ALFONSO X'S PATRONAGE
OF GOTHIC ARCHITECTURE

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'cuando dezimos el rey faze un palacio o alguna obra non es dicho porque lo él fiziesse con sus manos, mas porquel mandó fazer e dio las cosas que fueron mester pora ello'

These cautionary remarks from Alfonso X's *General estoria*, offered by way of a parallel for God's 'authorship' of the Ten Commandments, necessarily preface any exploration of the architectural patronage of Alfonso X (Alfonso X 2009: 1, 15; Kennedy 2019: 91-95). Building accounts, records, writs and letters from the reigns of Charles of Anjou (r. 1266-1285), James I of Aragon (d. 1276) and Henry III of England (r. 1216-1272) and their successors record precise details of their financial support for construction, and in Henry's case, detailed meddling in the design and decoration of royal residences and Westminster Abbey (Harper 2016: 154n8; Torra Pérez 2011; Colvin 1963-1975: vol. I, 93-159; Wilson 2008). The loss of equivalent registers from Alfonso's reign means that it is much harder to identify his direct support for building projects, and that the documentary record is either skewed towards cathedrals, the archives of which preserve the vast majority of Alfonsine documentation, or is entirely absent. The chronicle record for Alfonso's reign is also especially poor (Gómez Redondo 2002; Saracino 2017). Moreover, the king's own palaces and fortifications—notably those in Seville, Jerez, El Puerto de Santa Maria, Toledo, Burgos and Segovia—have been modified almost beyond recognition, and thus offer little insight into his particular tastes and preferences (Cómez Ramos 1979: 127-163). And although architecture also features prominently in the texts and miniatures of many Alfonsine manuscripts

(Cómez Ramos 2001: 109-136; Ruiz Souza 2011; Ruiz Souza 2012-2013), pictorial convention and Alfonso's authorial distance mean that these reveal little about the king's own attitudes towards architecture, beyond his recognition that it was incumbent on any ruler to ornament his kingdom with magnificent buildings (Salvo García 2016). Like his Christian and Muslim rivals, Alfonso understood sapiential rule, law-making and building as three intertwined elements of the Solomonic ideal of kingship (Linehan 1993: 498; Fernández-Ordóñez 1992: 40; Kennedy 2019: 16-17; Fierro 2009).

Alfonso's architectural patronage still deserves study, however. As implied by the *General estoria* or the much-debated notion of a 'Court Style' (Cohen 2009), kings could exercise their patronage indirectly, via close members of the royal court. And those who oversaw some of the most important construction projects of Alfonso's reign were at first *very* close to the king, even if relations later soured (Ayala Martínez 2015). In 1254, for example, Alfonso held his first *Cortes* in Toledo, and received there Cristina, princess of Norway; Gaston and Guy, Viscounts of Béarn and Limoges, respectively; the emir of Granada, Muhammad Ibn al-Ahmar; and ambassadors of Henry III of England, ready to discuss a joint crusade to north Africa (Hernández 2004-2005: 178). In that same year Alfonso's half-brothers, Felipe and Sancho, were archbishop-elects of Seville and Toledo respectively (Hernández and Linehan 2004: 67). His sister, Berenguela, was *señora* at the royal Cistercian abbey of Las Huelgas, near Burgos (Reglero de la Fuente 2016). The bishop-elect of Córdoba was Lope Pérez, former *criado* to Alfonso's father (Nieto Cumplido 1991: 141-148). Cuenca was governed by Mateo Reinal, another close associate of Fernando III (d. 1252), and León's bishop-elect was Martín Fernández, Alfonso's notary for León (Palomo Fernández 2002: vol. I, 151-152; Cavero Domínguez 2018: 47-52). So of those bishops who oversaw major building projects during Alfonso's reign, only master Aparicio, bishop of Burgos, and Juan Arias, archbishop of Santiago de Compostela, did not belong to the king's inner circle (Díaz Marcilla 2016). These close connections raise important questions regarding the king's involvement and investment in major building projects (and, by extension, the extent of episcopal oversight of construction), which might be considered in light of Lucas of Tuy's well-known encomium on the rule of Fernando III, in which the building activities of bishops, abbots and friars were supported by the king and depended on his good governance (Lucas of Tuy 2003: IV, lxxxxv, 95; Nickson 2021).

