans, reports... and in Spain since the 1950s, spectacular construction processes of less symbolic significance were carried out... and yet, in our case-study, everything was slowed down. But, finally, in 1972 the works were finalized. A long process, in short, almost as long as the life of the dictator that is visible even completely mythically reconstructed (Hernández, 2014: 307-348).

It is evident that the reconstruction responds to its symbolic value for the dictatorship; it is an emblem that slowly recovered its previous uses linked to the army. At present, dependencies such as the Regional Library and the Army Museum coexist in the building together with military units. The arrival of democracy introduced strong tensions that perfectly represent the complexity in the reassignment of symbolisms linked to totalitarian regimes, as clearly shown in Spain by the *Ley de Memoria Histórica*.^{8,9}

The ruins in the aftermath of the battle

Wars set different battle sites for history; in order to understand the use of reconstruction and ruin in Franquist Spain, there are two small towns, Brunete and Belchite, the very mention of the names of which cause us to recall very significant moments of the confrontations.

In Belchite, the representation of the ruins can be viewed as an emblem. They become the example of the struggle in an apocalyptic vision in which human beings disappear, in this case to live in a new town built nearby. From the beginning, the voices of the regime at all levels saw the possibility of its use. A Belchite cleric, linked to the rebels, indicated:

The ruins of Belchite, school of patriotism and civic virtues. If the theme of the destruction of Belchite was not so deeply tragic, we would say that the ruins of this town lend themselves to being a place of objective tourism. The Spanish

⁸ Act of Historic Memory (note from the translator).

⁹ It is pertinent to indicate how such a referential element for all the populations of Spain during the dictatorship, the monuments to the fallen have been disappearing, but it maintains its memory on postcards (Almarcha y Villena, 2019).

pilgrims, in time, will come to the old Belchite as the true patriots go to visit the ruins of Numancia [...] When the war finishes, an obligatory excursion for the older children will be a necessity, as well as a talk by their teachers on the symbolism of such holy and precious ruins. What better teaching? It does not matter that the new city is not built on the ruins, since these are duly closed with a surrounding wall, they would always remain for posterity, a living monument of the race (Teira, 2006: 68-69).

The constructions became ruins over the years, but at the same time they were endowed with new elements that reinforced their symbolism, such as the inclusion of the everlasting cross of the fallen, which was even transformed over time (Figure 6). The clergyman's speech was very clairvoyant; after the "tourists" of the regime, today it is more one of destination, which is promoted by means of the City Council's own website. All kinds of activities are programmed that have motivated actions to accommodate the ruins in order to maintain them and enable safe circulation.¹⁰



FIGURE 6. CROSS OF THE FALLEN AND RUINS. Belchite, 1940s.
Image: Private collection.

¹⁰ Ayuntamiento de Belchite, Oficina de turismo [<https://belchite.es/oficina-de-turismo-belchite/>] (accessed on 19 March 2020).

Brunete represents reconstruction. The Dirección General de Regiones Devastadas y Reparaciones assessed the damage at 97%. This is why it was one of the towns “adopted” by the Head of State in 1939. The new town was designed by José Menéndez Pidal and Luis Quijada. From the beginning it was a very special project, the battle plus its proximity to Madrid made it a perfect showcase for its performances. It clearly represents the reconstruction with totally new planning, articulated through a Herrerian-inspired plaza with a notable presence of granite and regionalist traces on the façades of the houses, but with many approaches in the spaces assumed by the rationalist currents (Almarcha, 2015: 114-121).

The generating nucleus was the church, the only vestige of the previous town, which could have been restored, but it was decided to keep only the façades (Figure 7). Around it there is a religious-social center with a square, the priest’s house and a parish archive. Adjacent is the Plaza Mayor, the highest political-social expression, with the town hall, Party House and entertainment venues. The church and the square formed an easily recognizable silhouette in the region.



FIGURE 7. GENERAL VIEW OF BRUNETE WITH THE RUINS REMOVED, THE CHURCH WITHOUT REBUILDING AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE FIRST HOUSES, 1940. *Image: Private collection.*

One of the most important constants in the “reconstruction” of Brunete, is the marked symbolic character that was given, both to the evolution of the work and to the intended final product, after important modifications of the initial project. The New State did not waste the opportunity of advertising the reconstruction of Brunete. It was used repeatedly in national and international exhibitions, as early as May 1940, in the exhibition of *Reconstrucción en España* held in the rooms of the National Library, inaugurated by Franco; an entire room was dedicated to Brunete with plans, mock-ups, and recreations used as props, etc. It appeared in images of the press, in the catalogue and in the *Reconstrucción*¹¹ journal. Even in the humble catalogue of the Exhibition, the example of the adopted town was once again Brunete. The exhibition had an itinerant nature and passed through different Spanish regional capitals. At the same time, an explanatory sample of the works was installed in one of the first houses built in the settlement, and some of the rooms decorated for such purpose that became a mandatory stop when visiting the population.

