

## Magical photos of fantastic places



By Carlos González González

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6.- My locus amenus.

## 1.- Visit to Ponferrada Castle.

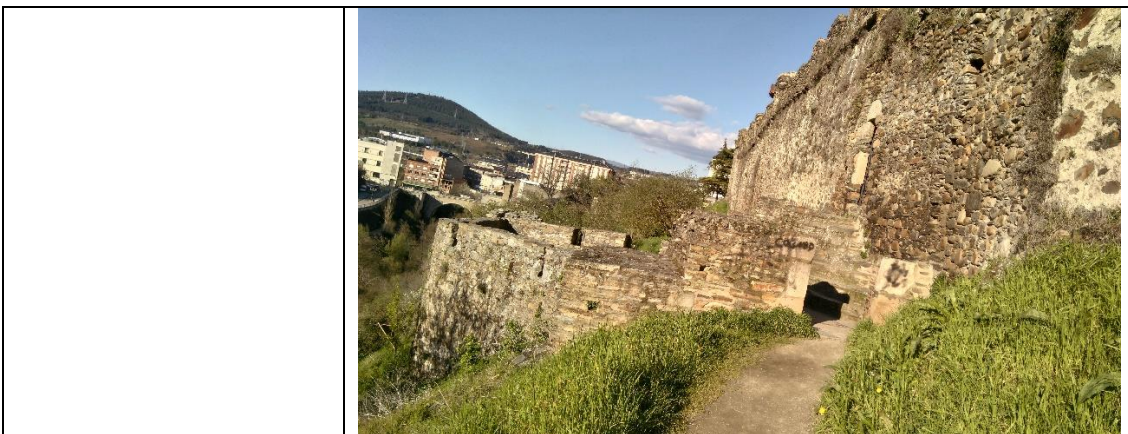
### Photo guide.



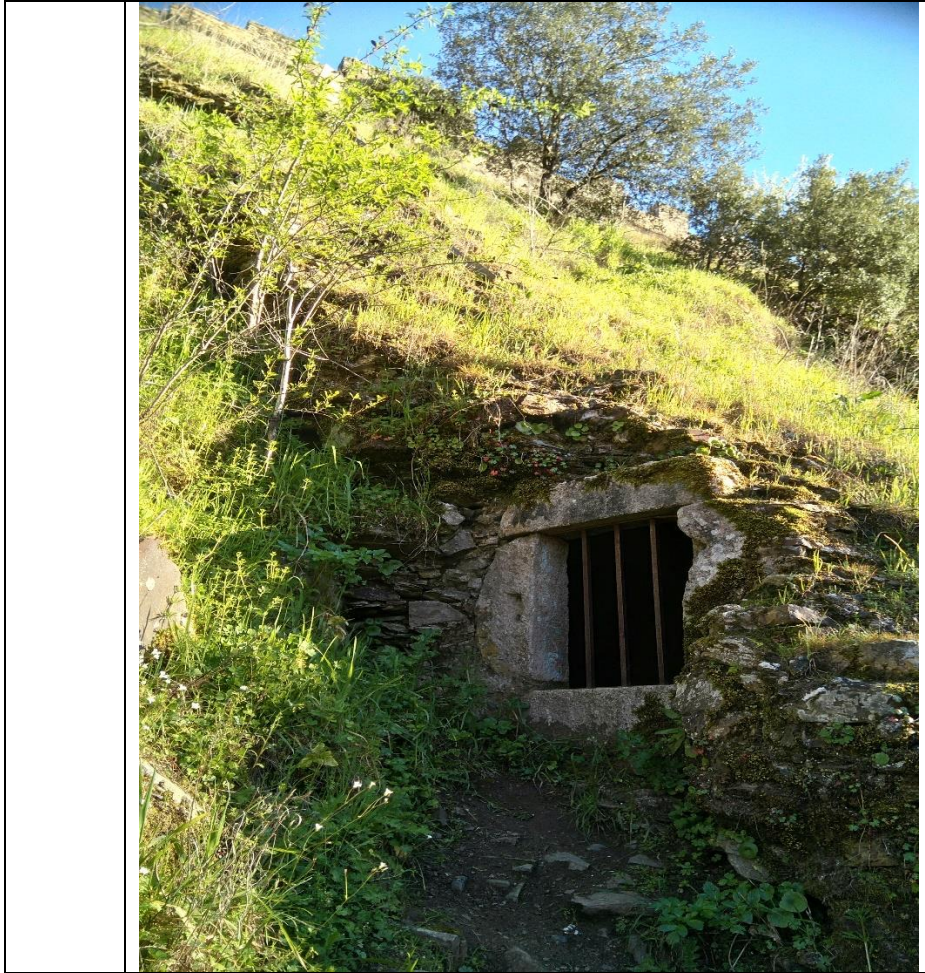
Exit door to the access bastion to the Cueva de la Mora



Exterior of the Ronda del Sil.  
Bastion of access control to the underground passage.



## Mora Cave. Up the Castle



## Full moon



The Knights Templar transport the Ark of the Covenant and the Holy Grail.

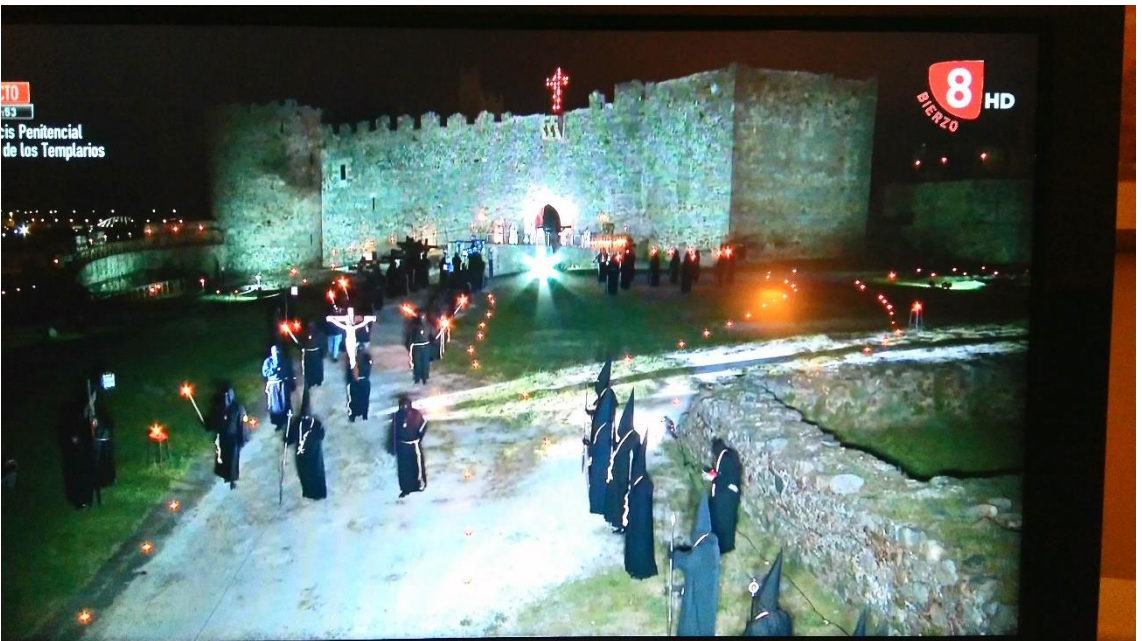


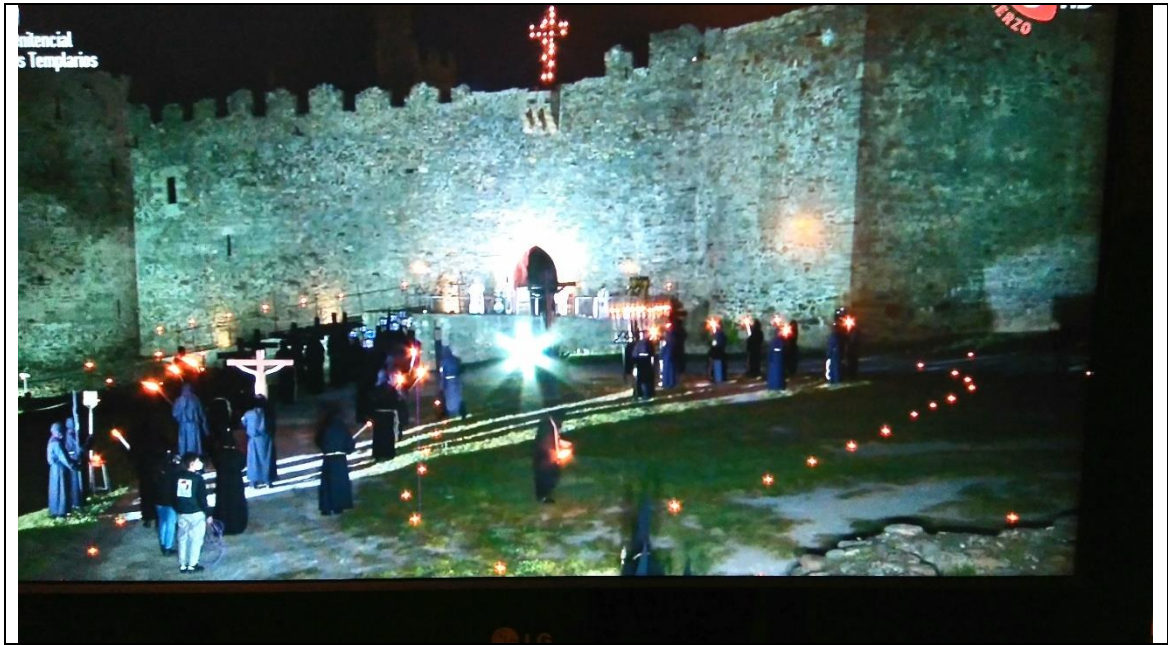
## The Cycling World Cup in Ponferrada



Celebration of the Way of the Cross in the castle with two carvings, the Christ of Hope and the Christ of Fortress

### Christ of Fortress





## Christ of Hope





DIRECTO

21:45

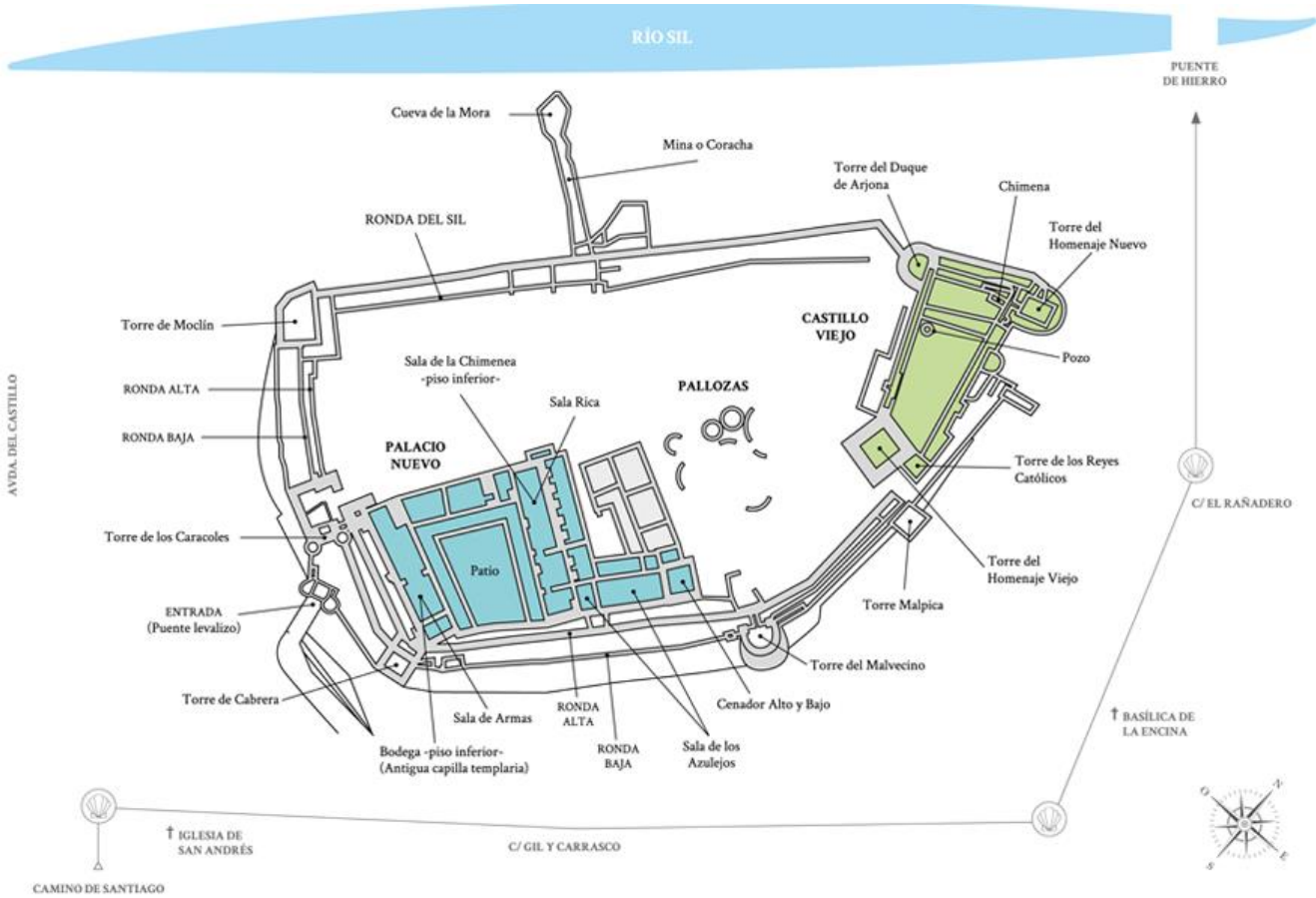
Via Crucis Penitencial

Castillo de los Templarios

8 HD  
MIÉRCOLES

# Sense of visit

Let's first look at a situation plan.