If Toledo's visitors in 1254 hint at the breadth of Alfonso's horizons and ambitions, then comparisons with Castile's rivals and allies also demand

renewed scrutiny of the evidence for Alfonso's patronage and the historiographic traditions that have grown around it (notable studies include Cómez Ramos 1979; Cómez Ramos 2001; Bango Torviso 2009; Ruiz Souza 2012-2013; Karge 2020). For if architectural patronage is strictly defined in relation to evidence of financial contributions, then it can be said that in the second half of the thirteenth century Alfonso X's royal peers almost exclusively patronised military and domestic architecture, palace and funerary chapels, hospitals, and the Cistercian and mendicant orders. With the exception of Alfonso III of Portugal (r. 1249-1279), who elected burial in Cistercian Alcobaça but gave generously to several cathedral works (Brandão 1652, 56-58; Varela Fernandes 2005, vol. I, 295-300), few rulers contributed major sums directly to cathedral construction, which was generally supported by wealthy prelates and chapters (Vroom 2010: 128-129)[1]. This largely holds true of Louis IX of France (r. 1226-1270), whose support for cathedral construction was over-stated in Branner's classic study of the 'Court Style' (Branner 1965; Cohen 2009: 228-37; Cohen 2014; Sandron *et al.* 2020: 24-25), and for Louis's mother, Alfonso's great-aunt, Blanche of Castile (d. 1252), who directed most of her generosity towards hospitals, the Dominicans and especially the Cistercians (Grant 2016: 203-219). The same broad generalisations also apply in the well-documented cases of Henry III and Edward I of England, not least because from John I (r. 1199-1216) onwards the kings of England were all buried in Benedictine churches, and especially favoured Westminster Abbey (Duffy 2003). Although Matthew Paris also applauded Henry III's generosity towards Salisbury cathedral, in this, as in many other cases, royal contributions to cathedral construction did not represent reliable income: like attendance at the laying of a foundation stone or a consecration, most royal donations were symbolic signs of faith in a project. Fulfilled only partially, Henry's promises of support were chiefly designed to encourage others (Carpenter 2011).

In the Latin kingdom of Cyprus, Hugh II (r. 1253-1267), John I (r. 1284-1285) and Henry II (r. 1285-1324) directed their support towards mendicants, but gave no support to ongoing work on the cathedrals of Nicosia or Famagusta, beyond Henry's foundation of a chapel in the former (Olympios 2018: 15, 105-162, 185-205). They also invested (to a limited extent) in fortifications in Nicosia and Acre (Petre 2010: 22, 27, 316). Their enthusiasm for the French *rayonnant* Gothic forms that Branner associated with the 'Court Style'— notably a preference for the multiplication of slender shafts and complex

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[1] For the tenuous links between Rudolph I of Germany (r. 1273-1291) and Speyer cathedral, see essays by Manuel Kamenzin, Matthias Müller and Benjamin Müsegades in Schneidmüller 2019.

tracery designs across walls and large windows—was matched by Charles of Anjou in Sicily and southern Italy. By necessity a castle-builder, Charles also founded and supported Cistercians and mendicant houses, built and decorated 'ad modum franciae' (Bruzelius 1991). Under Charles (but not his son), employment of the *rayonnant* style signalled affiliation with Capetian France and rejection of the building traditions associated with the Hohenstaufens and their Norman and Arabic predecessors in Sicily and southern Italy (Bruzelius 2000). The Hohenstaufen policy of constructing symbolically charged fortifications and new towns (Violante 2008) nonetheless finds parallels in the castles and towns associated with Edward I of England (Colvin 1963-1975: vol. I, chapter 6; Lilley 2014), with Louis IX at Aigues-Mortes and in the Holy Land (Mesqui 2006), with Alfonso III (r. 1249-1279) and Denis (r. 1279-1325) in Portugal (Aguiar 2003), with James 'the Conqueror' (d. 1276) in Valencia (Guinot Rodríguez and Martí 2006: 209-213), and with Alfonso X's own policies of foundation and repopulation, most famously of El Puerto de Santa Maria, celebrated in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* (O'Callaghan 1998: 172-191).

The most telling comparisons lie with Alfonso X's peninsular rivals. Although James 'the Conqueror' was obliged to endow the newly resurrected Valencian Church, he did little to support construction of the new cathedral there beyond the foundation of a chapel in his name (Huici Miranda and Cabanes Pecourt 1976-2017: vol. 2, doc. 419; Burns 1967: 132-134). Beginning in 1273, he also encouraged construction in Huesca of a new cathedral, *more christiano*, overseen by bishop Jaume Sarroca, a close ally, and offered limited funds in support of building (Garcés Manau 2014: 249). His wife, Violante, also founded a chapel in Tarragona cathedral in 1251 (Sanç Capdevilla 1935: 41). But although masons clearly moved between cathedral and royal workshops in the Crown of Aragon, there is no evidence that James the Conqueror or his family gave significant support to cathedral construction (Español 2002: 23; Español Bertrán 2011: 820). Instead, like so many of their European counterparts, royal patrons in the Crown of Aragon invested in their own fortresses, palaces and chapels, and channelled donations towards the Cistercians, mendicants and (to a lesser extent) Carthusians (Español Bertrán 2014: 384-385; Español Bertrán 2011). This is very clear from James the Conqueror's testamentary dispositions of 1272 and 1276, much as it is in the 1270 will of Theobald II of Navarre (r. 1253-1270) (Español Bertrán 2011: 816-819; Fernández-Ladreda *et al.* 2015: 93-99). Indeed, amongst the generous sums he dispersed to monasteries and convents, Theobald's only donation to a secular chapter was 500 mrs to Tudela cathedral; that this was