¹¹ *Reconstrucción* (1940), an extraordinary number dedicated to the Exhibition on reconstruction in Spain.

The most relevant aspect from the political and symbolic point of view was the succession of visits: the laying of the first stone made by Serrano Suñer in the moments when he held the greatest power, the first visit by Franco on June 16, 1941, on the occasion of the inauguration of the first group of houses, lighting the fire in one of them, as he had indicated when referring to the adopted villages. The official inauguration of the town on July 18, 1946, as well as that of the congressmen of the II National Congress of the Federation of Urbanism and Housing ... and finally the inauguration on July 18, 1946, marking the 10th Anniversary of the Uprising, was the first time that Franco left Madrid on that date, who was accompanied by a large number of items related to the population in those days.

On the day of the inauguration Franco, from the balcony of the Town Hall, made a speech full of symbolic connotations in relation to the principles that governed the reconstruction. The press reported the act in detail, the newspaper *Madrid* reported the following

Brunete has changed its shape, it has been reborn. Nothing remains of the tired and withered old town that raised its miserable mud houses on the furrows of its thirsty lands. Nothing remains, in short, of its irregularity, its mean appearance, its undeniable ugliness. Old Brunete died in the battle that bears its name, and today it seems like a miracle, the smile of a modern and joyful people – sprouting from shapeless ruins and bloody fields (Anónimo, 1946).

The final result clearly shows a new population that is also replicated in the civil dependencies of nearby towns rebuilt at that time, thus generating a clear “Devastated Regions” style.

Reading the ruin

Spain had 10,360 castles according to the inventory of the Asociación española de amigos de los castillos;^{12, 13} depending on how the evaluation of these constructions is made, it is currently close to 2,000, a significant number of which are in ruins, representing an important part of history of the country throughout the centuries. In contemporary times they have had processes that perfectly reflect their symbolic condition and uses of modernity. The Marquis of Lozoya, in the prologue to the edition of *Castillos de España* indicated “Romanticism of the 19th century attracts the attention of the most select spirits towards castles. It was a great fortune that the penury of 18th century Spain made restorations possible in very few cases”¹⁴ (Lozoya, 1967: n.p). There was a very small number of interventions, but the opinion regarding some of them began to change in the 1930s, when the National Tourism Board saw in them two important elements for the development of its policy. On the one hand, its visual imprint on the territory for its campaigns and, on the other hand, the possibility of converting some of them into tourist accommodations. The first *Parador*¹⁵ in a historic building was in the Oropesa castle (Toledo) inaugurated in February 1930, which was followed by the use of fortresses in the 1931 intervention of Ciudad Rodrigo, which had previously been an inn and the practice finally settled during the Franco regime (Rodríguez, 2018).

¹² Spanish association of friends of castles (note from the translator).

¹³ *Asociación española de amigos de los castillos* (2020), Inventario [https://www.xn--castillosdeespa-lub.es/es/buscador-castillos] (accessed on 20 March 2020).

¹⁴ Original quotation: “El romanticismo del siglo XIX atrae hacia los castillos la atención de los espíritus más selectos. Fue gran fortuna el que la penuria de la España ochocentista hiciese que en muy pocos casos fuesen posibles las restauraciones.”

¹⁵ *Paradores de Turismo* is a Spanish public hotel chain. The establishments are located in emblematic buildings or remarkable locations that have been selected for their historical, artistic or cultural values. Some of their accommodations are in buildings that have been declared as Sites of Cultural Interest and others are in historical sites.

The interventions carried out by the state in the framework of the *Paradores* network correspond, as Nicholas Stanley-Price points out, to the justifications for the needs of use for their reuse and tourism promotion. In most cases, they present the preservation of façades and volumes along with some of the most significant spaces. At the same time, there is a significant distortion of the use of the buildings in other areas to resolve housing and office needs. These circumstances have turned their back to the development of legislation, charters and conventions despite the fact that some are in catalogued buildings and therefore subject to complying with the corresponding regulations.