Entrance



Tower of the Snails



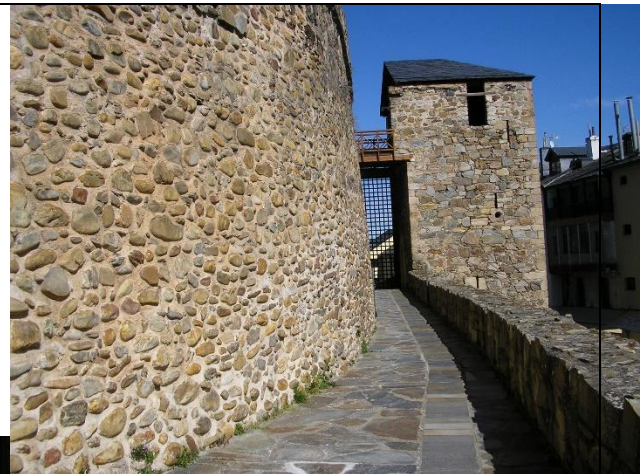
Low Round. Cabrera  
Tower



In the background,  
Malvecino  
Tower(left)



Malpica Tower. The  
Low Round continues,  
but there is a fence that  
prevented it from  
continuing but it is now  
up.



We continue to the Old Castle, which we  
visit.

We continue through Ronda del Sil to the Torre de Moclín.

Entrance to the parade ground from the Ronda Baja



In the background, the Old Castle.



Round of the Sil. In the background the Tower of the Duke of Arjona.



Moclin Tower

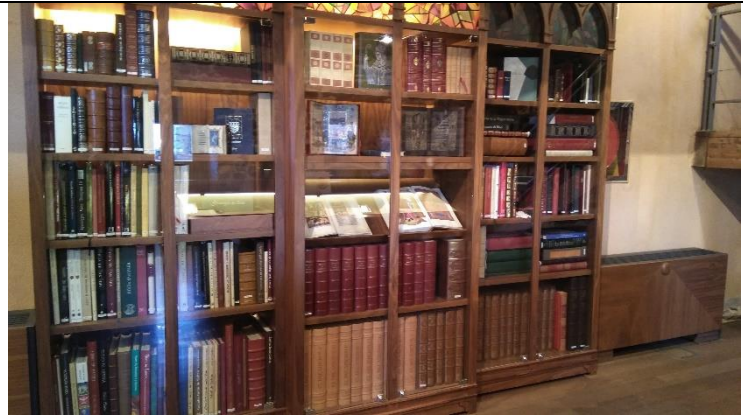


The final idea is to make a kind of spiral. For this reason we return, now through the Ronda Alta towards the Torre de los Caracoles and continue to the Torre de Cabrera. There we stop to see the model of the castle and continue, visiting the Malvecino towers and Malpica tower in the background. Then we return and enter the Templar Library.

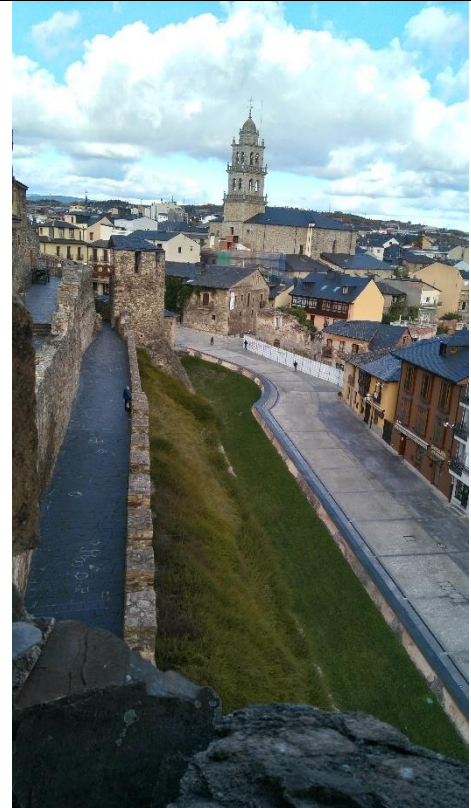
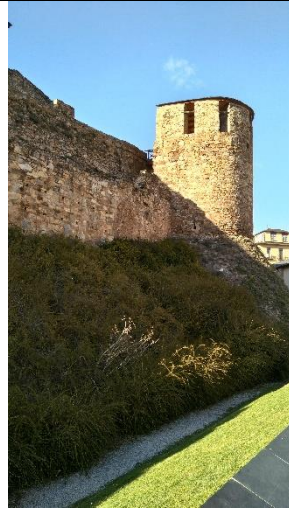
Cabrera Tower.  
Model of the Castle.



Templar Library.  
2nd Floor of the  
Palace. Access  
through the  
Ronda Alta.



Malvecino  
Tower.  
Exterior view  
and Interior  
view



Malpica Tower. Exterior and interior view (on the right)



We continue the Ronda Alta, we continue and go down to the central patio, and we stand in the center slightly to the right, where the witness stones of the pallozas should be. Next we will visit the palace area: the Old Room (only the imposing triumphal arch at the entrance), we enter the Palace and visit the Templar Winery, the Patio del Conde and the Templum Libri Exhibition.

Palace area.  
The Old  
Room.



Entrance to the  
palace area.



Templar Winery



## Count's Courtyard



## Templum Libri Exhibition

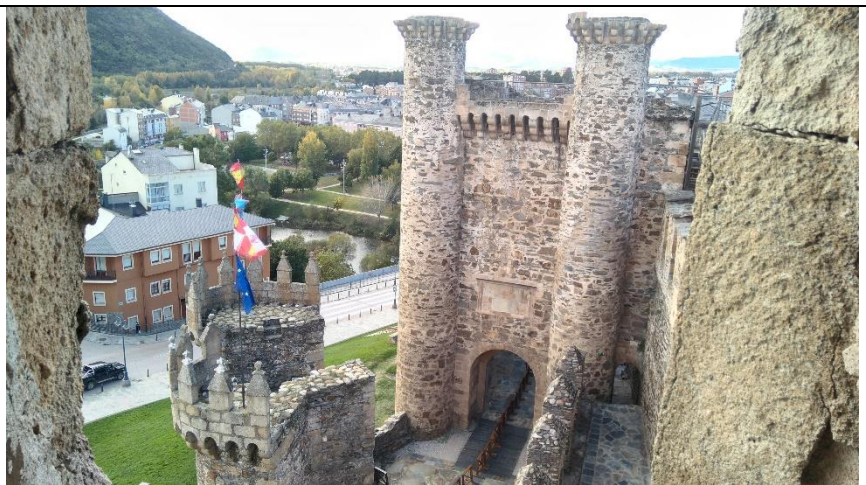


Palace.



Finally we left the palace and headed towards the Torre de los Caracoles, the beginning and end of the visit. We will say in passing that the entrance to the castle is at a right angle, which made access extremely difficult for enemies, especially cavalry, and made its defense much easier. Let's see the image.

Tower of the Snails.

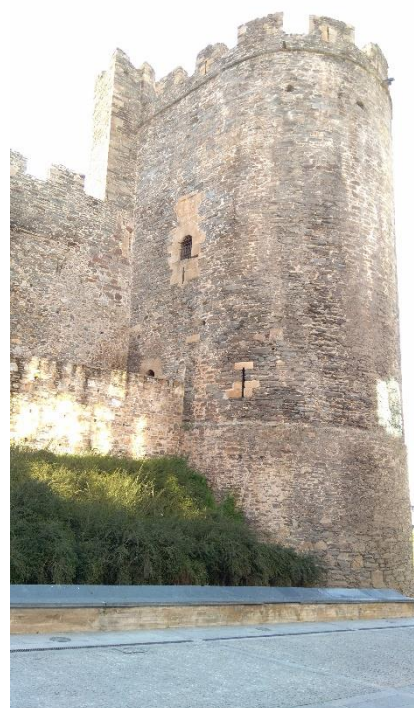


## The Old Castle.

To the right, Tower of the Catholic Monarchs, attached to the Torre del Homenaje Viejo. On the left, that of Malpica.



Tower of the New Tribute, of the Old Castle. Exterior view.

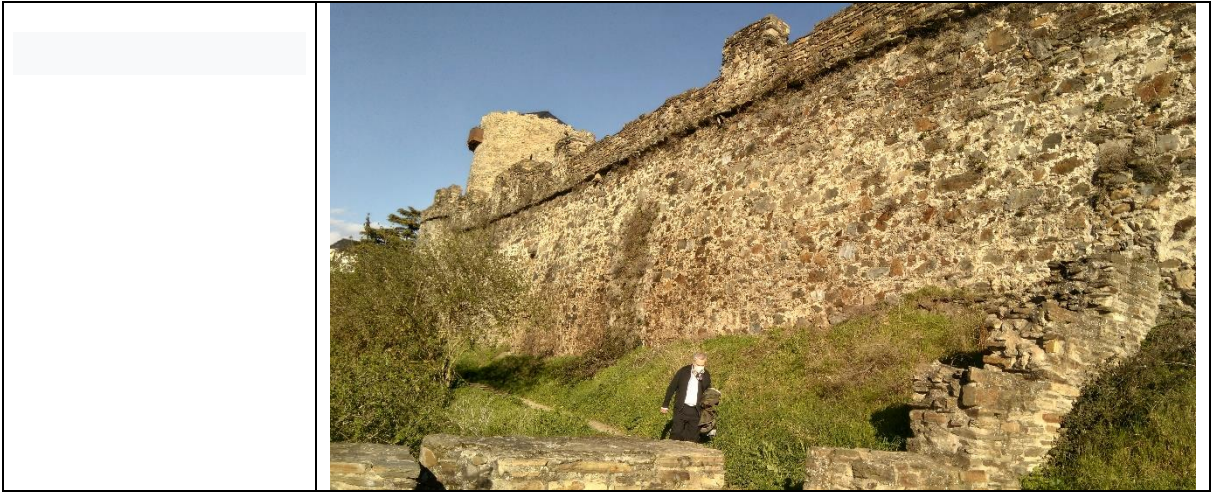


Old Castle. Torre del Homenaje Viejo with its roof and in the background Torre del Cubo, also with its roof. To the right Malpica Tower, also covered.



Old Castle. The machicolations can be seen above the main entrance. The barbican or barrier that defends the entrance was built by the Catholic Monarchs.





# The Round of Sil

Exit the  
Castle  
towards  
the  
outer  
bastion  
to access  
the mine  
or  
coracha.



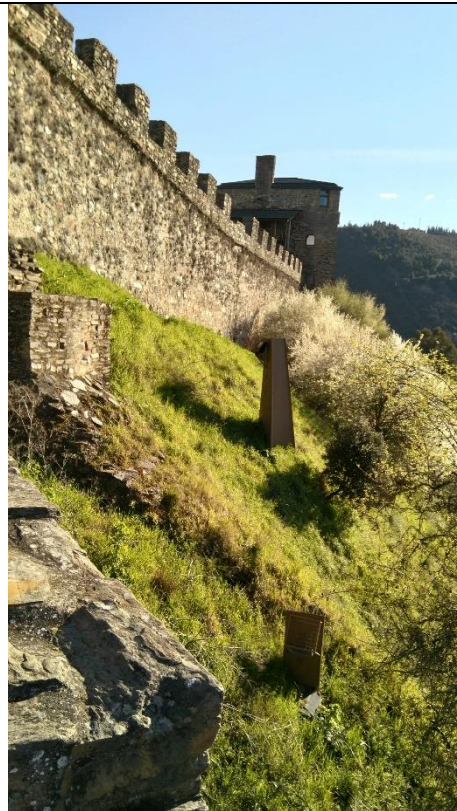
Exterior view  
of the exit  
from the castle  
towards the  
entrance to  
the mine or  
coracha



Bastion and access area to the mine or coracha



Exterior view of the tunnel or interior passageway leading to the river well.