sufficient to merit inclusion of Theobald's arms in the capitals in the western parts of the nave should caution us that heraldic evidence should not be taken as a sign of royal generosity (Martínez de Aguirre 2006: 165, 183). Indeed, in many cases royal heraldry seems to be an invitation for royal patronage, not an indication of it (Martínez de Aguirre Aldaz 1994: 20).

Such comparisons provide context for Alfonso X's support for the Cistercian monasteries of San Vicente in Segovia and at Santa María la Real in Murcia, where he elected burial (Porras Arboledas 1999; Torres Fontes 2000). He may also be implicated in remodelling of the portals and cloister of the royal Cistercian convent of Las Huelgas de Burgos following the burial there of his heir, Fernando de la Cerda, in 1275 (Abella Villar 2015: vol. I, 160-176). But although it was Alfonso's loyal sister, Berenguela, *señora* of Las Huelgas, who in 1279 helped to translate the body of their mother, Beatriz, from Las Huelgas to the royal chapel in Seville cathedral, the move was certainly a blow to the prestige of the nuns in Burgos (Reglero de la Fuente 2016, paragraph 21). The consecration of the convent's altars, chapter house and cemetery a few months later—overseen by Berenguela but probably orchestrated by Alfonso's wife, Violante—may suggest that ties between Alfonso and Las Huelgas were strained, and in fact he never again acted in favour of the convent (Sánchez Ameijeiras 2009: 259-263; Catalunya 2016: 205-207). Alfonso also showed less favour towards the mendicants than did his European counterparts: with the exception of his foundation in 1266 of Santo Domingo de Caleruega (where his daughter, doña Leonor, was buried in 1275), Alfonso's support was largely restricted to the Dominicans, and extended little further than donations of land for building (*Dipl.*: docs 292, 334-335, 818, 2287, 2301, 2419; González and Aniz Iriarte 1993). He may have played a role, however, in the appointment of his Franciscan confessor, Pedro Gallego, as first bishop of Cartagena, and possibly in that of the Franciscan Pedro Pérez to Badajoz (Pelzer 1964: 192-193; Cómez Ramos 1979: 85-88).

Like James the Conqueror, Alfonso clearly felt obliged to support newly (re)founded bishoprics, and in 1250, as *infante*, endowed that of Cartagena with 10,000 mrs of annual rent (*Dipl.*: doc. 38). His support for cathedral construction has otherwise been over-stated. In February 1253, for example, he offered tax breaks to various clergy associated with Toledo cathedral, prefacing his privilege with a statement of affection for the Toledan Church (Hernández 1996: doc. 489). But these tax breaks, together with numerous other gifts, confirmations and privileges, were directed towards the Toledan Church and its archbishop-elect (Alfonso's half-brother, Sancho), not towards the *obra* (also known as the *opus* or *fábrica*), the financially

and administratively independent institution responsible for building, maintenance and the provision of liturgical necessities (*Dipl*.: docs 93, 100, 101, 104, 107, 249, 251, 253, 260, 340, 341, 343, 603, 611, 680, 1134, 1137, 1472, 1519, 1520, 1695, 2974, 2979, 2983, 3695; Hernández 1993: vol. I, App. 3, doc. 1). Alfonso's favours were undoubtedly welcome, but beyond encouraging other donations, they did little to support construction of the cathedral's presbytery, which advanced rapidly in the 1250s (Nickson 2015: 77-94). Indeed, whereas the Pope made several interventions in support of the Toledan *obra* in the same period (Hernández 1996: docs 486-87, 489; Linehan 1980: 131; Linehan 1971, 169-170), Alfonso merely confirmed (in 1254, and again in 1279) a grant of tithe income first promised by Alfonso VI (Hernández 1996: docs 494, 497). On most other occasions the problem was that Alfonso retained control of tithes normally destined for church building, and assigned to him only temporarily to support crusades (Linehan 1971: 111-116; Linehan 1970; Linehan 1980).

