



**The Hispano-Islamisms of Juan Guas. The fabrication of a
Historiographical Stereotype**
**Os hispano-islamismos de Juan Guas. A fabricação de um estereótipo
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Resumen: Durante el pasado siglo XX, la historiografía de tendencia formalista, teñida de nacionalismo, desarrolló la idea de que el foco toledano de arquitectura tardogótica, protagonizado por Juan Guas, se había impregnado de una serie de elementos procedentes de la arquitectura hispano musulmana, dando como resultado incluso un estilo propio e hispanizado que habría modificado sus características esencialmente nórdicas. Este ensayo analiza cómo se fue construyendo esa visión historiográfica, quienes la impulsaron, y cuáles fueron sus argumentos y apoyos metodológicos. De esa forma se puede no sólo reconstruir el proceso, sino revisarlo y criticar sus presupuestos.

Abstract: Formalist currents tinged with nationalism in twentieth century historiography developed the idea of Toledo's late Gothic architecture being imbued with elements and features from Hispano-Islamic architecture, especially in the case of one of its leading lights, the architect Juan Guas. This gave rise to descriptions of a specific, hispanicized style, which had modified its essentially Northern European characteristics. This essay analyses the gradual construction of the aforementioned historiographical viewpoint, its champions, and their arguments and methodological approach. The process can then be reconstructed, with a view to revisiting it and critically analysing underlying assumptions.

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Art historiography has defined Juan Guas as a leading exponent of the second generation of Northern European architects, active in Spain, associated with the so called Hispanicized phase of late Gothic. The first generation had introduced late Gothic architecture to the Crown of Castile half way through the fifteenth century. The same historiography observes that while in Burgos the now Hispanic descendants of that first generation showed virtually no sign of adapting to local models, those working in Toledo and its geographical area, had clearly undergone some kind of Hispanicization, which was at times striking. This Hispanicization is said to have led to the development of stylistic features some have described as “Hispano-Flemish”, resulting from the hybridization of Flemish-Burgundian and German Flamboyant Gothic forms with those associated with the Hispanic style par excellence, Islamic-*mudéjar*².

The definition of this commonly held belief, or well-known historiographical stereotype is therefore noteworthy. The hypotheses have not however, always been accepted by everyone concerned, and the methodological models employed by the historiography to formulate them appear, in certain respects, questionable. This text aims to analyse the process of constructing a historiographical category of this nature with two objectives. First, to evaluate the construction model itself, as regards the development of different methodologies and the creation of premises tied to particular ideological domains, and second, to provide a critical approach to several aspects of a historiographical stereotype which, despite appearing to propose numerous seemingly irrefutable areas of study, offers up others that are at the very least debatable.

² This paper, developed further and completed here, has its origins in our contribution to a collective book edited by ALONSO RUIZ, Begoña entitled, *La arquitectura tardogótica castellana entre Europa y América*. Madrid: Silex, 2011, pp. 325-37.

Juan Guas was reportedly born in Brittany, France, and moved to Toledo when he was very young. He came to the city with his father, who was a member of the group of stonemasons and sculptors in the workshop of Hannequin of Brussels. The young Guas would therefore have begun his training alongside his father and the rest of the workshop, while the Flemish architect was working on the cathedral of the city. He probably started his career as an apprentice in the field of sculpture, stonework and architecture.

Then, as the previous generation faded from view, he would have become a front line architect, working for major ecclesiastical and civil institutions, such as the Crown and the aristocratic House of Mendoza. It was at this time that the alleged “influence” of Islamic and *mudéjar* art, especially in and around Toledo³, would have made its mark on him. This “influence” is however, only apparent in a limited number of his buildings. Specifically, the castle and palace built for the House of Mendoza, and in the San Juan de los Reyes

³ On Juan Guas, in addition to the bibliography analysed below, see: CORTARELO, Emilio. “El licenciado Sebastián de Horozco y sus obras”, *Boletín de la Real Academia Española*. II (1915), pp. 645-694. RAMÍREZ DE ARELLANO, Rafael. *Catálogo de los artífices que trabajaron en Toledo y cuyos nombre y obras aparecen en los archivos de sus parroquias*. Toledo: Imprenta Provincial, 1920. SEDÓ, Salvador. “¿Data en realidad de 1478 el proyecto de San Juan de los Reyes de Juan Guas?”, *Archivo Español de Arte*. 17 (1944), pp. 133-134. HERNÁNDEZ, Arturo. “Juan Guas maestro de obras de la catedral de Segovia (1472-1491)”, *Boletín del Seminario de Estudios de Arte y Arqueología*. XIII (1946-47), pp. 57-100. GARCÍA CHICO, Esteban. “Juan Guas y la capilla del colegio de San Gregorio”, *Boletín del Seminario de Estudios de Arte y Arqueología*. 16 (1949-50), pp. 200-201. AZCÁRATE, José María de. “Sobre el origen de Juan Guas”, *Archivo Español de Arte*. 23 (1950), pp. 255-256. AZCÁRATE, José María de. “Unos documentos sobre Juan Guas”, *Boletín del Seminario de Estudios de Arte y Arqueología*. 26 (1960), pp. 329-357. BRANS, J. V. L. “Juan Guas, escultor”, *Goya*. 36 (1960), pp. 362-367. ARRIBAS, Filemón. “Noticias sobre San Juan de los Reyes”, *Boletín del Seminario de Estudios de Arte y Arqueología*. 29 (1963), pp. 43-72. MARIAS, Fernando. “Una carta de censo y tributo otorgada por Juan Guas”, *Boletín del Seminario de Estudios de Arte y Arqueología*. 40-41 (1975), pp. 646-648. MARTÍNEZ FRÍAS, José María. *La huella de Juan Guas en la catedral de Ávila*. Ávila: Fundación Santa Teresa, 1998. CARRERO, Eduardo. “La iglesia del monasterio de Santa Cruz la Real de Segovia a finales del siglo XV: una confluencia de modelos de la arquitectura tardogótica castellana”, *Anuario de la Universidad SEK*. 5 (1999), pp. 77-98. ABAD CASTRO, Concepción. “Juan Guas y la capilla de ‘La Piedad’ en el convento de San Francisco de Ávila”, *Anuario del Departamento de Historia y Teoría del Arte (UAM)*. XV (2003), pp. 29-44. LÓPEZ DÍEZ, María. “Juan Guas en la catedral de Segovia”, *Archivo Español de Arte*. 79, 315 (2006), pp. 299-306. LÓPEZ DÍEZ, María. *Los Trastámara en Segovia: Juan Guas, maestro de obras reales*. Segovia: Caja Segovia, 2006.