The national symbolic value had its endorsement in the publication by the Franquist state in 1949 of the *Decreto sobre protección de los castillos españoles*,^{16, 17}

One of the notes that give greater beauty and poetry to the landscapes of Spain is the existence of castle ruins in many of its culminating points, all of which, apart from their extraordinary picturesque value, are an evocation of the history of our homeland in its more glorious times; and its prestige is enriched by the legends that popular fantasy has woven around it. Whatever their state of ruin, then, they must be the object of the solicitude of our State, so zealous in defending the spiritual values of our race.

Unfortunately, these venerable remnants of the past are subject to a process of decomposition. Dismantled and without use, almost all of them have become quarries whose constant use hastens the collapses, some of the most beautiful having totally disappeared. Save from exceptional cases, their reconstruction is impossible, as well as mere maintenance works; but it is necessary at least to avoid the abuses that accelerate its ruin (Decreto, 1949: 2058).

In this way all the ruins were placed under the protection of the state; a novel figure that at times has been considered as a de facto declaration of protection, although reality shows that this was not the case. Declarations of Castles as national monuments continued to be made, and the deterioration of the significant volume of protected elements made their conservation or restoration unviable. Some of the castles were adapted by institutions linked to the Regime, such as, among others, the cases of Castillo de la Mota in Medina del Campo (Valladolid), which became the headquarters of the Escuela de Mandos de la Sección Femenina¹⁸ or the Castillo de Belmonte (Cuenca) Frente de Juventudes.¹⁹

Archaeology and reconstruction

As I indicated at the beginning, we have a second moment of analysis of the reconstruction of ruins, undertaken in the democratic period. The promulgation of the *Ley de Patrimonio Histórico Español*²⁰ in 1985²¹ modernized the country's heritage policies, but quickly the autonomous communities, in accordance with the transfers of power received, assumed the need to regulate their territories, each in a specific manner. This situation has generated tensions between the different agents and approaches. Each corresponding ministry began to define possible plans, one of which was the National Plan of Archaeological Parks from 1986 that was legislatively finalized for the first time in Spain by the Junta de Comunidades de Castilla-La Mancha.

¹⁶ Decree on the protection of Spanish castles (note from the translator).

¹⁷ *Decreto de protección de los castillos españoles* de 22 de abril de 1949.

¹⁸ Women's Section of the Command School.

¹⁹ Youth Front.

²⁰ Spanish Historical Heritage Act (note from the translator).

²¹ *Ley 16/1985, de 25 de junio, del Patrimonio Histórico Español*.

The *Ley de Patrimonio Histórico de Castilla-La Mancha*,²² indicated

*When the characteristics of the sites so advise, there will be a trend towards the creation of archaeological parks that ensure the consolidation, recovery and knowledge of the archaeological sites of Castilla-La Mancha*²³ (Ley, 1990: art.18).

With this article an evident didactic and tourist vocation was already shown that surpassed the traditional activity focused on a minority. Likewise, it developed a legal instrument with a specific regional law, the *Ley de Parques Arqueológicos de Castilla-La Mancha*,²⁴ the first in the country to articulate cultural projects linked to parks. In order to understand what the definition of an archaeological site through the figure of the park means for it, we are going to analyze one of the most complex ones, the Alarcos Archaeological Park (Ciudad Real).²⁵ The statement indicated:

The Archaeological Park of Alarcos will be conformed by a nucleus located in the archaeological site of Alarcos and its surroundings, subject to a Ordinance Plan, and the visitable archaeological site called Calatrava la Vieja. Likewise, in the development of the park itself, some other sites accessible to visitors apart from those described in the Ordinance Plan may be included (Decreto, 2003: 11348).

The reality is that under this denomination, two archaeological sites were included, located in three municipal áreas, Ciudad Real and Poblete for the Alarcos site and Carrión de Calatrava for Calatrava la Vieja, with a delimitation in five zones with remains ranging from the Bronze Age to the Middle Ages.

The actions in the two enclaves had begun prior to their inclusion in the archaeological park, but as of the declaration the development changed significantly. In both locations, many of the principles defined for the intervention on the site are widely met. The dominant element is the existence of a set of buildings from Medieval times, with Islamic and Christian occupation, that are articulated by fortresses and habitats linked to them. These spaces were abandoned and thus began their gradual deterioration as they were mainly built using mud wall architecture and masonry. The extraction of stone for other constructions in nearby towns notably unbalanced the structures that finally collapsed.