The ambiguous nature of Alfonso's patronage is especially evident in relation to Burgos cathedral. Again, early in his reign he confirmed a series of ancient privileges for the Church of Burgos (Karge 1995: 57). In 1257 he also donated land to the north and south of the cathedral, and ordered clearance of the square to its west, before 'la puerta mayor, por o reçiben los reyes en procession' (Karge 1995: 45-49). But there is no direct evidence that Alfonso contributed towards construction of Burgos cathedral, and he did not visit once between 1257 and 1269, missing the cathedral's consecration on 20 July 1260 (Karge 1995: 50; *Dipl*.: doc. 1578). How then, should we interpret the proliferation of castles and lions (the heraldry of king *and* kingdom) on the *Puerta Negra* that gives access to the cloister, with crown-bearing angels above (Fig. 1)? Or the determinedly Parisian forms of the tracery in that cloister, probably carved in the 1260s (Fig. 2), or indeed echoes of sculpture in Paris or Meissen in the remarkable sculptures of kings, queens, *infantes* and bishops that adorn the walls of the cloister and upper parts of the cathedral? (Deknatel 1935: 316-317; Karge 2017). One view holds that this was all carefully planned by Alfonso X in celebration of the marriage in Burgos in 1269 of Fernando de la Cerda and Blanche of France (Hernández 2012). An alternative interpretation suggests that, faced with growing competition for royal favour, this was a desperate attempt by the bishop and chapter of Burgos to remind Alfonso of his father's affections for Burgos, and of the cathedral's special place in Castilian history (Abegg 2003). Alfonso is crucial to either interpretation, but in one he is choreographer-in-chief, in the other he has the royal box.
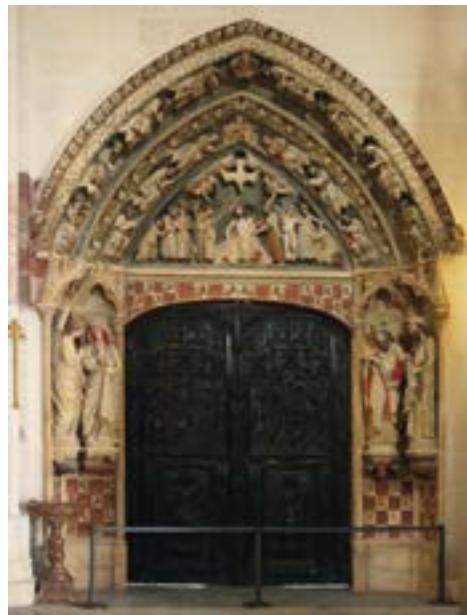
Fig. 1. The *Puerta Negra* of Burgos cathedral, leading from the south transept to the cloister, c. 1260s (Photo: Tom Nickson).

Fig. 2. Burgos cathedral cloister, west walk, c. 1260s (Photo: Tom Nickson).

Alfonso X's role in the construction of León cathedral also deserves re-newed scrutiny (Fig. 3), for despite close ties to Bishop Martín Fernández in the 1250s, 60s and 70s, when work on the new Gothic cathedral advanced rapidly, Alfonso never visited the city. Admittedly, in 1255 he did persuade the Pope to write off Bishop Martín's debts, but those debts were partly in-curred because Martín had lent money to Alfonso, who returned the favour by retaining the so-called *tercias reales* well beyond the original papal grant, only returning them in 1258 (Karge 2004: 125; CDACL docs 2140, 2152, 2166, 2167, 2176, 2177, 2192; Cavero Domínguez 2018, 60; 99; 114; 135-36). It is surely significant that in the cathedral obituaries Alfonso was re-membered only for his annual donation of 500 mrs, money that from 1256 onwards supported chaplaincies and liturgical celebrations, not construction work (CDACL: docs 2172, 2196, 2202, 2526; Herráez Ortega 2004: 159). In contrast, Pope Alexander IV's intervention over the *tercias reales* in 1255 ex-plicitly stated that those tithes were meant to go 'ad opus fabrice' (CDACL: doc. 2140). In fact, Alfonso's only direct support for construction at León came in 1277, when he offered tax exemptions to twenty stonemasons, a glazier and a smith—exemptions similar to those previously offered to the cathedrals of Astorga, Cuenca, Córdoba and Santiago de Compostela, where the project to build a new choir was abandoned c. 1275 (Herráez Ortega 2004: 156-159; *Dipl.* docs 1662, 2115, 2313, 2355, 2967, 3181, 3281, 3282; Puente Míguez 1999). Even such minimal royal support helped provide credibility, however. For example, Martín's assignment of Alfonso's chaplaincies on 31 October 1258 to chapels 'to be built in the new cathedral' ('in nova fabrica… construendis') was surely crucial to securing indulgences 'ad fabricam eccle-sie' at the Council of Madrid on 2 December later that year (CADCL: docs 2196, 2198). Appearances mattered, but the profusion of royal heraldry and imagery at León no more indicates direct financial support than do the 'trade windows' at Chartres cathedral (Williams 1993). They reveal aspirations, as-pirations that were thwarted early by the premature death of Fernando de la Cerda and failure of Alfonso X's imperial aspirations in 1275, and by Bishop Martín's dramatic fall out with Alfonso X in 1279 (Sánchez Ameijeiras 2004: 213-214; Boto Varela 2004: 307, 315; Cavero Domínguez 2018: 102-110).