Monastery. According to historiographical tradition, in all his other buildings, it only appears in very isolated and secondary details.

I. The process of Constructing the Historiographical Stereotype

An analysis of how the historiography of art has, over time, defined the figure of Juan Guas and his most important work, brings to light a number of stages and currents of opinion as regards the area of interest here; his Hispano-Islamisms. Early studies into the most important and significant buildings of Juan Guas (the Palace of the Infantado, Guadalajara, and the San Juan de los Reyes Monastery, Toledo) were brief and schematic, and somewhat noncommittal in their viewpoints. Antonio Ponz refers to the San Juan de los Reyes Monastery as a work of architecture “belonging to the genre we inappropriately called, and still call Gothic, in order to distinguish it from what we call Greek or Roman”⁴, with no further explanation. Juan Agustín Ceán has nothing to say about the architecture of Guas, since he treats him as a sculptor⁵. Eugenio Llaguno restricts his opinions on the San Juan de los Reyes Monastery to stating: “The church is decorated inside and out with work of a Gothic-Germanic taste, to which it belongs”⁶. José Caveda provides, as well, a very limited and generalist viewpoint⁷.

Early Hispano-Gothic architectural historians do not appear to stress the importance of possible Hispanisms either. When he discusses the Franciscan Monastery in Toledo, George E. Street focuses on and criticises the complexity of the decoration, and despite mentioning all kinds of trifling details, does not once refer to Orientalisms or Islamisms in this outstanding and archetypal Guas building. And this is despite alluding to these when describing the city’s architecture, including the chevet triforium of the cathedral, in which “the first evidence is found of some knowledge of

⁴ PONZ, Antonio. *Viaje de España*. Madrid: J. Ibarra, 1776, I, p. 152.

⁵ CEÁN BERMÚDEZ, Juan Agustín. *Diccionario histórico de los más ilustres profesores de las Bellas Artes en España*. Madrid: Viuda de Ibarra, 1800, II, p. 237.

⁶ LLAGUNO, Eugenio. *Noticias de los arquitectos y arquitectura de España desde su restauración*. Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1829, I, p. 113.

⁷ CAVEDA, José. *Ensayo histórico sobre los diversos géneros de arquitectura empleados en España desde la dominación romana hasta nuestros días*. Zaragoza: Imprenta de Santiago Saunague, 1848 (1986), pp. 278 and 311-327.

Moorish architecture”⁸. The absence of stylistic references –and not only to Hispano-Islamic elements– in the treatises devoted to the Palace of the Infantado and the San Juan de los Reyes Monastery in *Monumentos arquitectónicos de España* by José Amador de los Ríos⁹ is perhaps more surprising still. José María Quadrado does not allude to Islamisms in the Monastery in Toledo either¹⁰, and neither does Sixto Ramón Parro, who quotes Amador de los Ríos at length¹¹.

Stereotypical references to the Hispano-Islamisms of Juan Guas started to appear at the beginning of the twentieth century. Interpretations began to change with the influence of architect-restorers and historians linked to currents of nineteenth century positivism, with its deterministic viewpoint that looked to find conditioning factors for artistic creation in peoples, races and environments, in the style of Hippolyte Taine. Although the search for a specific, national, and Spanish art had already begun with authors such as Amador de los Ríos (in his “*Mudéjar*”¹²), the first references to the Islamisms of Juan Guas can be found in another noteworthy author; Vicente Lampérez. In his 1909 work entitled *Historia de la arquitectura cristiana española en la Edad Media*, the San Juan de los Reyes Monastery is again the central focus for

⁸ STREET, George E. *La arquitectura gótica en España*. Madrid: Saturnino Calleja, 1926 (*Some accounts of Gothic Architecture in Spain*, London: John Murray, 1865), pp. 275 and 265.

⁹ AMADOR DE LOS RÍOS, José. *Palacio ducal del Infantado en Guadalajara*. Madrid: José Gil Dorregaray, 1877. AMADOR DE LOS RÍOS, José and ASSAS, Manuel de. *El monasterio de San Juan de los Reyes, en Toledo*. Madrid: José Gil Dorregaray, 1877. Moreover, when referring to the decorative elements imitating *muqarnas* (stalactite work), he states: “The single capital of each pillar in the apse contains three lines of mini-vaults crammed together in the form of inverted terracing, alongside other more commonplace adornments” (page 12). This is surprising since Amador was considered to be one of the main champions of the study of art from a nationalist viewpoint. Others were set to take up his mantle. See SAZATORNIL RUIZ, Luis. “Historia, historiografía e historicismo en la arquitectura romántica española”, *Historiografía del arte español en los siglos XIX y XX*. Madrid: CSIC, 1995, pp. 63-75.

¹⁰ QUADRADO, José María. *Recuerdos y bellezas de España. Castilla la Nueva. Toledo*. Toledo: José Repullés, 1853, p. 422. However, somewhat cryptically, he says the stylistic corruption began when late Gothic started to fade, “with twofold Arabic and Greco-Roman influences”.

¹¹ PARRO, Sixto Ramón. *Toledo en la mano*. Toledo: S. López Fando, 1857, II, p. 17

¹² AMADOR DE LOS RÍOS, José. *El estilo mudéjar en arquitectura. Discurso leído ante la Real Academia de Nobles Artes de San Fernando y contestación de D. Pedro de Madrazo*. Madrid: Real Academia de Bellas Artes, 1859.

analysis¹³. He describes the structure of its construction as having “nothing exotic or special”, with the possible exception of “the German vaults (without diagonals) that dominate the church and cloister”. A little later on however, he refers to a rib vault of interlaced arches in the dome tower of the crossing, “which has a partly Muslim inspiration”. As can be observed, prudence was still tempering assessments and analyses. When Lampérez refers to ornamentation, he once again alludes to “the German-Burgundian schools”, as a consequence of the decorative exuberance.