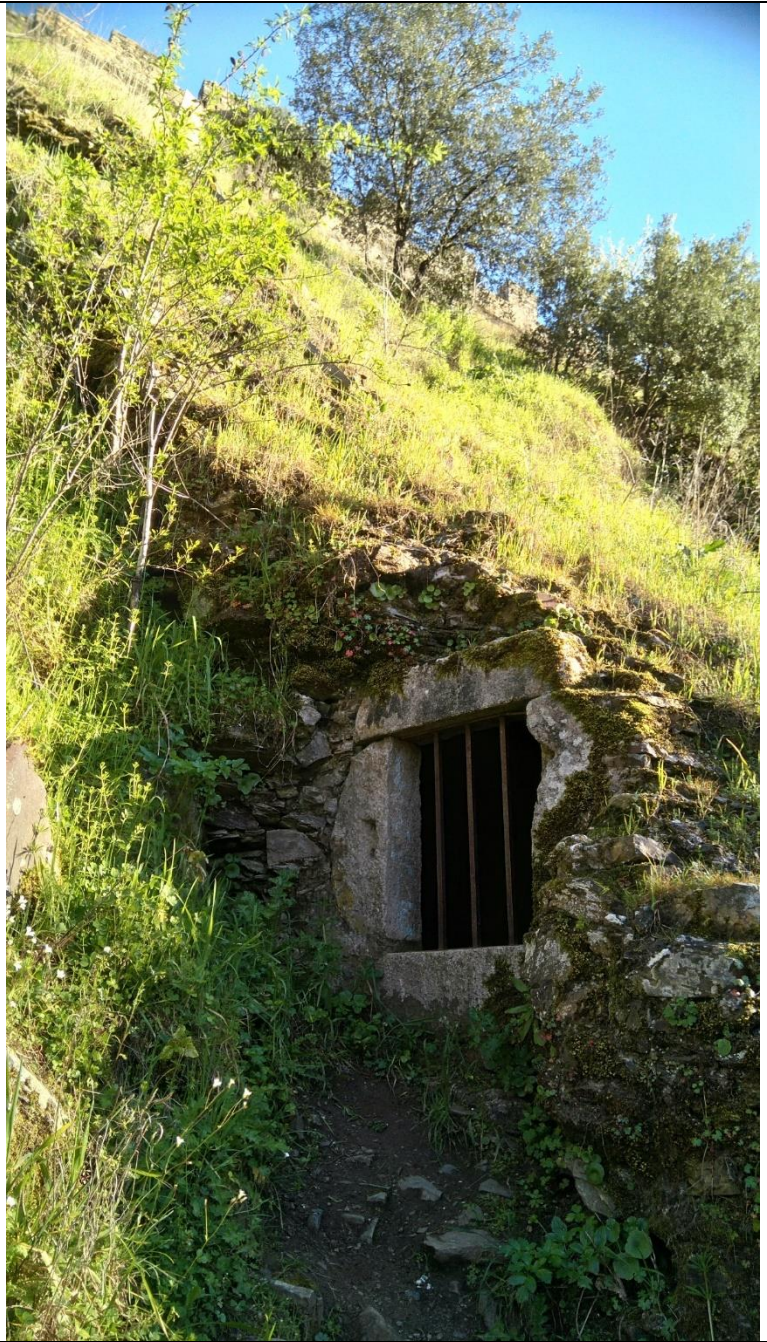
Second exterior bastion to protect the mine or coracha.



Exterior view of the interior tunnel leading down to the river well. Above, the Castle. Below, the window of the passage.



Window, today with bars, of the access tunnel to the river well.



## The Moclín Tower

This tower is built on Templar foundation structures (12th century).

It was rectified in the 15th century by the Count of Lemos, Pedro Álvarez de Osorio, and also in the 16th century.

According to José A. Balboa and V. Fernández, King Ferdinand the Catholic tried to make this tower independent through a closure of which only the foundations were built (see plan).

Today the Moclín Tower houses an exhibition about life in castles.

To the left  
Moclín Tower



Straight  
ahead, to the  
left Torre de  
Moclín



Moclín Tower.  
Interior view



## The Tower of Cabrera.

In the center, impressive view of the Cabrera Tower



Cabrera Tower. Level 3.



Cabrera Tower.  
Simulation of a  
battle in a model.



Cabrera  
Tower.  
Level 5.  
View  
towards  
the interior.



## The Malvecino and Malpica Towers.

These towers are advanced towers, that is, their structures are separated from the main walls to which they are joined by walkways.

They are open towards the interior and therefore in case of loss and enemy access to the Ronda Baja, it would not pose a major problem for the defenders, who could in turn attack at will.

Malvecino  
Tower. Exterior view.



Malvecino Tower.  
Interior view.  
In the background, the  
tower of the Basílica  
de la Encina.



Malpica  
Tower.  
Exterior  
view



Malpica  
Tower.  
Interior view,  
at the end of  
the Ronda  
Alta.



## The Templar Library

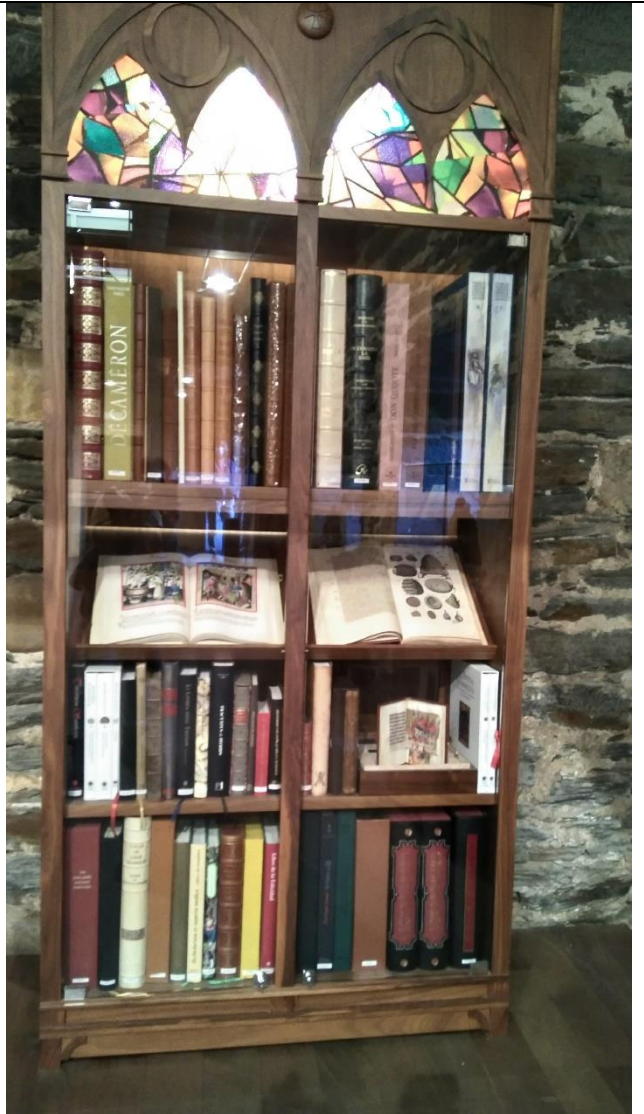
As we pass through the Ronda Alta, we find two towers in the palatial area with their pedestals called “the tiles” and the “high gazebo”, rooms set up to house the Templar Library and the Center for Research and Historical Studies.

The library contains numerous copies of the “Templum Libri” collection along with a large number of books on Templar themes.

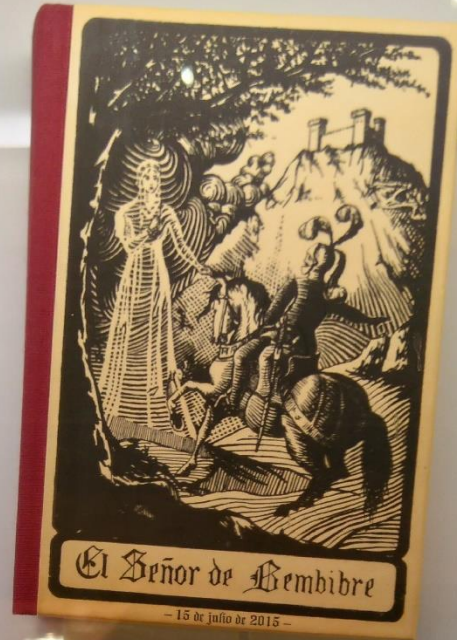
The Bible of  
the Crusaders




## Copies of Templar-themed books



# Copy of the Lord of Bembibre



**EL SEÑOR DE BEMBIBRE**  
SIGLO XIX



La novela de Enrique Gil y Carrasco, escritor nacido en Villafranca del Bierzo, publicada por primera vez en Madrid en 1844, no es en sí misma una novela histórica. Es probablemente la principal novela del romanticismo español. La historia que narra, vinculada a los templarios, supone la definitiva mitificación de los templarios en el Bierzo. Ha tenido más de 100 ediciones. Se presentan 3 ediciones singulares:

**Edición Prínceps de la novela** - Madrid, 1844. Original cedido por Jovino Andina, coleccionista de la práctica totalidad de las ediciones realizadas de esta novela.

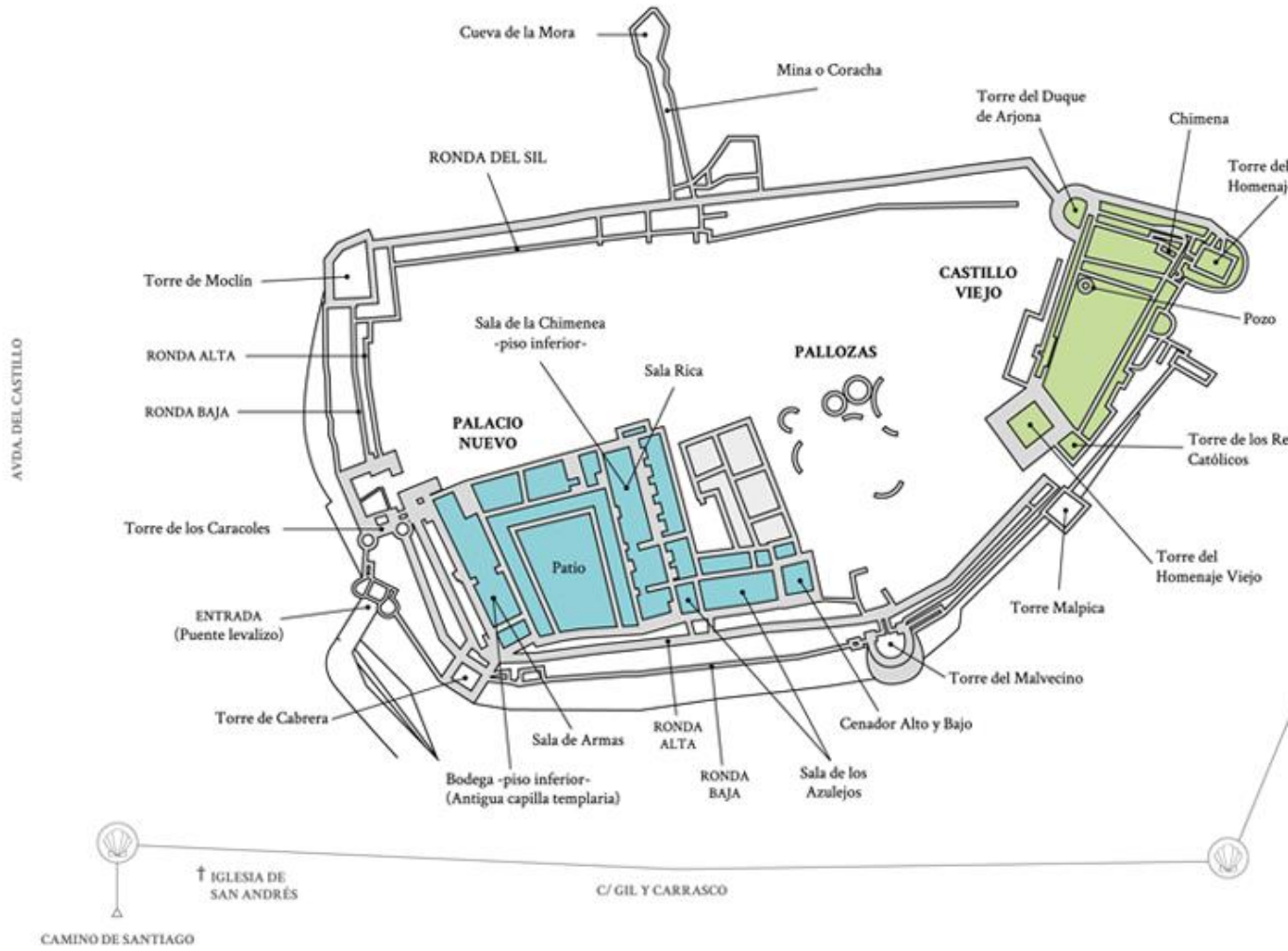
**Adaptación hecha para la clase de lectura en las escuelas primarias.** Madrid, 1925. **The Lord of Bembibre.** Biblioteca Gil y Carrasco. Paradiso Gutenberg, 2017 (e-book edition, eBooksBierzo, 2017 (1ª traducción al inglés de la novela).