Fig. 3. León cathedral, presbytery and south transept, begun c. 1243/1255
(Photo: Tom Nickson).

Alfonso X's connections to *rayonnant* architecture also merit fresh consideration. After all, the great *rayonnant* projects at Strasbourg, Metz, Cologne, Regensburg, York and Nicosia depended on ambitious (arch)bishops and canons, not royal patrons, even if Cologne's imperial associations resonated with Alfonso's own ambitions (Nussbaum 2000: 49-65; Böker 1991; Olympios 2018: 105-161). Moreover, despite Alfonso X's wide European horizons, his first encounters with French *rayonnant* came very late: Narbonne cathedral's eastern chapels were still under scaffolding when Alfonso passed through en route to Beaucaire in 1275, so it was only in Bayonne in December 1280 that he could have seen the full *rayonnant* vocabulary for the first time (Freigang 1992: 19-109; Lambert 1939). On the other hand, the architectural horizons of Bishop Martín and his canons were limited to Rome, Parma and Lyon: they too had little knowledge of *rayonnant* (Linehan 1975: 16-27; Bartolomé Martínez 1985: 31; Guijarro González 2004: 239; Cavero Domínguez 2018).

Fig. 4. Toledo cathedral, south transept, eastern walls, lower parts
c. 1230s, upper parts c. 1250s (Photo: Tom Nickson).

After a hiatus in construction in the early 1250s León's first architect was probably Simon, first recorded as master of works in February 1261 (Linehan 1975: 49). He must have been resident in León by 1258 at the very latest, and was presumably responsible for the earliest *rayonnant* tombs and chapels there. Karge dates the earliest *rayonnant* tracery in the upper parts of the south transept and west end of Burgos to c. 1260 (1995: 89-91, 223-224, 233); at Toledo the earliest *rayonnant* elements in the east walls of the transepts date to the 1250s or early 1260s (Nickson 2015: 86-89). The

near-contemporaneous introduction of *rayonnant* architecture at León, Toledo and Burgos may suggest a degree of competitiveness between the sites, but perhaps also implies the existence of close workshop contacts: Simon's probable successor at León, master Enrique (d. 1277), figures in the obituaries of both León and Burgos cathedrals, for example (Karge 1995: 193-195).

Given the introduction of *rayonnant* architecture in Castile in the 1250s it is significant that numerous Castilian nobles and clergy, most with royal and/or Toledan connections, made their way to Paris in the 1240s and 1250s, providing many opportunities to recruit architects trained in the *rayonnant* workshops of northern France (Hernández 2004-2005: 190; Hernández and Linehan 2004: 35-76; Grant 2016: 165-169, 174, 185, 203, 206, 244). *Rayonnant* elements at Burgos and especially Toledo might be explained solely through the circulation of drawings, but the architect of León cathedral must have been directly familiar with *rayonnant* buildings in France. If he was not recruited there, he may instead have travelled to Castile in the entourage of the ambassadors who gathered in Toledo in 1254, or perhaps with those who submitted to Alfonso as emperor in 1258 and 1259, including the Dukes of Burgundy, Flanders, Lothier and Brabant, and Upper Lotheringia (Hernández 2004-2005: 192). A slew of papal indulgences for visitors to Spanish churches from 1249 onwards (including León in 1255) must have made Castile an attractive prospect for French architects (Domínguez Sánchez 2015: docs 155, 158, 159, 162, 165-168, 172, 174, 175, 192), and connections were especially strong along the pilgrimage roads to Santiago de Compostela. Alternatively, French architects may have sought work in Castile after construction at Saint-Denis, Châlons-en-Champagne and other French sites was disrupted by the diversion of tithes to support Louis IX's crusade in 1248 (Bruzelius 1985: 131; Villes 2007: 163). This would explain the striking similarities between León, Saint-Denis and Châlons (Karge 2004: 133-142), although it is not widely acknowledged that they differ in one significant respect. Whereas *grisaille* filled a significant portion of the vast windows and glazed triforia of Saint-Denis, Châlons and other *rayonnant* churches from the 1230s onwards (Fig. 5), those at León—like other thirteenth-century examples in the chapter house of Las Huelgas and the transepts of Toledo and Burgos cathedrals—retain the full colour saturation associated with early thirteenth-century glass in France (Lillich 1994: 1-8; 328n51; Gómez Rascón 2000). Like the screens added to the windows of several churches in Castile and Navarre, this dark glass was perhaps preferred because it helped to reduce glare from bright sunshine (Martínez de Aguirre Aldaz 2011; Nickson 2015: 103).