Alarcos is located on a hill over a ford of the Guadiana river. A settlement is known from the Bronze Age to the Middle Ages, but the most important remains are an important extension of the Iberian oppidum and especially the area of the Medieval castle with Islamic and Christian buildings, very important because of the prominence during the Reconquest, with an important battle named after the place (De Juan, 2013). From this ensemble, there was only one hermitage visible still in use, which was declared as historical-artistic monument in 1980.²⁶

²² *Ley 4/1990, de 30 de mayo del Patrimonio Histórico de Castilla-La Mancha*. Derogada por la *Ley 4/2013, de 16 de mayo, de Patrimonio Cultural de Castilla-La Mancha*.

²³ Original quotation: "Cuando las características de los yacimientos así lo aconsejen se tenderá a la creación de Parques arqueológicos que aseguren la consolidación, recuperación y conocimiento de los yacimientos arqueológicos de Castilla-La Mancha."

²⁴ *Ley 4/2001, de 10 de mayo, de Parques Arqueológicos de Castilla-La Mancha*.

²⁵ *Decreto 95/2003, de declaración del Parque Arqueológico de Alarcos*.

²⁶ *Real Decreto 3095/1980, de 30 de diciembre, por el que se declara monumento histórico-artístico de carácter nacional el santuario de Nuestra Señora de Alarcos, término municipal de Ciudad Real*.

In 1984 the excavations began and the importance of the findings could be quickly seen, as well as the possibilities that were opened to advance knowledge about the period, the battle, etc. that would significantly expand scientific knowledge. Therefore, annual campaigns were developed almost uninterruptedly from 1984 to 2010, when the project was paralyzed with the arrival of the crisis. In recent years it has resumed with interventions of 15 days.

From the first moment and in line with all international regulations and those that were immediately promulgated in Spain, the excavation action was accompanied by the necessary consolidation and restoration, since a rapid loss could occur. The program of these interventions showed the need for craftmanships that were about to disappear, for which the model of the *escuelas taller*²⁷ defined by José María Pérez "Peridis" (Pérez, 2017) was considered the best proposal. It allowed the capacity building on site in techniques such as mud wall architecture and stonework, necessary for the consolidation of the remains and adding them to the development of projects articulated by the scientific team composed of archaeologists, architects, and restorers.

The works carried out in the castle area involved the movement of thousands of cubic meters of earth, which were the degradation of the earthen architecture and the destruction of the masonry. It had been produced basically by the loss of the carved ashlar from the chains of walls and towers caused after the abandonment of the place, which were used in the construction of a new enclave founded by Alfonso X in the vicinity, the current Ciudad Real. The evolution of the deposit in the aerial views of the years 1982 and 2010 shows the process very clearly (Figure 8).

The image is extremely revealing of the activities carried out in the area during 25 years, with the consolidation of the remains of the excavated walls, the recovery of some lines to suggest the volumes in a clearer manner and allowing the entire complex to be perceived without undertaking, at any time, creative reconstructions or restorations in style.

One of the most complex intervention proposals in the complex is the recovery in height of the pentagonal tower in the bow (Figure 9). After the removal of the accumulation of soil, it was difficult to decipher the remains –as can be seen in the image in the intermediate zone– and it was decided to trace it with stones found in situ up to a certain height, in a process close to anastylosis. It is evident that in this way it is possible to understand in a much clearer way what the construction was in volume, rather than in height. During the years in which these actions were carried out, it was incorrectly said that they were rebuilding the castle, when what is evident is that they were removing the earth from what had been its mud walls, that had returned to being earth. Throughout the intervention process, the original part was differentiated from the consolidated one by placing ceramic plaques marked with the name of the archaeological park together with contour marks visible from the outside.

All the processes in its Iberian and Medieval areas are contrasted and disseminated in scientific fields and are the fundamental support for the didactic visit that is complemented by other audiovisual media in a space adjacent to the hill. The transformation of the site into an archaeological park was specified in a doctoral thesis defended by the archaeologist director Antonio de Juan García (De Juan, 2013). In 2003 the park was inaugurated and a fruitful flow of visitors of all ages began, for which different types of visits and activities were contemplated.

²⁷ Workshop school (note from the translator).