## The Pallozas

In the center more or less, slightly to the right, of the enormous parade ground there were some pallozas of medieval origin, according to some, or pre-medieval, according to others.

These pallozas appear marked on the plans of the fortress. Let's see  
:

RÍO SIL



And so we can see the remains of the stones, in a circle, in a photo from 2007. Let's see:



However, apparently, an operation was carried out by a videography company to make a report, covering the entire area with gravel, gravel that unfortunately is still there.

Let's look at the photo:



## The palace area

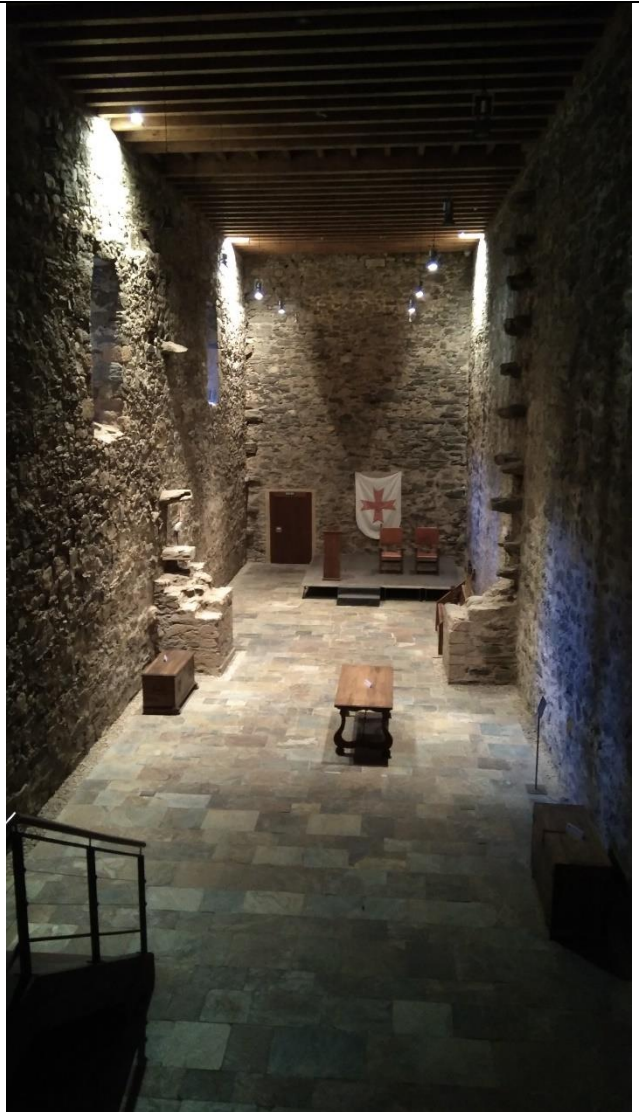
A large part of the palace was built during the time of the Count of Lemos, Mr. Pedro Álvarez Osorio, and its inhabitants were the latter with his two successive wives, in the first marriage, D<sup>a</sup> Beatriz de Castro, and, after her death, in the second marriage, D<sup>a</sup> María Bazán.

In the palace, as soon as you go down to the countryside, you can see the façade of the Old Room with its beautiful pointed arch. We continue, we enter through the main door and to the right we will see the magnificent Bodega Templaria (old chapel), in front the Duke's patio and to the left we go up to visit the Templum Libri exhibition.

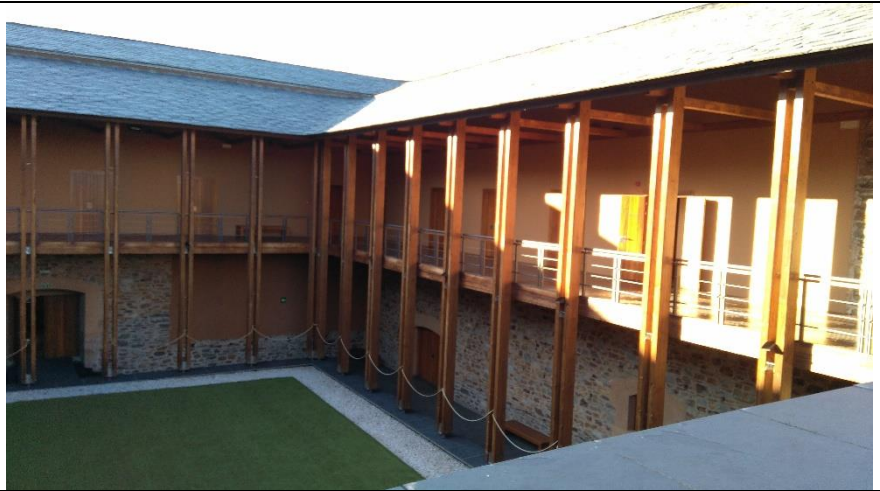
Old Room.  
Splendid  
pointed arch



Templar Winery (old chapel)



## Count's Courtyard



The books exhibited in the Templum Libri Exhibition occupy two rooms of the New Palace of the fortress, which, as we have already said, was built by Pedro Álvarez Osorio, Count of Lemos.

In the first of them there are codices and manuscripts on religious themes.

The second is dedicated to the Sciences and Humanities and displays illuminated manuscripts, illustrated printed books and author books.

The hundred pieces are part of the large collection of the great Bercian bibliophile Mr. Antonio Ovalle García, who has donated these assets to the Ponferrada City Council in a selfless manner.

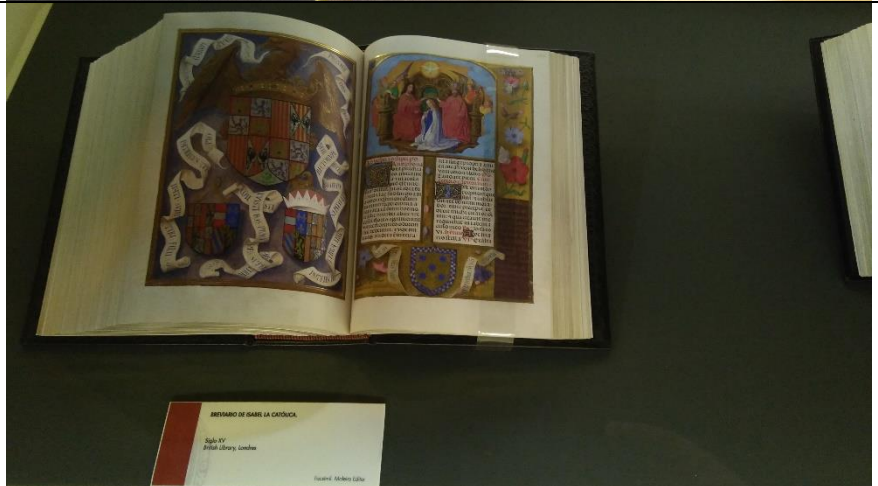
Entrance to the  
Templum Libri  
Exhibition



Visconti  
Book of  
Hours



Breviary of  
Isabella the  
Catholic



World map.  
Atlas Miller.



## Around with the tau

The Tau is undoubtedly the great symbol of strength. Apparently this symbol would be a sign of Templar identification. But it is not at all.

This shield appears in different areas, especially at the main entrance, although never in the Old Castle.

In reality, as Vicente Vázquez definitively points out, this tau is the tau of San Antonio de Castrogeriz, the Castro family's estate.

D. Pedro Álvarez Osorio, Count of Lemos, had married D<sup>a</sup> Beatriz de Castro in his first marriage and, once she died, the count placed this shield in key places to indicate the connection of the fortress with the Castros, and thus favor his natural grandson Rodrigo, facing the interests of his daughters, born in his second marriage with María Bazán.

Whether this was the last reason or another, the truth is that there was a succession drama, including two wars, a circumstance taken advantage of by the Catholic Monarchs to recover strength for the Crown.

Image of the Tau  
above the main  
entrance arch to the  
castle

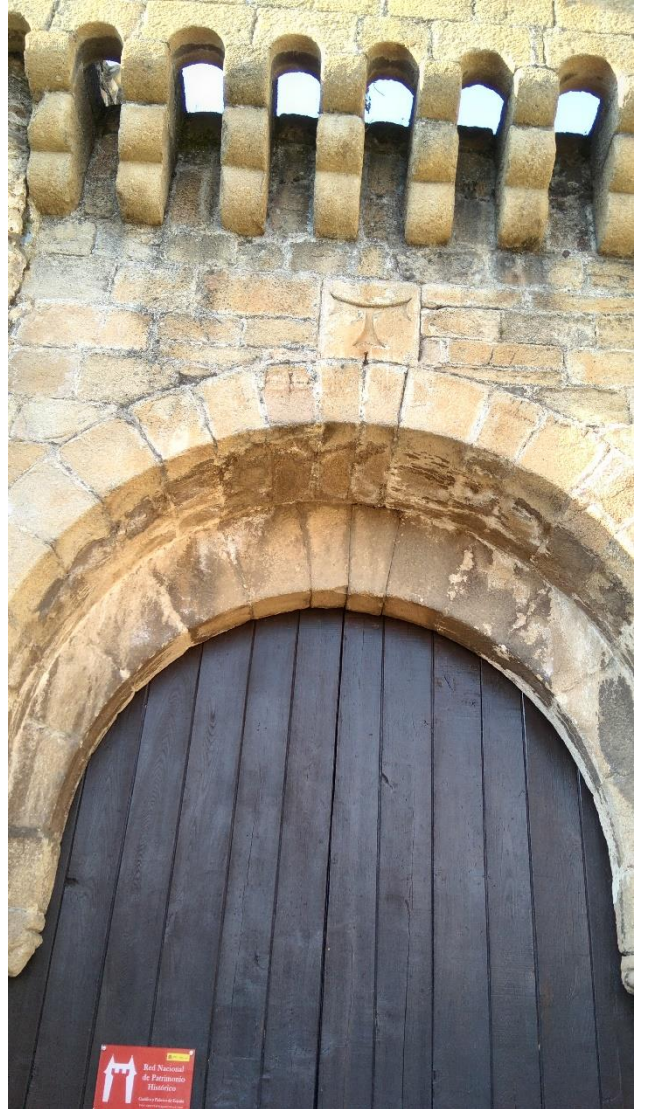
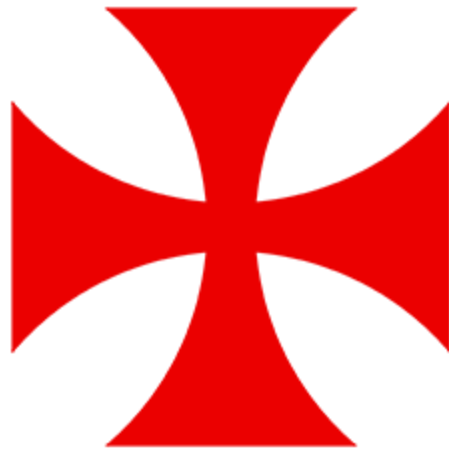


Image of the Tau at the  
entrance to the field  
from the Ronda Baja



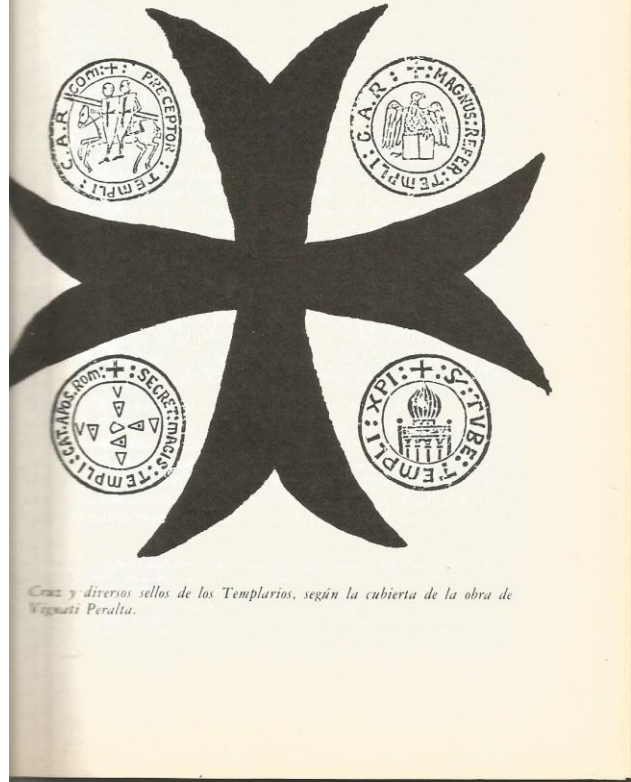
The kick cross, authentic  
Templar symbol, red.



Miniature  
image of the  
Templar cross  
on the book



Templar  
cross and  
miscellaneous  
seals of the  
Order,  
according to  
Luengo.



*Cruz y diversos sellos de los Templarios, según la cubierta de la obra de Vignetti Peralta.*

## The surroundings of the Castle



In the surroundings of the Castle we find on the Southeast side the connection with the old area, the church of San Andrés and the Basilica of La Encina, as well as the Cuadras building (created in its day to house the market cavalry), which for a long time was an inn with very delicious tapas, which has been moved to a nearby location. Now this building in Las Cuadras is destined to be a tourist office.