Fig. 5. Châlons-en-Champagne cathedral, crossing, looking
south, c. 1240s-1260s (Photo: Tom Nickson).

If Alfonso X cannot be closely connected to the best-known *rayonnant*
workshops in his kingdom, it is nonetheless striking that the *rayonnant* idiom
was adopted for prestigious projects in the Crown of Castile far earlier than
in its neighbouring kingdoms. Can it then be considered a Court Style, even
in the loosest sense of that term? Any such definition must acknowledge,
for example, that the magnificent wall of traceried windows in the apse of
the Cistercian abbey church of Santa María de Cañas (La Rioja), complete
by 1288, cannot be explained by connections to the royal court, but rather
through workshop contacts with Burgos and Las Huelgas (Alonso Álvarez
2004: 55-111).

Alfonso X's attitude towards architecture in the vast newly conquered
territories in the south also shows that he was in no sense solely wedded
to *rayonnant* forms. This is illustrated by a story recounted in the so-called
Historia hasta 1288 dialogada (1893: 6), in which the king threatened to kill
every Muslim in Seville if a single brick was removed from the minaret of the
Almohad mosque (the *Giralda*). It is not clear from this story (which sounds
like a literary topos) if Alfonso's threat was motivated by pragmatism or ad-
miration, but passages added in the early fourteenth century to the *Estoria
de Espanna* certainly imply that the minaret was admired in courtly circles

(Ruiz Souza 2012; Ruiz Souza 2012-2013; Nickson 2019, 142). Alfonso also substantially enlarged the endowments of Seville's converted mosque-cathedral and invested heavily in its royal chapel, where his father was buried in 1252, and where Alfonso ultimately elected burial himself in a vast royal chapel with elevated sculptures set within Gothic tabernacles (Laguna Paúl 1998; Laguna Paúl 2009; Laguna Paúl 2013; Laguna Paúl 2019 and bibliography therein). Alterations to the old Almohad mosque did not require extensive construction, however, and of the king's many gifts of land, rents, goods, property and privileges, only that of the second highest tithe contribution in each parish in the diocese (the *excusado de fábrica*, admittedly a very considerable source of income) was directed specifically at the cathedral *obra* (*Dipl.*: docs 1650, 2111).

Alfonso's interventions in the fabric of Córdoba's converted mosque-cathedral (as well as the city's walls and water supplies) are even more regular and are more detailed than in any other cathedral in his kingdom: very thoroughly documented by Heather Ecker (2003: 122-133; see also *Dipl.*: docs 1563, 1576, 1643, 3438), they deserve greater prominence in accounts of Alfonso's architectural patronage. As Ecker underlines, Alfonso's demands on *mudéjar* craftsmen—notably carpenters, smiths, lime-burners, and brick- and tile-makers—are virtually without parallel in Castile and imply that no Gothic construction was undertaken: only in Toledo were Muslim workers so active for Christian (and Jewish) patrons in the thirteenth century (Molénat 1995; Ruiz Souza 2009). Alfonso's interventions in Córdoba are also exceptional in a broader panorama, for we have seen already that in other 'contact zones' (Pratt 1991), such as Sicily or Cyprus, patrons favoured *opus francigenum* in opposition to local building traditions. Alfonso's policy also differed from that of James the Conqueror in the neighbouring Crown of Aragon. Although Muslim craftsmen were occasionally employed under the king (Burns 1991: docs 155, 266), it was generally James's policy to suppress and replace Muslim buildings, as in the case of Valencia cathedral (Serra Desfilis 2013: 38).

It is not possible here to consider adequately Alfonso's patronage in Jerez, Orihuela, or many other cities and sites. Nor can I discuss the extent of Alfonso X's connections with Santa Ana de Triana and other parish churches in Seville, which have arguably been overstated and depend largely on the presence of royal heraldry and a lost but often-cited inscription from Santa Ana, the language of which recalls the sixteenth century much more than the thirteenth (Cómez Ramos 2001: 54-55, 165-181). Alfonso's interventions in Seville's Alcázar do merit further attention, however. It was Elie Lambert who first tentatively suggested that Alfonso was responsible for the 'Gothic

palace' in Seville's Alcázar (1932: 161-165), later followed by Rafael Cómez Ramos and accepted by many others since (2001: 49-50, 151-161). But the documentary evidence for new construction there (rather than repurposing of the substantial Almohad palace on the same site) consists of nothing more than a mandate of March 1254 to repair water supplies 'a los nuestros palacios del Alcázar de Sevilla' and an endowment for anniversary masses in the chapels of Sts Elizabeth and Clement 'en el Alcaçar' (González Jiménez 1991: docs 121, 387)[2]. In fact, the only reference to any kind of new construction (though not to masonry work) dates to 1290, the reign of Sancho IV, when payments were made to 'Ali Toledano, que anda sobre los aluañes' in Seville's Alcázar (Hernández 1993: vol. I, 391).