But the allusion to Hispanic understood as “Muslim-Spanish or *mudéjar* schools” appears once more in the rhythmically repeated models for wall decorations and the meticulousness of the detail. Lampérez provides a nuanced description of this as being defined by models “inspired” in Hispano-Muslim or *mudéjar* art, although the monastery in Toledo also possesses elements “copied” from that world; the so-called “stalactites”, and “the *arrabae* [square framework for an arch in Islamic architecture], festooned arches, and polyhedral corbels Guas lavished on his work”.

Here at last, is a definition of the Hispano-Islamic features the historiography is beginning to recognize as a specific style of the architect, and these are even divided into categories, from inspiration to direct copy. In historiographical terms, the style of Guas begins to take shape when Lampérez describes the ornamentation of San Juan de los Reyes as appearing very different to his work on the “puerta de los Leones of the Cathedral, when his chisel was in thrall to Egas of Brussels”. In general, he perceived a “great deal of Islamic-Spanish, or rather Toledo, in this art”, and added that a comparative study of the Toledo of Guas and the Burgos of Gil de Siloé and Simón de Colonia would reveal the differences between pure Gothic and hybrid styles in greater depth¹⁴. It is clear that stylistic concepts mix with a pronounced nationalism,

¹³ He also studied other architectural works. In his *Arquitectura civil española de los siglos I al XVIII*, (Madrid: Saturnino Calleja, 1922, I, pp. 278-279), Vicente Lampérez makes meagre references to the “stalactites” of the cornices, and the “very especially Spanish” nature of the viewing balcony or loggia in the Castle of Real de Manzanares, but does allude to the “Isabelline” style, a baroque and orientalist Gothic, when discussing the Palace of the Infantado. Islamic allusions only appear when reference is made to the excessive decoration in the palace in Guadalajara; its interior ceilings and the “stalactites” under the loggia, which would logically have emulated the above-mentioned castle (pp. 472-474).

¹⁴ LAMPÉREZ, Vicente. *Historia de la arquitectura cristiana española en la Edad Media*. Madrid: Juan Gili, 1909, pp. 528-529.

in an attempt to define a kind of determinism with its origins in Taine, which reflects the transformative power of foreignness through mixing or hybridisation, and demonstrates Spain's creative artistic potential in contrast to pure importation¹⁵.

In his attentive study of the Castle of Real de Manzanares, Lampérez already refers to *mocárabes* (stalactite work) and the Islamic nature of the wall decoration based on the sgraffito of rhombuses, as in the Palace of the Infantado and other buildings of the era, and consistently insists on "decadent" Gothic being replete with "*mudéjar* reminiscences"¹⁶. In his *Arquitectura civil española de los siglos I al XVIII*, Lampérez hardly makes any reference to the "stalactites" of the cornices and the "very especially Spanish" nature of the viewing balcony or loggia of the Castle of Real de Manzanares, but does allude to the Isabelline style, orientalised and baroque Gothic, when discussing the Palace of the Infantado¹⁷. Islamic allusions only appear in this text with reference to the excessive decoration of the palace in Guadalajara, the ceilings of its interiors and the "stalactites" under the loggia or viewing balcony, which logically, would have been taken from the above-mentioned castle¹⁸.

Perhaps the most professedly impulsive step taken in the creation of the historiographical stereotype under discussion here, can be found in Émile Bertaux. In his chapter on the Renaissance in Spain and Portugal for the *Histoire de l'Art* edited by André Michel (1911), he refers to the art of the time of the Catholic Monarchs as a discussion between "Germanic art and *mudéjar* art". He insists on the potential of *mudéjar* as a national Spanish characteristic, and on its "adaptations" of Gothic in the fifteenth century: "Interchange between Moorish art and Flamboyant architecture". Given these assumptions, his approach to interpreting the works by Guas is already clearly defined.

¹⁵ GÓMEZ MARTÍNEZ, Javier. *El gótico español de la Edad Moderna. Bóvedas de crucería*. Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid, 1998, 13. LAMPÉREZ, *Historia...*, I, p. 24. On this historiographical nationalism, SAZATORNIL RUIZ, "Historia, historiografía...", 63-75 and CÓMEZ, Rafael. "Nacionalismo e historiografía: El autor de las trazas de la catedral de Sevilla", *Archivo Hispalense*. (1995), pp. 152-259, and in *Gotische Architektur in Spanien*. Madrid-Frankfurt am Main: Iberoamericana-Veruert, 1999, pp. 335-44.

¹⁶ LAMPÉREZ, Vicente. *Los Mendoza del siglo XV y el castillo del Real de Manzanares*. Madrid: Imprenta de Bernardo Rodríguez, 1916, pp. 36, 37 and 43.

¹⁷ LAMPÉREZ. *Historia...*, I, pp. 277-279.

¹⁸ LAMPÉREZ. *Historia...*, I, pp. 472-474.



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When referring to the Palace of the Infantado in Guadalajara, he highlights the “diamond tips, stalactites, sentry boxes, loggia” as being, in his opinion, very similar to their Andalusian counterparts, to suggest their Islamism.

A new Islamizing element appears in descriptions of San Juan de los Reyes, which was overlooked by Lampérez, and captures the attention of Bertaux without him making any reference to the structure, vaults or other elements of the building. This is the powerful heraldry. He also focuses on “the long inscriptions encircling the interior of San Juan de los Reyes like an endless ribbon”, which he describes as “having nothing Gothic about them apart from the type of letter”. In his opinion, they are transpositions of friezes with inscriptions, taken from Islamic architecture, now Christian in the age of the Catholic Monarchs and the Castilian nobility, and also found in the courtyard and portal of the palace in Guadalajara, the dome tower of the Seo Cathedral in Saragossa, and in the Royal Chapel of Granada.