FIGURE 8. AERIAL VIEW OF THE CASTLE.
Parque arqueológico de Alarcos (Ciudad Real),
1982, 1995, 2010. *Image: Antonio de Juan
García Collection.*



**FIGURE 9. PENTAGONAL TOWER AT THE
BOW OF THE ALARCOS CASTLE.**
Image: Antonio de Juan García Collection.

The other site incorporated into the archaeological park is Calatrava la Vieja. It is located in a fluvial peninsula of the Guadiana at the top of a hill that allows control of the river. In addition, it is located in the natural passage on the way from Córdoba to Toledo. We find a historical sequence similar to Alarcos with occupation from the Bronze Age to the Middle Ages. It played a leading role as the capital of the region in Islamic times and later as the first seat of the Order of Calatrava until the creation of its fortress in Calatrava la Nueva (Hervás, 2016).

In this case, important remains of the fortress survived, generating a Romantic ruin for centuries, until on June 3, 1931,²⁸ the provisional Government of the Second Republic declared the castle as a historic-artistic monument. A few decades later it was accepted within the generic declaration of the 1949 decree and from the 1960s onwards, and concerns about the state of the castle's remains and the adjoining lands, which were exploited agriculturally led to the expropriation of a significant part of the land. Finally, it was again declared as a Site of Cultural Interest²⁹ in the category of Archaeological Zone in 1992.

The works on the complex began in 1975 with an architectural restoration project by the General Directorate of Fine Arts carried out by architect Santiago Camacho. It was intended to solve the problems generated by areas of stone looting that could collapse the wall faces. Subsequently, there were other interventions by architects Miguel Fisac between 1982-1984 and Jaime Muñoz in 1994-1995 that were already more linked to the archaeological research work by Manuel Retuerce and Miguel Ángel Hervás. Some of the actions of the first period determined specific processes of restoration due to errors of interpretation, use of materials such as concrete formwork or actions in the area of the chapel that were enabled as an interpretation center (Hervás, 2016: 339-341).

Excavation campaigns were followed systematically from 1984 to 2010 with the support of the different employment plans or *escuelas taller*, which allowed the consolidation of the wall structures, the site and the construction of the necessary infrastructures for the development of the archaeological park activities. The criteria that were used were in line with international regulations and legislation, as in Alarcos, although in this case it was necessary to address the elimination of those elements that had been erroneously introduced, and that distorted the perception of the ruin.

The visitor to Calatrava la Vieja finds in the La Mancha plain an imposing construction that looks out and sometimes reflects in the Guadiana; he can know its hydraulic structures and intuit the majestic entrance to the medina. In addition, it is possible to understand how stone was used in its construction, but also the humble boxes for rammed earth walls. Preservation of the few that have reached us has been achieved and at the same time they are didactic with the inclusion in the recovery of the profiles of a rammed earth formwork (Figure 10). As in the case of Alarcos, all new elements are indicated with the ceramic plaques and profiles.

During all these years the process and the findings have been made known and contrasted in scientific fields, in addition to being the support of the didactic visit. It has been the subject of a doctoral thesis defended by the archaeologist Miguel Ángel Hervás Herrera (Hervás, 2016).

²⁸ *Decreto de 3 de junio de 1931, declarando monumentos Históricos-Artísticos, pertenecientes al Tesoro Artístico Nacional, Gaceta de Madrid*, nº 155, 4 de junio de 1931, p. 1182. This was a joint declaration for 789 buildings, some of which are duplicated, and others which had already been inscribed before.

²⁹ *Decreto 60/1992 de 28 de abril, por el que se declara Bien de Interés Cultural, con la categoría de zona arqueológica a favor del yacimiento arqueológico de Calatrava la Vieja en Carrión de Calatrava (Ciudad Real)*. DOCM n.º 37, 20 de mayo de 1992, pp. 1975-1977.



FIGURE 10. DETAIL OF A TOWER OF THE CASTLE OF CALATRAVA LA VIEJA. *Image: Private collection.*

The citizen and ruin in 21st century Spain

It is evident that the ruins, their reconstructions and restorations are part of the landscape that surrounds us. Those of us who are dedicated to heritage issues know the importance of preserving in the most correct way possible what has come to us and we assume the legislation, regulations and all kinds of debates that are generated around them. Even so, we are aware that a very large part of society does not support our discourse, some do not understand why the castle is not rebuilt to be able to see it "as it was" or the reason for our efforts to apply the *Ley de Memoria Histórica* to remove all possible pride of a dictatorial age.

In both cases we are guilty of the false reading of the ruins. There is a total and absolute lack of heritage pedagogy. Culture is not in the public debate; only in the use of the word and very little in the facts. The 2008 financial crisis ended many projects that now seemed to be put back into operation, but the new panorama of the COVID-19 pandemic leaves us with a future full of uncertainties.

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