What then of the building itself? Recent archaeological evidence confirms the impressive scale of the Gothic and Almohad palaces, the debts of the former to both Islamic and northern European traditions of palace design, and the relationship between the Gothic palace and that built under Pedro I, but offers no new dating evidence (Almagro Gorbea 1999: 346-351; Almagro Gorbea 2008, 62-67; Almagro Gorbea 2015). The chamfered rib profiles in the palace's lowest levels, the so-called 'Baños de Maria de Padilla', certainly resemble those in the nearby Torre de la Plata and Torre de don Fadrique, the latter begun in 1252 by Alfonso's rebellious brother (Cómez Ramos 2001: 142-155; Molina López 2010). But this was a standard type of rib for low-status spaces, and the vaults on the first floor of the Gothic palace do not closely resemble other Alfonsine projects (Fig. 6)[3].

Unlike the Gothic vaults in the presbytery of Santa Ana de Triana, the upper parts of the Torre de don Fadrique, or in the Torre de los Leones in Córdoba's Alcázar, all traditionally associated with Alfonso X (Cómez Ramos 2001: 135-143), the central roll of the ribs on the first floor of the Gothic palace is lightly keeled, flanked to either side by a hollow chamfer, a small roll and a hollow quirk (Fig. 7). By itself this does minor difference does not constitute strong evidence, but it is perhaps significant that vaults and ribs very similar to those in Seville's Alcázar cover the refectory of the Sevillan convent of San Agustín, dated on written and heraldic evidence to the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century (Martínez de Aguirre 1992) (Fig. 8).

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[2] As in Córdoba, Alfonso also ensured the repair of the city's water supply (González Jiménez 1991: doc. 124).

[3] New corbels were added in 1579 to the 'sala grande de las bouedas' on the first floor (Gestoso y Pérez 1889-1892: vol. I, 608), but the vaults they support were not altered.

Fig. 6. Upper floor of the 'Gothic palace',
Seville Alcázar, late thirteenth century?
(Photo: Tom Nickson).

Fig. 7. Detail of the vaults of the upper floor
of the 'Gothic palace',
Seville Alcázar, late thirteenth century?
(Photo: Tom Nickson).

Fig. 8. Refectory, San Agustín, Seville, begun c. 1290s (Photo: Tom Nickson).

The compact bosses on the vaults at San Agustín also descend below the ribs in a manner similar to those in the Gothic palace, and the refectory's impressive dimensions, measuring 9 x 41 metres, with vaults 8.4 metres high, are close to those of the largest hall in the Gothic palace, which measures approximately 8 x 28 metres, its vaults 10 metres above floor level. Were they constructed by the same workshop? The evidence is not strong enough to be certain, but given the dearth of written evidence this is enough, I suggest, to be cautious in assuming that Alfonso X bears sole responsibility for the Gothic palace in Seville's Alcázar.