On the northwest side, the castle borders the river, with an impressive ravine, which has been populated with large trees such as maple, walnut, cherry, etc. Let's look at the images:

The Castle, with the Cabrera Tower and the Malvecino Tower in the background. On the right, the tower of the church of San Andrés, and in the center, in the background, that of the Basílica de la Encina.



Las Cuadras  
Building,  
current  
headquarters  
of the Tourist  
Board



Reforestation in the Sil  
ravine (hazelnut trees,  
walnut trees, cherry  
trees, maples, etc.).  
Photo from 2005.



Walk towards the river  
with steep slopes.



View of the García Ojeda Bridge, from the Moclín Tower



View of the city of Ponferrada, from the Castle, on the right bank of the river



View of the Torre del Duque de Arjona (still without cover). To the right, below, the Sil River. In the background is Mount Pajariel.



View from the Castle of the Sil river bridge, built on the old one that gave its name to the city.



Reflection of the Castle  
in the Sil River, a  
winter day.

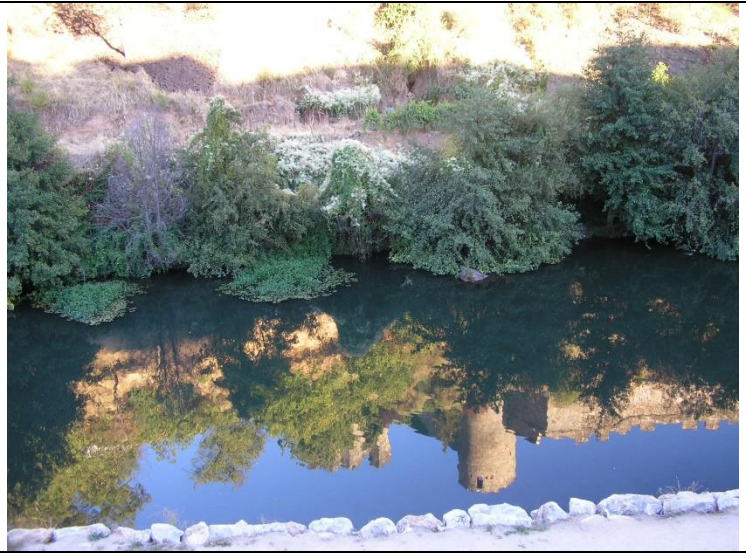


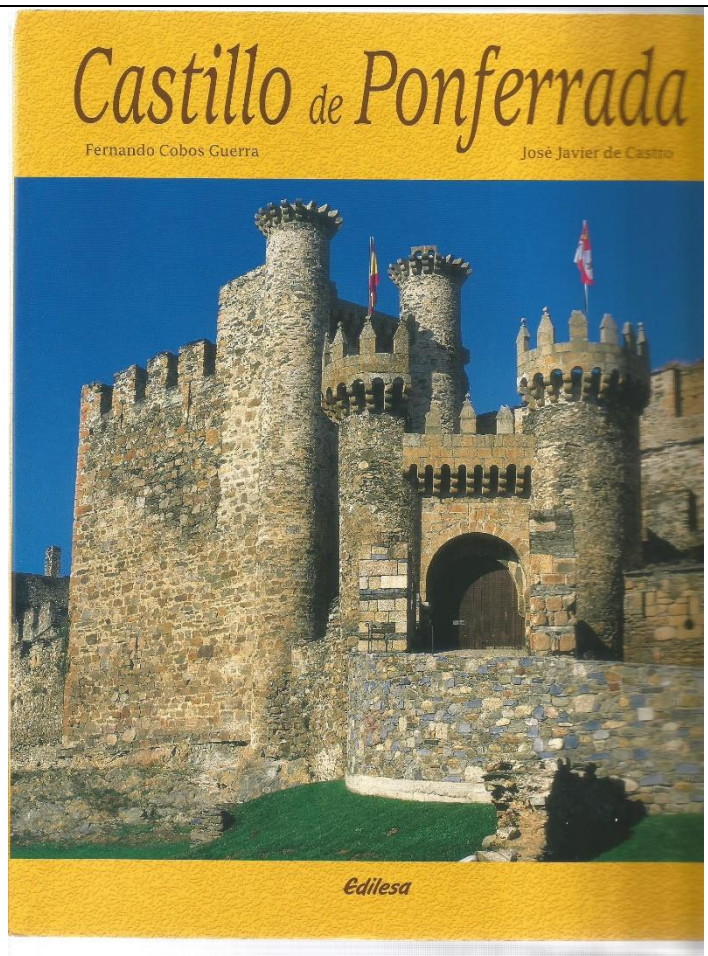
Image of the Sil River,  
above the Castle, in the  
background the García  
Ojeda Bridge and  
Mount Pajariel



# Bibliography

Fernando Cobos Guerra is an architect and is a specialist in documentation and restoration of Historical Heritage. He is possibly the person who knows Ponferrada Castle best, having directed the studies and the works carried out there.

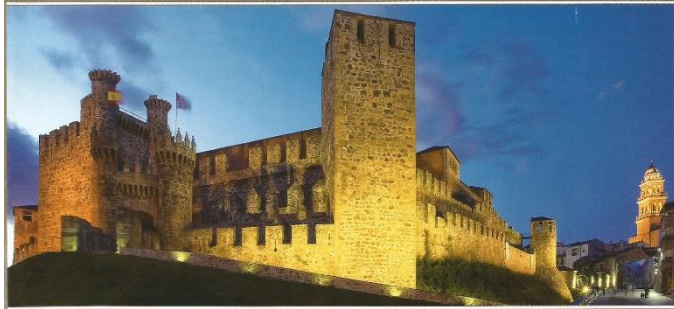
José Javier de Castro Fernández is an economist by profession and is linked to the Spanish Association of Friends of Castles. He has extensive experience in researching documentary and historical collections.



Vicente Fernández Vázquez is a great researcher who has studied Ponferrada Castle in depth with the historical rigor that is usual there.

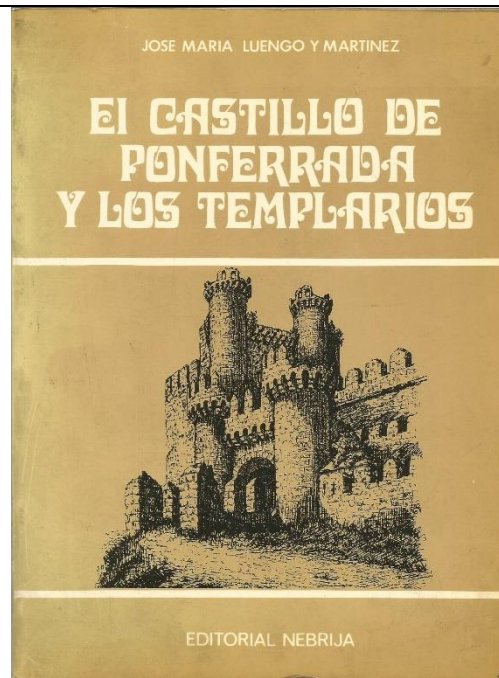
# Ponferrada

ARTÍSTICA Y MONUMENTAL

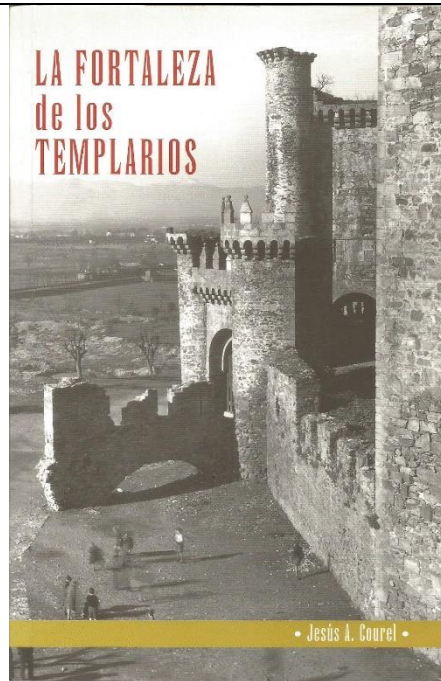


Vicente Fernández Vázquez

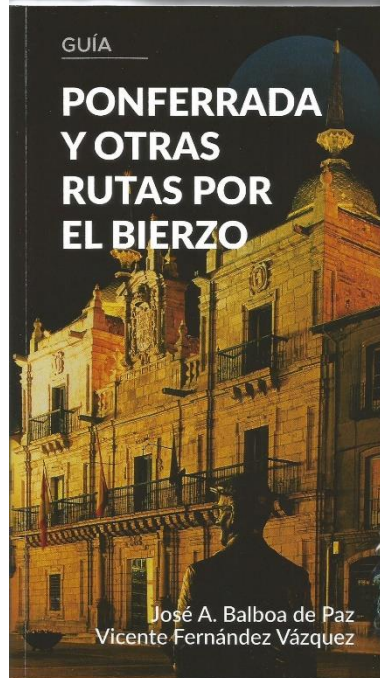
This book by José María Luengo y Martínez contributed greatly to the knowledge of Ponferrada Castle, through a rigorous and accurate analysis, uniting, as the author himself points out, two mother stones: Art and History.



This book by Jesús A. Courel is a reference work to know, in turn, the impressions of those authors who have written things about Ponferrada Castle.



This book is a perfect guide that explains the essential information about Ponferrada Castle that you need to know, by two renowned authors, José Antonio Balboa de Paz and Vicente Fernández Vázquez.



## Conclusion

The current situation is frankly optimal. The Ponferrada Castle has been rehabilitated and receives numerous visitors. It is a milestone on the revitalized Camino de Santiago.

On the other hand, its large perimeter, its walls, always majestic, its large enclosure and the interior and recovered areas, make it, without a doubt, the great castle of the N.W. Of the peninsula.

Let's visit it and take care of it. The new generations will thus be able to enjoy a great heritage asset, which is also the indisputable symbol of the city of Ponferrada.



## 2.- Visit to the Carracedo Monastery



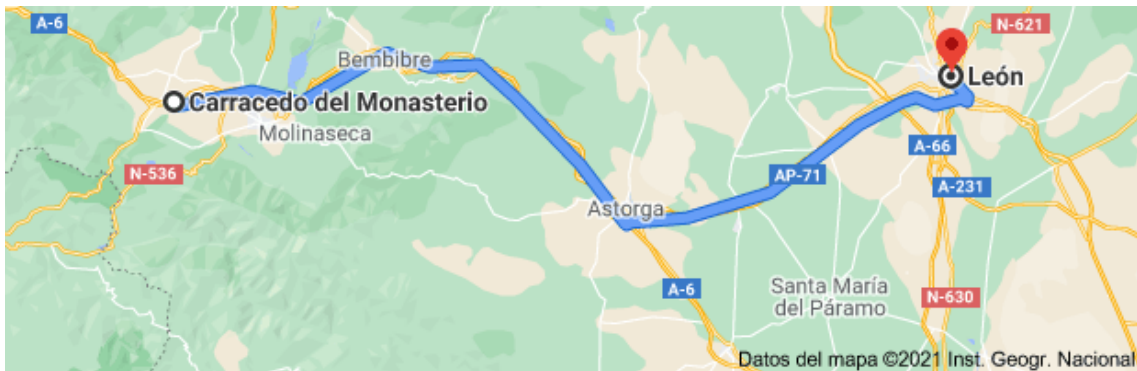
## Location.

The Carracedo Monastery is located in the town of the same name, belonging to the municipality of Carracedelo, in the Bierzo region, province of León, 16 km away from Ponferrada.



As José Antonio Balboa points out, this Monastery “close to major communications, but separated from them, is like a green and solitary oasis, today an orchard of wooded meadows, crop fields and rows of fruit trees.”