He also refers to “Muslim stalactites” in the façade of the palace in Guadalajara, and the culmination of the pillars of the crossing of San Juan de los Reyes “associated in the strangest of ways with the Flemish realist sculpted heads”, and the polyhedral corbels of Lampérez, all within the generalized Oriental-Islamism he proposes, although the most striking feature of his analysis is that San Juan de los Reyes has now become a strange building in “our westerner’s eyes”, in the motif of the rhythmic repetition of the eagles upholding the royal coat of arms: “here I find endless repetition”, as in the Alhambra in Granada. Consequently, new elements are brought to life by the grace and favour of Spanish exoticism, which could cause the impression in an unwitting reader of Bertaux’s text that the church of the monastery in Toledo is a marvel to behold and Oriental in its entirety¹⁹. In this way, the Isabelline style came to be defined, and the French public was provided with an exotic view of Hispanic art²⁰.

Lampérez himself was infected with this orientalising and particularism fever, heavily tinged with nationalism and exoticism. In an astonishing text entitled *Una evolución y una revolución de la Arquitectura Española (1480-1520)* presented in

¹⁹ BERTAUX, Émile. “La Renaissance en Espagne et au Portugal”, MICHEL, A. (dir.). *Histoire de l’Art depuis les premiers temps chrétiens jusqu’à nos jours*. Paris: Armand Colin, 1911, IV, 2nd part, pp. 821-827. See also TORMO, Elías. “Las conferencias de M. Emile Bertaux en el Ateneo y en la Universidad. El estilo Isabel la Católica”, *Arte Español*. 1912, p. 112.

²⁰ See SAID, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon, 1978.



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a conference at the Ateneo de Madrid in 1915²¹, he enthusiastically cites the opinions of Bertaux, Marcel Dieulafoy and others, in an attempt to demonstrate the “national hallmark” of Spanish late Gothic architecture. While recognising his theme was not original, his intention was its “popularisation”. He states in this short but highly significant text: “My aim is to demonstrate that in our fifteenth century, there existed a Gothic style that I would call Iberian [...], which was far more Spanish than it was foreign; another example of that constant reaction in our national quintessence to exoticism”.

The goal of Lampérez was to prove Spanish and Portuguese Gothic had gone out on a limb. The expression of its particular development is found in three elements: Gothicism, *mudéjar* and naturalism. The “national elements disfiguring the Flamboyant style” with its northern origins, therefore included typically Spanish features such as the introduction of Islamic structural and decorative elements; vaults, mixtilinear arch designs²², tapestry façade ornamental screens, sometimes in geometric grids, a love of detail and excessive decoration, rhythmic repetition, ornamental motifs, stalactites, etc, as well as all kinds of decorative elements taken from the natural world, and even everyday life (cords, leaves, trunks, branches, algae...).

Many of the examples he gives are especially surprising today. He includes several works by Juan Guas, such as San Juan de los Reyes, the Palace of the Infantado and the Castle of Real de Manzanares. Maybe it was the nature of the conference and its audience, or possibly emboldened by his knowledge of the opinions of Bertaux.

Subsequently, other historians following in the footsteps of Lampérez and Bertaux helped consolidate the stereotype, by contributing with such and such an Islamism discovered as a result of the Hispano-Islamisation of the two or three most noteworthy works of Juan Guas, or by exaggerating to a greater or lesser degree when describing such and such a building as Oriental. In his *Gotik in Spanien* (1928), the German August L. Mayer, provides a personal

²¹ LAMPÉREZ, Vicente. *Una evolución y una revolución de la Arquitectura Española (1480-1520)*. Madrid: Hauser y Menet, 1915.

²² Of “Selguicide” origin according to Dieulafoy, from Hispano-Muslim architecture, specifically the Aljaferia Palace in Saragossa, according to Lampérez. The latter quote: DIEULAFOY, Marcel. *Espagne et Portugal*. Paris: Hachette, 1913, 228. BERTAUX, Émile. *Les arts en Espagne*. Paris: Hachette, 1911.

viewpoint on the topic. In addition to referring to the importance of northern architects in Spanish late Gothic, he touches on the subject matter here when stating that the Gothic masters coming after the first generation, who arrived halfway through the fifteenth century, above all Juan Guas, were an example of the development of “Moorish ideas”, although the only example he provides for these ideas is the construction of the water system in the palace in Guadalajara as cited in earlier sources.

When discussing San Juan de los Reyes, he highlights the capacity of Guas to fuse late Gothic “Baroque” from the North in the execution of sculpted figures, with “the singular and superlative use of Moorish decorative ideas in all of the stonework” so as to create something unique. Once more, the repetition of the heraldic motif in the coats of arms of the crossing “and the fact they [the statues] are viewed as secondary members of the decoration taken as a whole, all goes to show that Guas paid a great deal of attention to detail in his study of Moorish ornamentation and the old *mudéjar* architecture in Toledo in order to create some kind of renaissance in this style”²³.

Despite this being the predominant current in what could be referred to as the “official historiography”, other authors, such as Manuel González Simancas, when making specific allusions to the architectural ornamentation, describe San Juan de los Reyes as a building “with no trace of *mudéjar* whatsoever, which is odd for a building at that time in Toledo”. And this despite constant references to nationalism and the unity of the nation achieved by the Catholic Monarchs²⁴. The case of Weise is more complex because he does not deal specifically with Guas or his work, but does align himself directly with others identifying Islamisms in Spanish late Gothic²⁵.

The definitive definition of the historiographical stereotype appears after the end of the Spanish Civil War. What had come before was characterized by a certain amount of improvisation in what was established with no apparent

²³ MAYER, August L. *El estilo gótico en España*. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1929 (Leipzig, 1928), pp. 15 and 136.

²⁴ GONZÁLEZ SIMANCAS, Manuel. *Toledo. Sus monumentos y el arte ornamental*. Madrid: Regina, 1929, 170. Neither can a large number of references be found in AGAPITO Y REVILLA, Juan. “La arquitectura en tiempos de Isabel la Católica”, *Boletín de la sociedad Española de Excursiones*. I (1904), pp. 440-445.