Consideration of Alfonso X's architectural patronage from a European perspective draws attention to the extraordinary quantity and variety of the building projects undertaken during Alfonso's reign, but also calls into doubt several longstanding assumptions about the nature of his patronage. The prestige and charisma of Alfonso's kingship resonate in the conception, design and ornamentation of León, Toledo and Burgos cathedrals, but they were largely built without direct input from the king. The reassessment offered here also suggests that any attempts to associate Alfonso X firmly with Gothic architecture—in Castile's great *rayonnant* cathedrals or even in Seville's Alcázar—should be treated with extreme caution. His father, Fernando III, was much more actively involved in supporting a new generation of Gothic cathedrals and monasteries, for example, while his immediate successor, Sancho IV (r. 1284-1295), was a more consistent patron of Gothic art and architecture (González 1980-3: vol. I, 22-32; Gutiérrez Baños 1997: especially 234). From a European perspective, the most distinctive characteristic of Alfonso's architectural patronage was his care for the restoration of Córdoba's converted mosque and recognition that this was best undertaken by Muslim craftsmen. Although this was not so new in a Castilian context, here and elsewhere Alfonso set important precedents for his fourteenth-century successors (Ruiz Souza 2012; Ruiz Souza 2012-2013). But with respect to scale, Alfonso's most impressive act of architectural patronage lay not in palaces or churches, but with the vast shipyards he built on Seville's sandy riverbanks, recorded in an inscription of 1252 (Fig. 9). Here arcades of broad Gothic arches originally divided seventeen aisles, each aisle nine metres wide. Cómez Ramos (2014-2015) estimates that the *atarazanas* originally covered 15,000 square metres, larger even the vast prayer hall of Córdoba's Great Mosque. This building alone makes Alfonso one of Europe's most remarkable patrons of Gothic architecture.
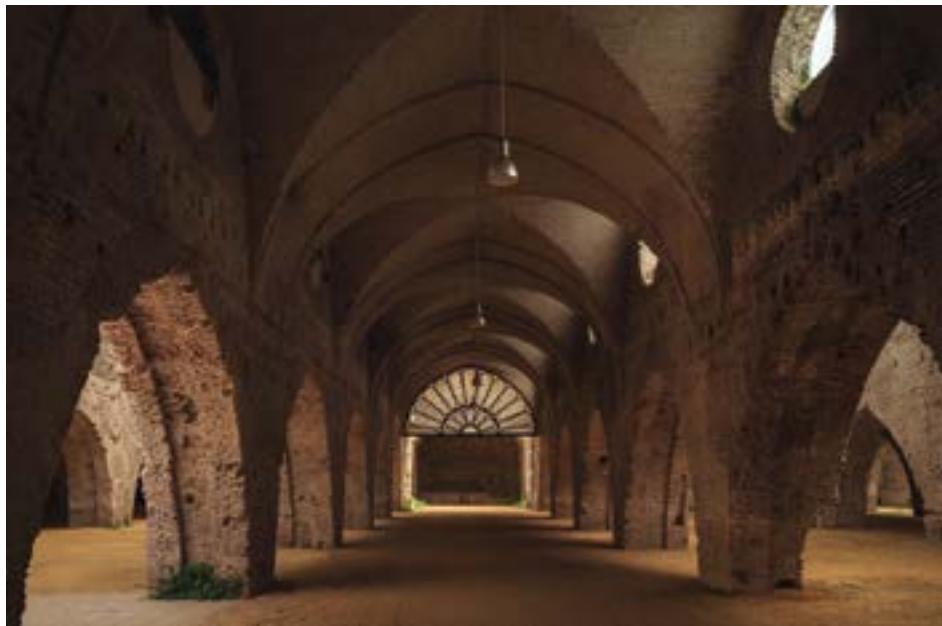
Fig. 9. Royal shipyards, Seville, begun 1252 (Photo: Tom Nickson).

Acknowledgements

Abbreviations

CDACL = *Colección documental del Archivo de la catedral de León* (1987-2005), 19 vols. León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación 'San Isidoro'.

Dipl. = González Jiménez, Manuel, and María Antonia Carmona Ruiz (2012), *Documentación e itinerario de Alfonso X el Sabio*, Historia y Geografía, 190. Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla.

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Alfonso X's patronage of Gothic architecture

Abstract: This article examines the architectural patronage of King Alfonso X and the notion of a 'Court Style' in thirteenth-century Gothic architecture. Following brief consideration of problems of evidence, I briefly sketch common characteristics of the architectural patronage of Alfonso's royal rivals and allies across Europe and the Iberian Peninsula. This prompts reassessment of the king's relationships with mendicant and Cistercian orders, and then detailed consideration of his financial contributions to the cathedrals of Toledo, Burgos and León. Although royal heraldry and imagery is prominent in all three cathedrals, I argue that Alfonso probably did not play a significant role in promoting *rayonnant* architecture in his kingdom. The most distinctive feature of his patronage lies in his support for work on the converted mosque-cathedrals of Seville and especially Córdoba. Finally, I consider a number of projects associated with Alfonso in Seville, notably the Gothic palace in the Alcázar.

Keywords: Court Style. Rayonnant Gothic. Cathedrals. Palaces. Alfonso X.

El mecenazgo de Alfonso X en obras arquitectónicas

Resumen: Este articulo examina el mecenazgo del rey Alfonso X y la noción de 'estilo de corte' en la arquitectura gótica del siglo XIII. Después de una breve consideración de los problemas relativos a las evidencias, esbozo las características compartidas en el mecenazgo arquitectónico de los competidores y aliados del rey Sabio tanto en Europa como en la península ibérica. Con relación a ello, procedo una nueva valoración de las relaciones entre el rey y las ordenes mendicantes y cisterciense, y un examen detallado de sus contribuciones económicas a las catedrales de Toledo, Burgos y León. Aunque las imágenes y la heráldica reales sean prominentes en las tres catedrales, sostengo que Alfonso no desempeñó un papel importante en la promoción de la arquitectura gótica radiante en su reino. La característica más peculiar de su mecenazgo se encuentre en su apoyo para a las obras en las mezquitas-catedrales de Sevilla y sobre todo de Córdoba. Finalmente examino varios proyectos asociados con Alfonso en Sevilla, sobre todo el palacio gótico del Alcázar.

Palabras-clave: Estilo del corte. Gótico radiante. Catedrales. Palacios. Alfonso X.