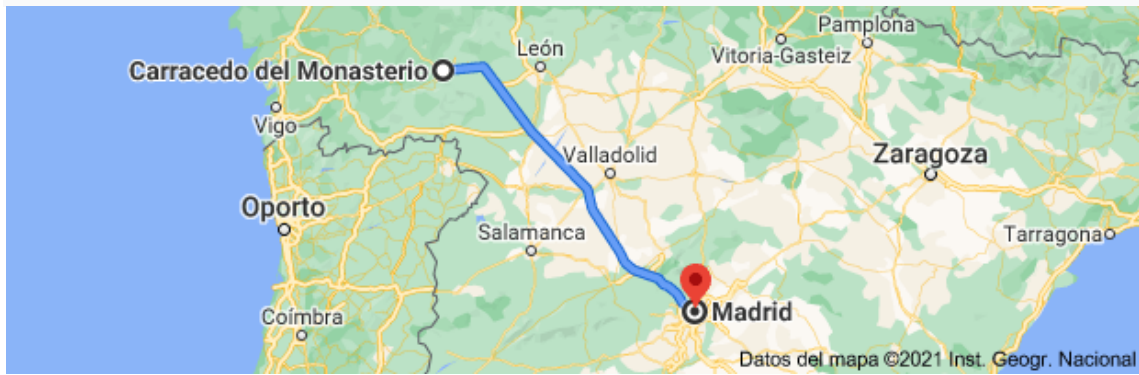
Let's see the reference with León



And with La Coruña



## And with Madrid



## Aerial view



The Mirador de la Reina, "Jewel in the Crown"



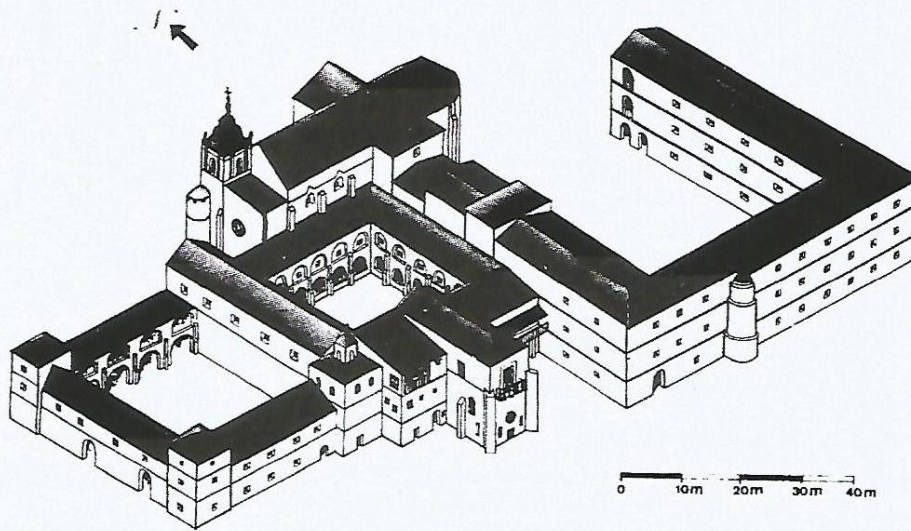


It is the regular Cloister that is best preserved and rehabilitated, with the south wing (with the Refectory and the Library) and especially the east or palatial wing (with the Chapter House and the Queen's Viewpoint) being the most valuable and best preserved areas. .

Below we present a figuration by Vicente Fernández Vázquez that makes us imagine what the group would have been like in its best moment.

## MONASTERIO DE CARRACEDO HACIA FINALES DEL SIGLO XVIII

Figuración según Vicente Fernández V.

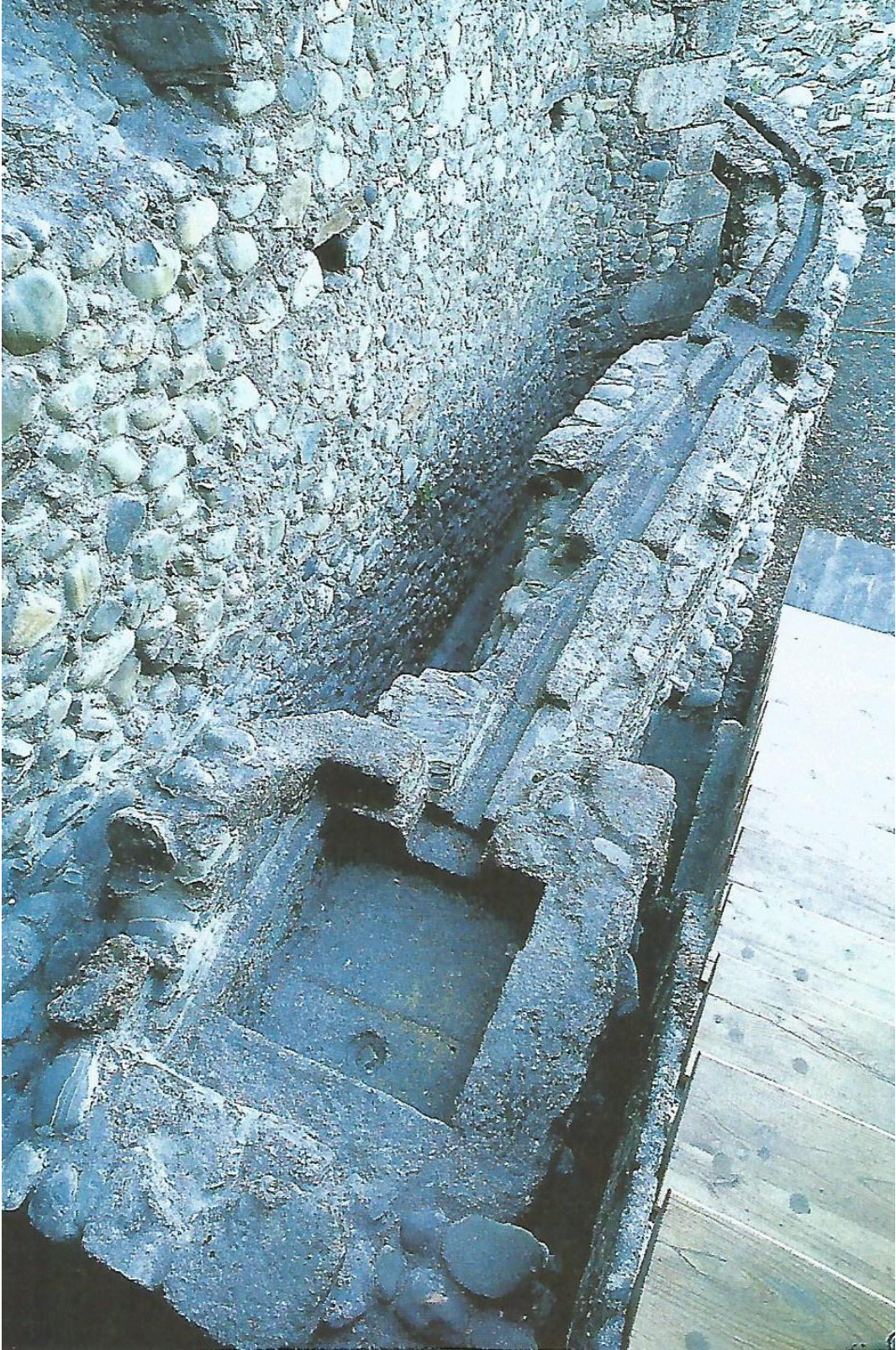


### The fountain

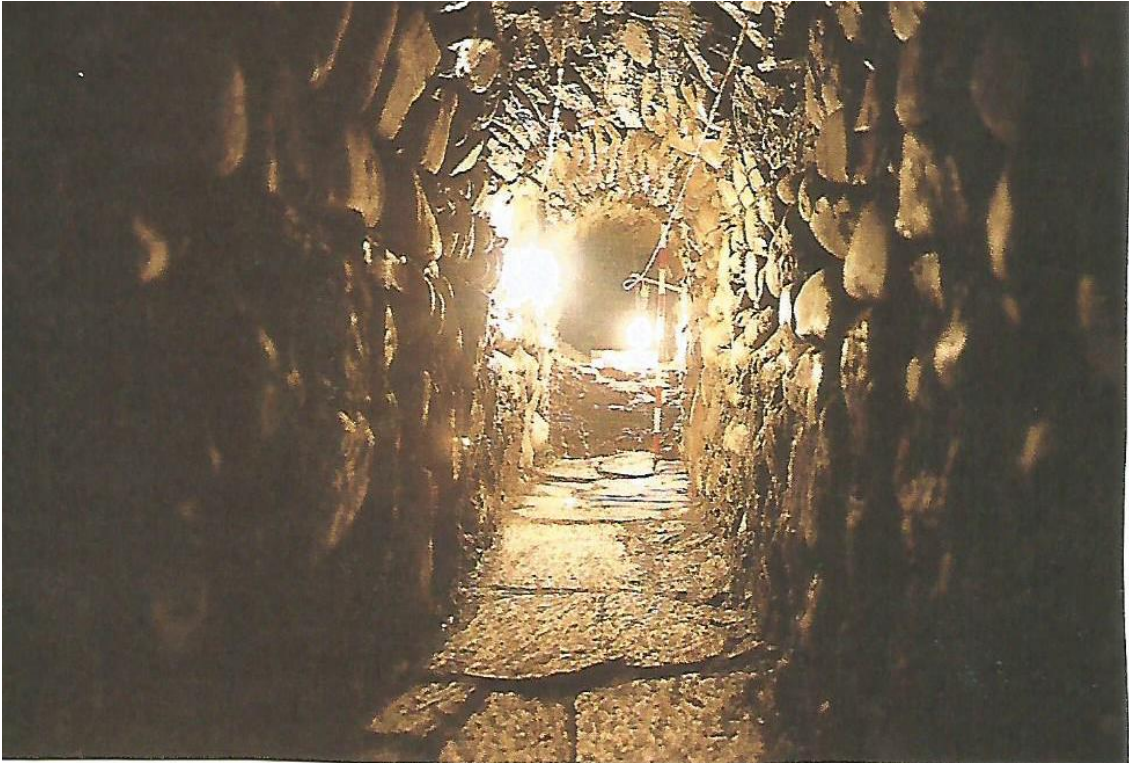
José Antonio Balboa says that an ingenious hydraulic system, with aqueducts and pipes, supplied the water necessary to feed the fountain, kitchen and refectory, as well as to clean the latrines.

The Cloister Fountain, popularly called “El Meirón”, also “La Chata”, even “La Meona”, is currently located in the gardens of Villafranca.

Carracedo hydraulic system. Image 1.



Carracedo hydraulic system. Image 2.



Remains of the  
fountain



“La Meona” fountain in the gardens of Villafranca del Bierzo



## The Chapter House

A Romanesque doorway, flanked by two windows, gives access to the Chapter House, with a square floor plan, divided by four columns into nine spaces covered by ribbed vaults.

In the side walls several niches once served as tombs of abbots. However, Jovellanos confirms the use of this room as a chapter house “with wooden seats.”

## Entrance to the Chapter House



Chapter house. Image 1



Chapter house. Image 2



## The Parlor and the Passage to the orchard

Next to the Chapter House we find two narrow and long naves, each measuring 14 by only two meters wide, covered with barrel vaults. These rooms correspond or seem to correspond with the Locutory and the Passage to the orchard or eastern patio.

Passage to the garden



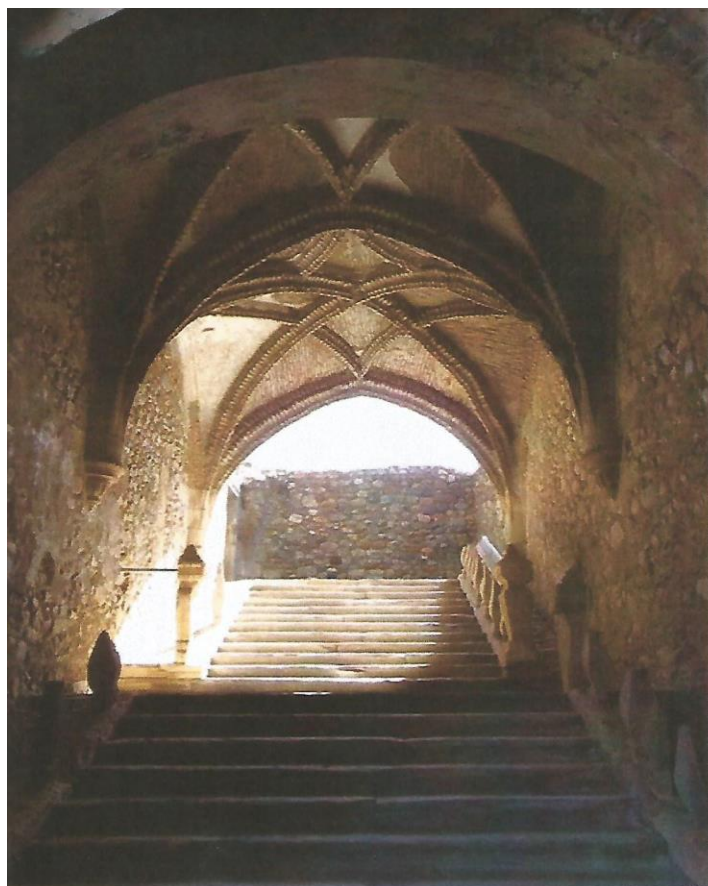
## The Archive

A two-section staircase leads to the room called “The Archive”, formerly the chapel of the royal palace or at least the Abbot's chapel.

If you talk in the corners, you get strange echoes in other areas of the same room, as we have seen.

At the back, to the west, with a half-barrel vault, there is a small room called the “crazy ones”, which acts as an antechamber.

Stairway to the Archive. Image 1.



Access ladder to the Archive. Image 2.



The archive



## The Queen's Kitchen.

The Queen's Kitchen has had different uses. It has been the abbot's audience room and later the monastery's bread room. It is located on the axis of the Chapter House and is entered through a door in the north wall of the Archive.