²⁵ WEISE, Georg. *Studien zur spanischen architektur der Spätgotik*. Reutlingen: Gryphius-Verl., 1933, especially chapters 1 and 4. Indeed, his Wölfflinian view is much more ambitious.



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room for criticism, or at the very least, doubt (with some exceptions) based as it was on repetition and the inclusion of novelties. A major step was taken by Chueca Goitia in 1947, in his *Invariantes castizos de la arquitectura española*, which presented an interpretation of the work of Guas (above all San Juan de los Reyes) in which the spatiality is Oriental, fractured and continuous, as befits his somewhat peculiar national-formalist vision, in which Oriental or Islamic elements almost always take pride of place. In his opinion, the decoration is strictly geometric, and therefore, Oriental.

This consideration takes precedence over all others, with the exception of the birth of a genius of the Spanish nation, as expressed through the work²⁶. All of this therefore, points to the sublimated desire of a historiography driven by an aggravated nationalism searching for its own formalized “patriotic” characteristics, all of which was resurrected in the heat of the General Franco's National Crusade, despite appearing anomalous in the work of Chueca²⁷.

A North American, Beatrice G. Proske, would then repeat the stereotypes concerning the *mudéjar* nature of the decoration, although not so much the nationalism, while discussing the sculpture of San Juan de los Reyes, by pointing in general terms to its richness, and more specifically to the wide and high friezes, and the imitation *muqarnas* (stalactite work)²⁸. She effectively shared the idea of the Spanish training of Guas, and his immersion in *mudéjar*, although not to the exclusion of all else. Although Bernard Bevan did not veer from the traditional standpoint either, he did not go into details or entertain nationalist sentiments²⁹.

²⁶ CHUECA, Fernando. *Invariantes castizos de la arquitectura española*. Madrid: 1981 (Buenos Aires: Dossat, 1947), pp. 85-89.

²⁷ See the monograph on Chueca and his work, especially the article by SAMBRICIO, Carlos. “Fernando Chueca Goitia, historiador de la arquitectura”, *Goya*. 264 (1998), pp. 131-143. Also: ANES, Gonzalo. *Fernando Chueca Goitia, Arquitecto y Humanista*. Madrid, RAH, 2007.

²⁸ PROSKE, Beatrice G. *Castilian Sculpture. Gothic to Renaissance*. New York: Hispanic Society of America, 1951, p. 141. When discussing the epigraphical friezes, she points out that: “The idea of clothing the upper part of the wall with a wide band or frieze is distinctly *mudéjar*, and although the elements of this frieze have no *mudéjar* connotations, other details have”, with no further details. She subsequently states that “Other elements are a naturalistic form of Gothic”.

²⁹ BEVAN, Bernard. *Historia de la arquitectura española*. Barcelona: Juventud, 1950 (London: Batsford, 1938), pp. 172 and 205. Only the excessive decoration, the “stalactites”, and the

It was José María de Azcárate who took up the mantle of more systematically defining the style of Juan Guas, and of even specifying the nomenclature. Before him, the Marquis of Lozoya had toed the general line, insisting on the importance of all things *mudéjar* and generalized adaptations made by Spanish late Gothic using motifs brought in from a Muslim repertoire. His analysis of San Juan de los Reyes does not uncover an excessive number of Islamisms; rather, he confines himself to emphasising the “German” aspects of the vaulting. However, on quoting Bertaux, he refers to the fact that “Juan Guas was a man of the North to whom Toledo revealed the East”, with no further explanation³⁰.

The studies of Azcárate into Juan Guas are fundamental. He defined and systemized the theme of the style of the architect in a famous article (1951) which centred on defining the Islamizing Hispanisms of his architecture³¹. To this end, the façade of the Palace of the Infantado was his point of reference. Three elements of the façade were identified as fundamental. The wall face with its nail heads or diamond tips, the portal, and the open gallery³². He revealed the Muslim origin of the layout of the rhomboid grid organizing the façade, and rejected its possible Italian origin, noting the same organization in the Castle of Real de Manzanares as a precedent in the work of Guas.

He thereby ignored the fact that rhomboid grids were a common motif employed by Gothic artists to cover a wide range of surfaces, including architectural wall faces. When referring to the portal of the palace, he did not doubt its Toledo *mudéjar* inspiration for an instant³³. The outline and the decoration of the columns –reflecting the wall face– and the inscription on the thread of the arch, were without doubt elements taken from *mudéjar*, despite the portal’s profusion of Gothic decoration. The open gallery, with its sentry boxes, placed over what he confidently identifies as *muqarnas* (stalactite work), ledges and columns with diamond tip work, mouldings with strings of beads, shields and phylacteries, and diminished arches, was without doubt a

importance of the heraldry and the bands of epigraphy (in Islamic style) are worthy of his detailed attention as regards *mudéjar* elements in the work of Guas.

³⁰ MARQUÉS DE LOZOYA. *El arte gótico en España*. Barcelona: Labor, 1945, pp. 73, 84 and 86.

³¹ AZCÁRATE, José María de. “La fachada del Infantado y el estilo de Juan Guas”, *Archivo Español de Arte*. 24 (1951), pp. 307-19.

³² AZCÁRATE. “La fachada”, 311.

³³ AZCÁRATE. “La fachada”, 315.

derivation of the gallery of the Castle of Real de Manzanares³⁴. Azcárate however, rejects the idea of the gallery having an Italian origin. Rather, it is Islamic and military, with its precedent in the Castle of Escalona. In the opinion of Azcárate, the façade of the palace in Guadalajara was a reflection of its lavish interior, which combined Gothic and *mudéjar* elements inspired in the *mudéjar alfarjes* (decorative wooden ceilings). In general, “turning to stone and the exterior of the building what would normally be made of wood and interior”.

The style of Guas was doubtless defined by a fusion of the Flamboyant Gothic style he inherited from Hannequin of Brussels and Toledo *mudéjar*, which he would have learnt “freely”. Azcárate goes on to stress the importance of these factors “in order to appreciate the characteristics that distinguish the Hispano-Flemish style centred on Toledo from Burgos”. It is clear that the buildings he analyzes could also be differentiated in the same way from many other Guas buildings, which are not mentioned.

The following year (1952), Jan Brans did not go quite so far, although in general terms, he fell into the traditional line, and even found Hispanisms in the work of Gil de Siloé and Juan de Flandes, sculptor and painter of Flemish origin. He certainly found some Islamisms in the Palace of the Infantado, but with the exception of the *muqarnas* (stalactite work) in the gallery, discovers nothing in the façade. He is more interested in the interior, with its typically *mudéjar* woodwork, which is unconnected to specifically architectural elements and Guas. In the final analysis, San Juan de los Reyes is, in the opinion of Brans, a Gothic-*mudéjar* mix, but he provides no specific details³⁵.

Not long after, the *Ars Hispaniae* tome devoted to Gothic architecture was published, written by Torres Balbás. Many of the defining elements of the Islamized style of Juan Guas are completely taken on board here, from the vault of the dome tower in San Juan de los Reyes – “with its Hispano-Muslim lines”–, to the splendid decoration (with Flemish Gothic roots but of Hispano-Muslim origin as well), the lettering in Gothic characters, the rhythmic repetition of Saint John eagles, the imposts “resembling *muqarnas*”

³⁴ AZCÁRATE. “*La fachada*”, 318. Along the lines of Bertaux and Lampérez before him, he linked the style of Guas and his *mudéjar* elements to the palace in Guadalajara: LAYNA, Francisco. *El palacio del Infantado en Guadalajara*. Madrid: Hauser and Menet, 1941, p. 25.

³⁵ BRANS, Jan. *Isabel la Católica y el arte hispanoflamenco*. Madrid: Silverio Aguirre, 1952, pp. 218-9 and 204-9.



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serving as a base for the arches, the arches of many of the doors to the church and its cloister, and the arches of the upper gallery of the cloister³⁶.

Important foreign historians do not seem to have concurred with the general and progressive tendency towards the acceptance of widespread Islamisms in the work of Juan Guas. This appears to be significant. Despite going along with the idea of *mudejarization*, George Kubler is brief, referring to ornamentation and only in the Palace of the Infantado³⁷. In 1962, Paul Frankl notes the existence of *muqarnas* in San Juan de los Reyes, but does not perceive the building as being Islamized in general. On the contrary, “it is possible the architect simply realised how well these forms fitted in with the late Gothic he was using”³⁸.

It was up to Azcárate to once again lay the groundwork for the Islamized Gothic style of Juan Guas, with an article on his work in Toledo³⁹, and above all, a celebrated book on fifteenth century architecture in Toledo⁴⁰. He had updated his own definition, and now offered it up with a series of simplified and more generalist arguments. Consequently, the stylistic evolution of the Toledo school of late Gothic culminated in the Hispano-Flemish style –a terminological nuance on Bertaux’s Isabelline style–, represented by the outstanding figure of Juan Guas.

The Hispano-Islamisms of Guas and the Hispano-Flemish style were now a firmly established historiographical stereotype, presented as the fusion of Northern Late Gothic and Toledo *mudéjar*: “At this point, the representative artistic forms of both cultures fuse, to give rise to the Hispano-Flemish style; an expression and synthesis of both tendencies”⁴¹. Juan Guas “uses the

³⁶ TORRES BALBÁS, Leopoldo. *Arquitectura gótica. Ars Hispaniae, VII*. Madrid: Plus Ultra, 1952, p. 340. On the topic of the Hispanic late gothic vaulting and its Islamization, and the rejection of the restrictive criteria of Lampérez, Torres Balbás and others, see GÓMEZ MARTÍNEZ. *El Gótico...* p. 14.

³⁷ KUBLER, George and SORIA, Martin. *Art and Architecture in Spain and Portugal and Their American Dominions, 1500 to 1800*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1959, p. 1.

³⁸ FRANKL, Paul. *Arquitectura gótica*. Madrid: Cátedra, 2002 (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1962), p. 360.

³⁹ AZCÁRATE, José María de. “La obra toledana de Juan Guas”, *Archivo Español de Arte*. 29 (1956), pp. 9-42.

⁴⁰ AZCÁRATE, José María de. *La arquitectura gótica toledana del siglo XV*. Madrid: CSIC, 1958, especially pp. 9 and 17-26.

⁴¹ AZCÁRATE. *La arquitectura...* p. 9.



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geometry from *mudéjar* decoration and organization in buildings in which Gothic structural forms predominate”⁴². The historiographical construction process culminates here, as reflected in his summing up. The structures are Gothic, and the decoration is a hybrid in which both artistic cultures join forces in the creation of a new style with a confusing name, Hispano-Flemish, as if architectural styles could be defined using decorative criteria alone.

In the chapter devoted specifically to Guas, Azcárate loses all restraint and defends his conclusions in categorical terms. The Palace of the Infantado in Guadalajara owes its decorated wall face with its rhomboid grid and diamond tips to Islamic and *mudéjar* art; specifically to the *sebka* (decorative grid) – mentioned for the first time here-. According to Azcárate: “The same *mudéjar* root is the inspiration for the portal”. He is adamant that it is a transposition of a portal typical of Toledo: “with its ogive arch, lintel and side supports, and *mudéjar* scheme of organisation, which is hugely enriched by the introduction of Gothic-Flamboyant elements”.

He then adds: “The same can be said for the inscription in large German letters in the thread of the wide ogee arch, the multiple curves and counter curves of the mouldings, and lastly, the coats of arms and standard of the second Duke of the Infantado”⁴³. The gallery also fuses, and he no longer beats about the bush: “northern and southern, and Gothic and Arabic-*mudéjar* influences”. The *muqarnas* by way of a cornice are also highlighted on this façade, and its gallery is now undoubtedly not Italian influenced, but rather has: “the organisation of an *arrocabe* (wooden frieze)” made from stone⁴⁴. The other prime example of the architecture of Juan Guas in which Azcárate identifies the mestizo style he calls Hispano-Flemish is understandably San Juan de los Reyes, although it is significant that other works of architecture attributed to Guas are not worthy of his attention in this respect.