The Kitchen has a square plan, like the Chapter House, with four slender columns, with raised cylindrical bases, smooth shafts and Corinthian capitals.

It is a very illuminated room, open to the east and west through several windows and rose windows, with the Mirador de la Reina standing out on the east side.

Access staircase to the Queen's Kitchen



## Queen's Kitchen



## The Queen's Viewpoint.

This viewpoint is a covered gallery with three arches, the two lateral ones semicircular and the central one pointed.

From the Queen's Kitchen you access the gallery through a door with a semicircular arch.

The entire complex, José Antonio Balboa tells us, is of great beauty and alone marks the uniqueness that fully identifies it.

From the viewpoint a staircase leads to the eastern courtyard, of which nothing remains, except the remains of a tower on the eastern canvas.

Queen's Viewpoint. Image 1.



Queen's Viewpoint. Image 2.



The Refectory.

The southern area of the cloister or panda of the refectory is the best preserved and almost the only one in which the ribbed vault can be seen in its entirety.

The kitchen, the refectory and the winter abbey room open towards this gallery.

Perpendicular to the bay, the Refectory is a huge room, where you can still see various construction moments, from its first medieval wall to the roof with a type of reticular vault from the 16th century.

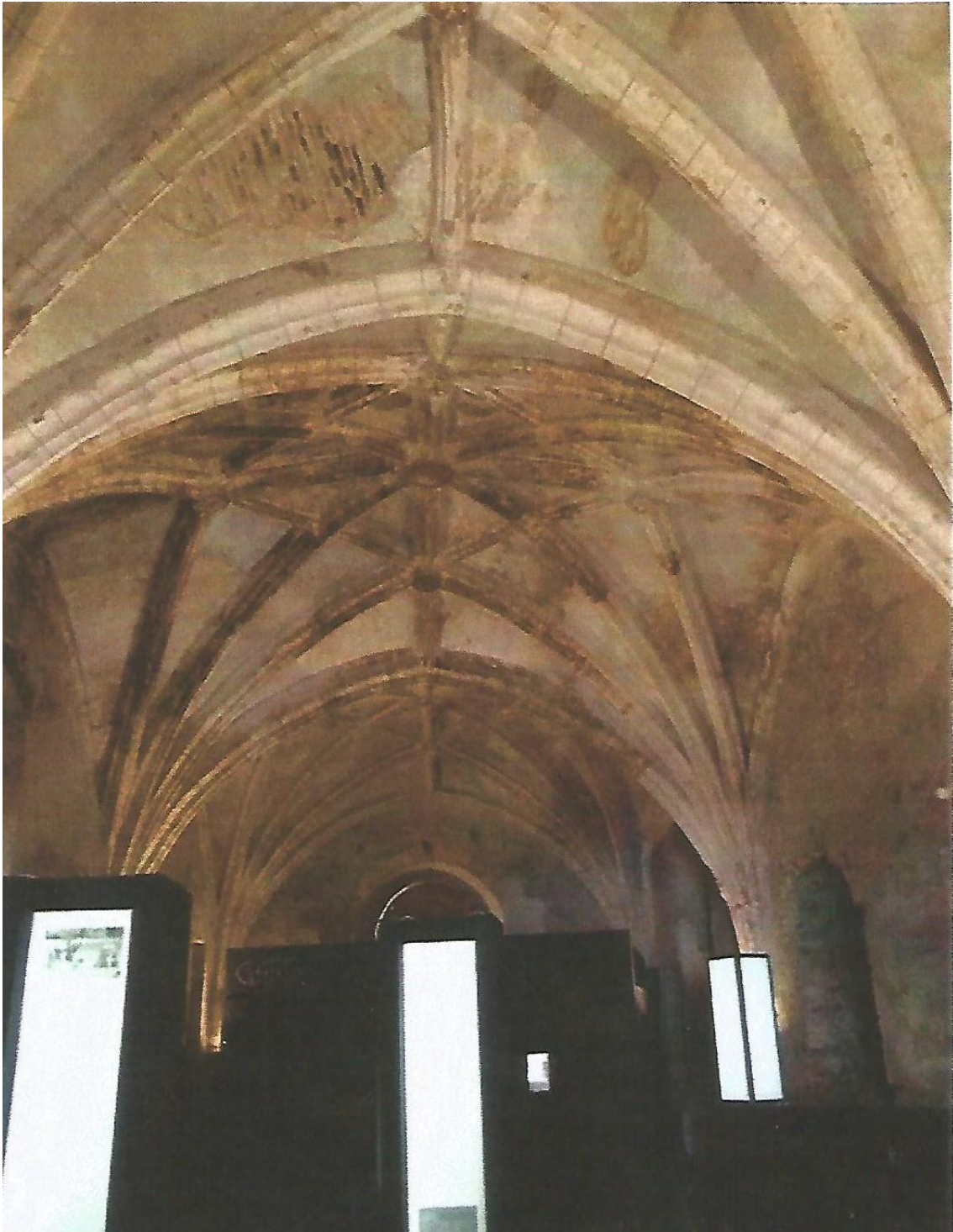
We must also highlight the large windows built in the 18th century, with the immense oculus on the south wall, framed to the outside by two robust buttresses.

Today it is the place of reception and explanation with large panels of the structure of the monastery.

The Refectory. Image 1.



The Refectory. Image 2.



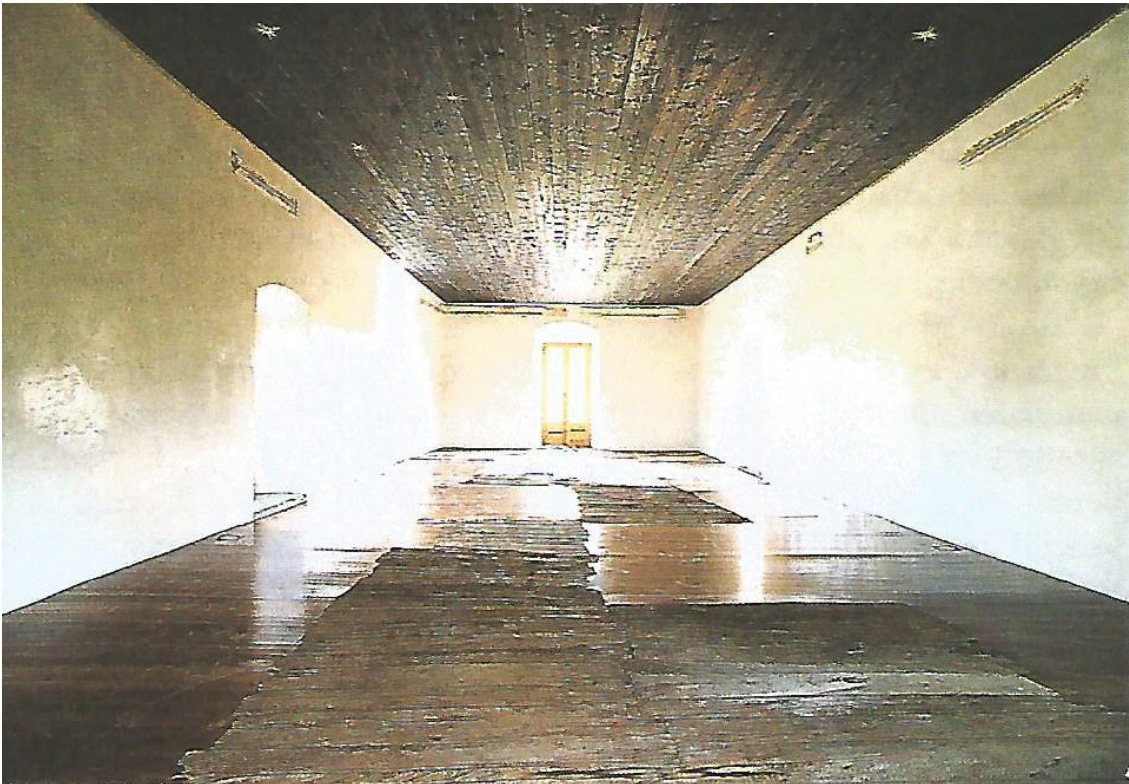
. The Refectory. Image 3



## Library.

The library was built above the refectory, of which Jovellanos comments: “Good bookstore, wide and large, and quite illuminated, although it could be more so; quite a few books, although not full, and good ones, although not in everything.”

## Old Library



In the same wing where the library is located, in the cellar rooms, there is a terrace-viewpoint where you can see the A6 highway in the distance and in the background the mountains that surround the Bercian valley.

Terrace-viewpoint. Image 1



Terrace-viewpoint. Image 2



## Church.

The current church is built on the old one on the north façade of the regular Cloister.

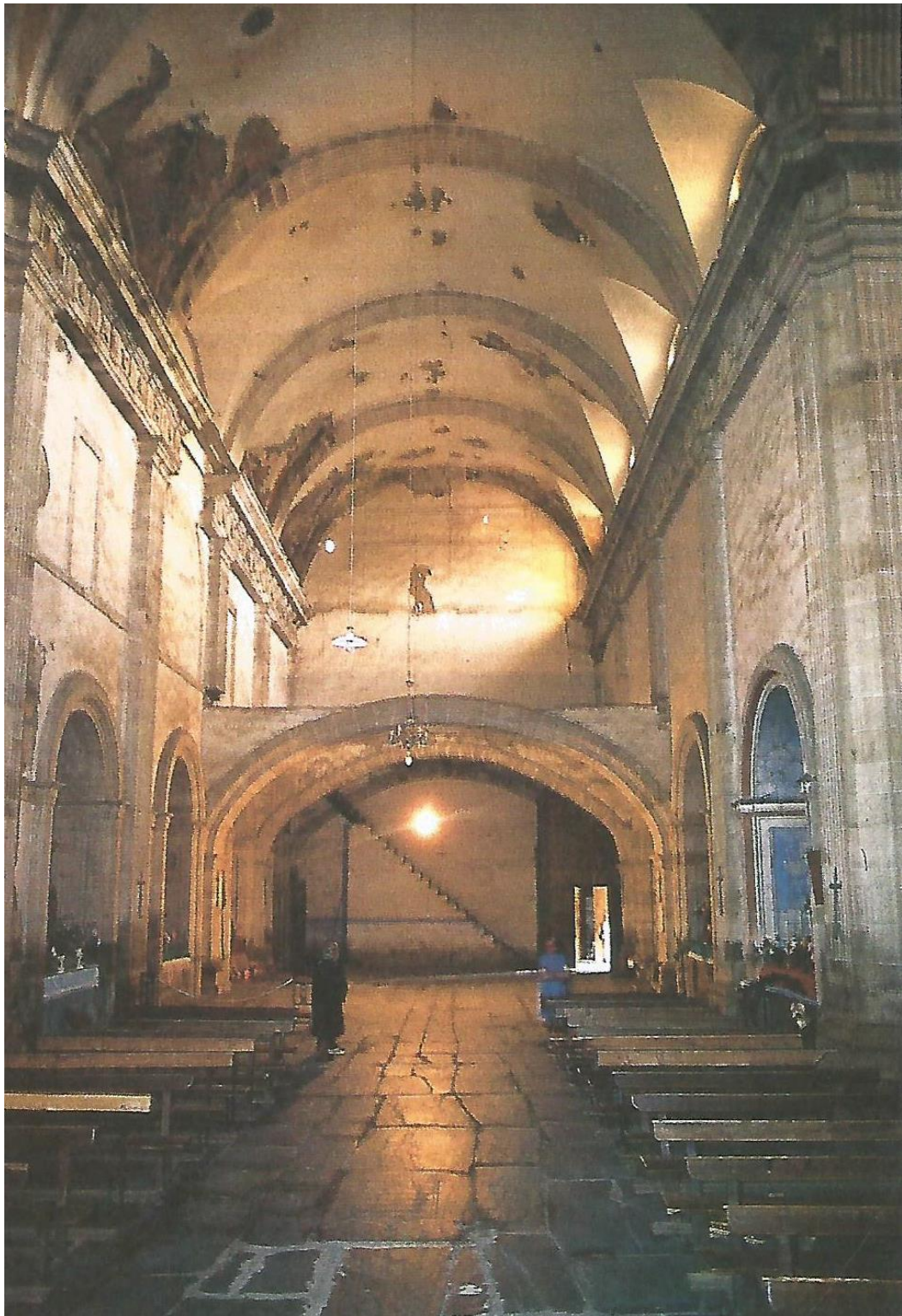
Between the new, narrower church, and the old, wider one, there was a narrow corridor that forms the south side of the church and the north side of the cloister.

On the northern façade of the old façade there are two statues-columns corresponding to Abbot Florencio and Emperor Alfonso VII, of whom we have already spoken.

The current church is neoclassical in style, with a single nave, transept and semicircular apse. The nave is covered with a half-barrel vault.

This new church is just as long as the old one (50 m) but as we have said it is narrower (10.5 m by 15 m in the old one), although it has an impressive height (15 m).

Interior of the current Church.



Effigy of Abbot Florencio



Effigy of Emperor Alfonso VII



The fingerprints of the stonemasons.