Here he begins by highlighting the walls of the crossing, where the motif of the eagles bearing royal arms is interpreted as the “eurhythmic repetition of *mudéjar* tradition”⁴⁵. The dome tower is also clearly of oriental lineage⁴⁶. In the opinion of Azcárate, in San Juan de los Reyes, Guas furnishes “northern

⁴² AZCÁRATE. *La arquitectura*... p. 9.

⁴³ AZCÁRATE. *La arquitectura*... p. 21.

⁴⁴ AZCÁRATE. *La arquitectura*... pp. 21-22.

⁴⁵ AZCÁRATE. *La arquitectura*... p. 24.

⁴⁶ AZCÁRATE. “La obra toledana...”, p. 23.



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Flamboyant forms (...) with national characteristics, by fusing them with *mudéjar* forms to create the Hispano-Flemish style”⁴⁷. Working with a team of Flemish stonemasons: “he freely interprets the Flamboyant style he learnt by the side of his mentor Hannequin, and does the same in *mudéjar*, carving from stone what the *mudéjar* masters made from plaster, stucco or brick”.

The creation of “a strictly national style” achieved through a syncretism specific to Guas would have brought him fame and fortune. However, as Azcárate points out:

the Hispano-Flemish style died in its prime, as art headed for new horizons, and the Flamboyant style’s own end was implicitly close, given the virtuosity of its forms. Guas attempted to revitalise it with fresh lifeblood tapped from the local *mudéjar*, which was also becoming petrified, in order reenergise each with the other⁴⁸.

Having already definitively codified a style, Azcárate continued to revisit the idea. In 1971 he published a sociological-cultural text, in which he attempts to explain and justify the existence of Hispano-Flemish architecture in the court of Isabella the Catholic by conferring the necessary importance on the cultural *mudejarisms* of the era⁴⁹. The concepts established by Azcárate became the official historiographical version. It is therefore difficult to find subsequent critical positions. Perfect examples of the success of Azcárate’s fully articulated proposals include texts such as *La Historia de la Arquitectura española*

⁴⁷ AZCÁRATE. *La arquitectura*... p. 25.

⁴⁸ AZCÁRATE. *La arquitectura*... p. 26.

⁴⁹ AZCÁRATE, José María de. “Sentido y significación de la arquitectura hispano-flamenca en la corte de Isabel la Católica”, *Boletín del Seminario de Estudios de Arte y Arqueología*. 37, (1971), pp. 201-223. This author once again insists on the stereotype he himself has established in informative works such as his *Aspectos distintivos de la arquitectura gótica española*. Cáceres: University of Extremadura, 1985, (especially, p. 17), with its expressive title, and in *Arte gótico en España*. Madrid: Cátedra, 1996. Caamaño faithfully follows in his footsteps, and confers still greater prowess on the Hispano-Flemish style by pointing to its influence on Islamic forms in Portuguese Manueline: CAAMAÑO, José María. “Arquitectura y mecenazgo en la Corona de Castilla”, LACARRA, María del Carmen (ed.), *Las artes en Aragón durante el reinado de Fernando el Católico (1479-1516)*. Zaragoza: CSIC, 1993, pp. 226-227. On the aforementioned cultural *mudejarism*, and the mutual cultural influence between Castilians and Andalusians, see the synthesis by SILVA, Noelia. “La corte de los Reyes Católicos y el reino Nazarí. Permeabilidad cultural e intercambios artísticos”, CHECA, Fernando and GARCÍA, Bernardo (eds.). *El arte en la corte de los Reyes Católicos. Rutas artísticas a principios de la Edad Moderna*. Madrid: FCA, 2005, pp. 265-286.

by Chueca Goitia, who reiterates a large number of the formulations mentioned here, as well as his own. Maybe because Chueca's treatise is a generalist work, it provides a summary of most of the above-mentioned arguments, but along the lines of his *Invariantes castizos*. However, the existence of the Hispano-Flemish style and the matter of the synthesis of styles (Low-Country Gothic and *mudéjar*) is more than just reaffirmed, greater emphasis is also placed on its relation with politico-nationalist questions, where the ultimate artistic expression of the Catholic Monarchs' national unification of Spain is found in San Juan de Reyes and the emergence of a style that expresses: "the vitality of a country immersed in the process of unification".

The work of Juan Guas as a whole: "condenses and symbolises the setting for an era of national exaltation presided over by the Catholic Monarchs", which leads to some extreme and hardly justifiable simplifications of the allusions of Azcárate⁵⁰. It is perhaps worth pointing out that Chueca does at least refer to something not explicitly mentioned before; the matter of the differences between the drawing, attributed to Guas, of the chevet of the church of the Monastery in Toledo (preserved in the Prado Museum) and building itself.

The alleged Hispano-Islamisms executed in the end are nowhere to be found in the drawing, which complicates matters enormously, because it is no longer possible to ascertain whether some of the supposedly most obvious Islamic elements are related to the work of Guas or not, since there are doubts as to the designs employed to finish the dome tower, as some designs are known to have been submitted by Simón de Colonia, active at Burgos⁵¹.

Subsequent work of a generalist nature contributes to improving our understanding of the degree to which the historiographical stereotype being analysed was well-received and assimilated. A cursory review of Spanish art and architecture manuals and histories written from the sixties to the nineties in the twentieth century, and at the beginning of the twenty first century,

⁵⁰ CHUECA, Fernando. *Historia de la Arquitectura española*. Madrid: Dossat, 1965, II, p. 598.

⁵¹ On the topic of the uncertain authorship of the dome tower, MARÍAS, Fernando. *El largo siglo XVI*. Madrid: Taurus, 1989, p. 128. ARRIBAS. "Noticias...", pp. 43-72. Cited in PÉREZ HIGUERA, Teresa. "En torno al proceso constructivo de San Juan de los Reyes en Toledo", *Anales de Historia del Arte*. 7 (1997), pp. 11-24. On the Guas drawing preserved in the Prado Museum: SÁNCHEZ CANTÓN, Francisco Javier. "El dibujo de Juan Guas, arquitecto español del siglo XV", *Arquitectura*. 115 (1928), pp. 339-347. SEDÓ. "¿Data...?", pp. 133-134.