*The signs of the stonemasons in the Romanesque churches of Spain* is a book by José Luis Bozal González.

This book reveals to us, for the first time, the meaning and function of the stonemason's signs. They are not identification marks but religious symbols of protection of the temple against the devil and evil spirits.

The significant signs that appear in the Carracedo Monastery are the following:

<u>PADRE</u>	<u>P</u> Pater
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<u>FILIUS.</u>	<u>+</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Ih</u>
----------------	----------	----------	-----------

<u>: SPIRITUS SANCTUS.</u>	<u>S</u>
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<u>Símbolos de ALFA/OMEGA.</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>ω</u>	<u>W</u>
--------------------------------	----------	----------	----------

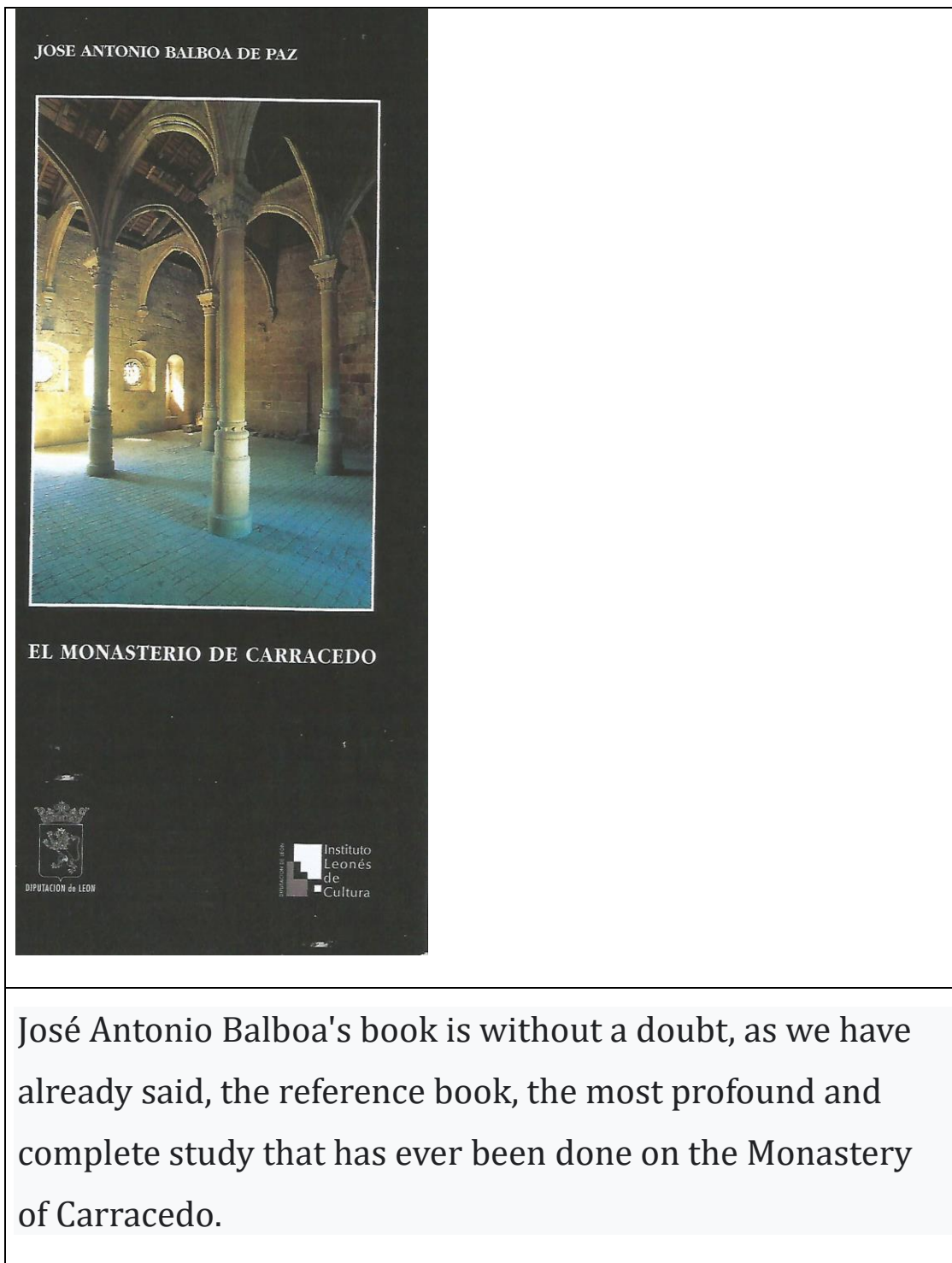


Example of a stonemason sign of the Holy Spirit located in the Monastery of Carracedo

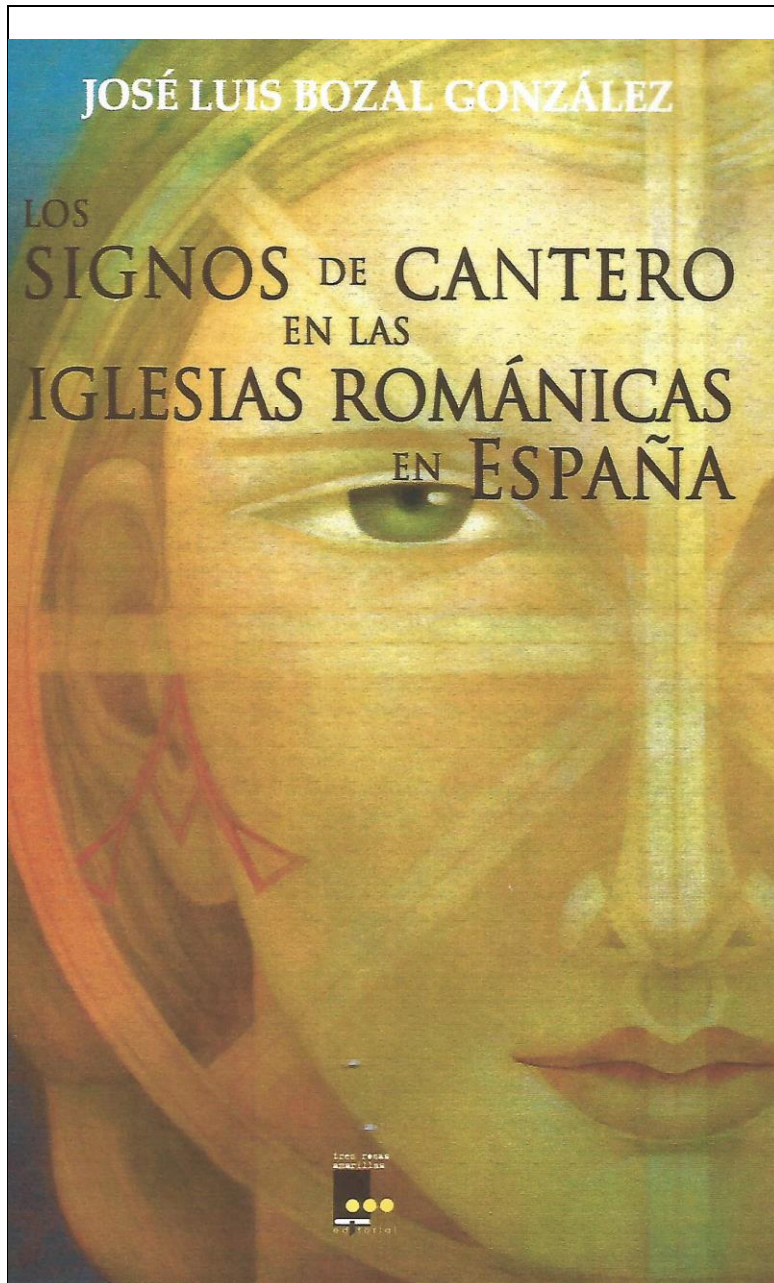


According to José Antonio Balboa, the stonemason marks, so numerous in Carracedo, must have been the work of qualified specialists, salaried workers whose names are difficult to trace in existing documents.

## Bibliography.



José Antonio Balboa's book is without a doubt, as we have already said, the reference book, the most profound and complete study that has ever been done on the Monastery of Carracedo.



As we have already mentioned, José Luis's book is unique and very complete on the subject of the signs of the stonemasons, about which I have spoken a lot with the author, as well as other topics such as the Templars and the Thought of Teilhard de Chardin.

*JOSE ANTONIO IGLESIAS ARIAS*

# ***EL MONASTERIO DE CARRACEDO***



*EDICIONES LANCIA*

This book by José Antonio Iglesias is a very interesting informative guide about the Monastery of Carracedo.

## Illustrative photos

Queen's  
Kitchen  
Oculus



Chapter House.  
Capital detail.



Chapter House.

Capital detail.

.



High window in the Queen's Kitchen



Irrigation ditch



Queen's Kitchen



Stairway to the Archive



Staircase leading to the Queen's Kitchen



Queen's Viewpoint



Chapter House. Image 1.



Chapter House. Image 2



Semi-ruined tower of the third  
Cloister or Courtyard



Cover of the Chapter House



Aerial view



## Queen's Viewpoint



### 3.- Magical photos of Astorga

















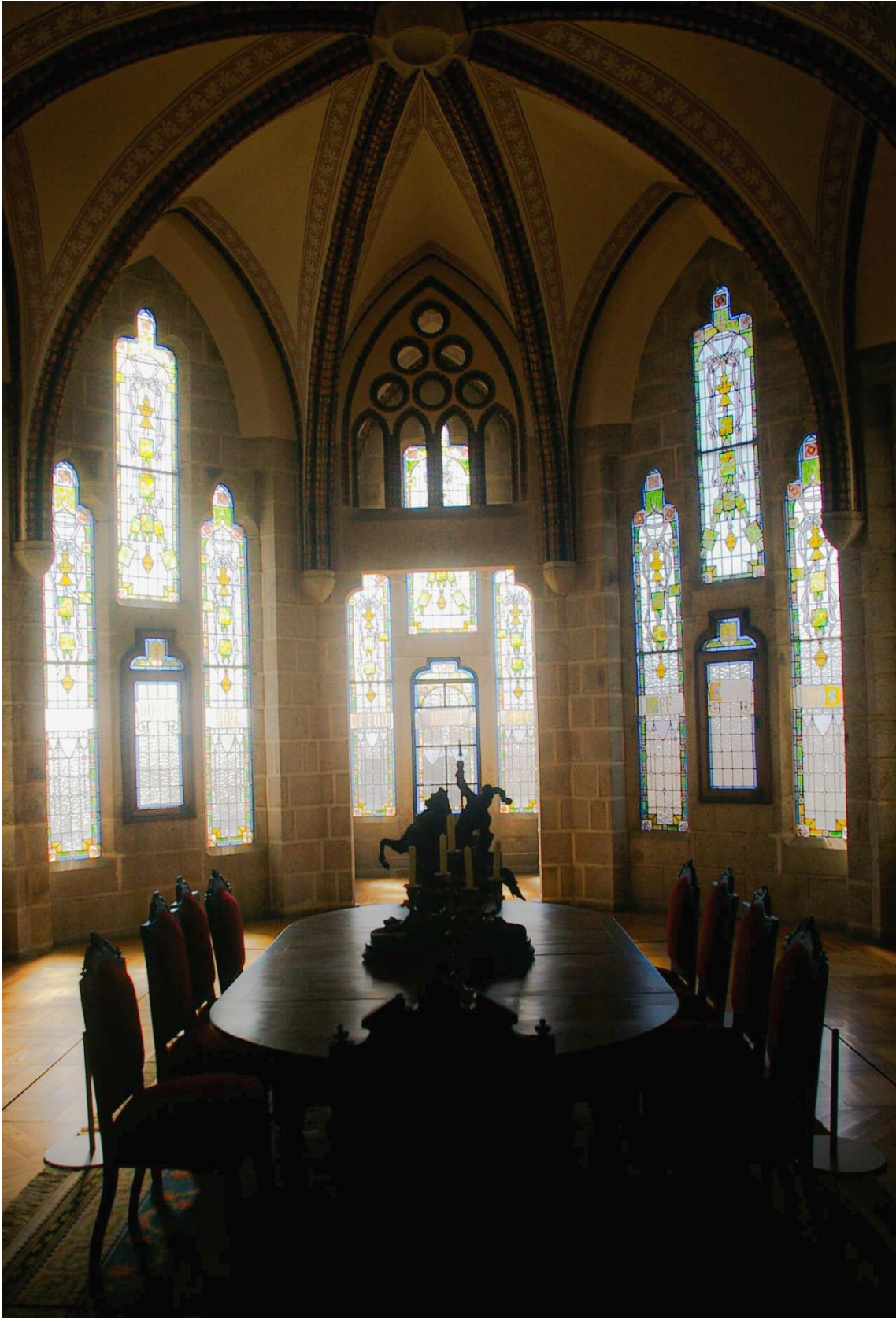














## 4.- Magical photos of Bordeaux (France)















## 5.- Magical photos of the Madrid Botanical Garden.





































## 6.- My locus amenus.