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reveals an interesting perspective on the success of these ideas and their criticism. In works such as *El arte gótico en España* by Montserrat Blanch⁵², when referring to the Toledo centre for late Gothic architecture, brief references are made to the Hispanization of the style of the Egas brothers and Juan Guas through the introduction of “*mudéjar* additions”.

In a far better known and extensive work, the tome devoted to the Middle Ages from the *Historia del Arte Hispánico*, (1980) by Joaquín Yarza, the theses of Azcárate are also received positively, since the idea of Toledo *mudéjar* being integrated into Northern Gothic in the work of Guas is maintained. The question of the portals of the El Paular monastery, works by Guas, is also developed here, their organisation supposedly being based on Toledo *mudéjar*. He also develops the idea of the introduction of *mudéjar* elements in military and palatial civil architecture at the initiative of noblemen, which is manifest in the *sebka* grid wall organization and the replacement of machicolations with “a kind of *muqarnas*”. The epigraphy, rhythmic repetition of heraldry, high gallery and excess decoration (despite recognising this as characteristic of both late Gothic and Islamic styles) are still viewed as elements of Islamic inspiration.

On dealing with the archetypal case of San Juan de los Reyes, references to Islamisms are limited to the *muqarnas* (stalactite work) of the springings of the crossing arches, a rare allusion to the assimilation of truly Islamic motifs – although they have a personalized design that differs from the original, based on Gothic ogive arches–, which can in fact be found in the work of Guas⁵³.

Rafael Domínguez Casas makes just one short reference to the style of Guas, agreeing that: “the secret of his originality resides in his wise combination of the decorative aesthetic of *mudéjar* lineage, so firmly rooted in these latitudes, with Flemish forms and structures learned from his mentor Hannequin”. His reference to the dome tower of San Juan de los Reyes left unfinished when he died and the designs drawn up by Simón de Colonia, at least provide a semblance of criticism⁵⁴. Other publications discussing the Catholic Monarchs, coming out in the heat of numerous commemorations,

⁵² BLANCH, Montserrat. *El arte gótico en España*. Barcelona: Polígrafa, 1972, p. 23.

⁵³ YARZA, Joaquín. *La Edad Media. Historia del Arte Hispánico, II*. Madrid: Alhambra, 1980, pp. 398-399.

⁵⁴ DOMÍNGUEZ, Rafael M. “San Juan de los Reyes: espacio funerario y aposento regio”, *Boletín del Seminario de Arte y Arqueología*. (1990), pp. 364-380.



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unsurprisingly, further ingrain the stereotype⁵⁵. More recent studies do not hesitate to fall into line with established tradition⁵⁶.

Something appears to change in the tome focussed on the medieval era of the *Historia de la arquitectura española*, written by Isidro Bango, which greatly moderates allusions to *mudejarisms* in Guas. Bango only makes marginal references to the Hispano-Islamisms of Guas, except when he comes to San Juan de los Reyes. Here he once again refers to the absence of “Hispanic localisms” in the preserved drawing of the chevet, while at the same time suggesting “the ‘foreignness’ of the drawing is set to be tempered by the inclusion of some forms from the local *mudéjar*”. In his opinion, the mixtilinear arches of the courtyard have “Hispanic roots”. This building is in Bango’s view a case in: “which the Gothic forms of the North have been melded with those of a Hispanic decorative lexicon, making it possible to interpret it as an exponent of the personality of an architect trained in the Flemish tradition, but whose art assimilated the achievements of Toledo, where he lived for most of his life”⁵⁷.

This apparently noncommittal viewpoint conceals a veiled criticism, which is in line with general ideas, without going into detail. The second tome of the *Historia del Arte* edited by Juan Antonio Ramirez, continues in a similar, yet far more critical vein. Here, Gonzalo Borrás says nothing about the Hispano-Flemish style, or the Islamisms of Juan Guas, not even when discussing San Juan de los Reyes. Although, on mentioning the Palace of the Infantado, he

⁵⁵ Reyes y mecenas. *Los Reyes Católicos-Maximiliano I y los inicios de la Casa de Austria en España*. Madrid: Electa, 1993, pp. 550-551. CAAMAÑO. *Arquitectura...* p. 226-7. YARZA, Joaquín. *Los Reyes Católicos. Paisaje artístico de una monarquía*. Madrid: Nerea, 1993, pp. 43-46. CHUECA, Fernando and NAVASCUÉS, Pedro. “Arquitectura Isabelina”, NAVASCUÉS, Pedro (ed.). *Isabel la Católica, reina de Castilla*. Barcelona: Lundberg, 2002, pp. 247-330. YARZA, Joaquín. *La nobleza ante el rey. Los grandes linajes castellanos y el arte del siglo XV*. Madrid: El Viso, 2003. *Isabel la Católica. La magnificencia de un reinado*, Salamanca-Madrid: SECC, 2004.

⁵⁶ CASTÁN, Javier. *Arquitectura gótica religiosa en Valladolid y su provincia (siglos XIII-XVI)*. Valladolid: Editora Provincial, 1998, p. 101. PÉREZ HIGUERA. “Proyecto...”, pp. 11-24. By the contrary, Jan Bialostocki does not appear so accepting of the stereotype. He only refers to Islamisms in very specific cases in the Spanish art of the fifteenth century (certainly not in the case of Guas, despite emphasising his originality): BIALOSTOKI, Jan. *El arte del siglo XV. De Parler a Durero*. Madrid: Akal, 1998, p. 296.

⁵⁷ MORALES Y MARÍN, José Luis (ed.). *Historia de la arquitectura española, 2*, Zaragoza: Planeta, 1985, pp. 594-596 and 646-649.



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says it is a: “paradigm of the fusion of Gothic and *mudéjar* forms”, probably in reference to the conjunction of Gothic architecture and traditional Hispano-Muslim wooden ceilings⁵⁸.

Fernando Marías proceeds in a similar vein to Bango and Borrás, although he is a little less brief, probably as a result of the nature of the publication in which he touches on the subject. In his *El Largo Siglo XVI* he appears to criticise the historiographical stereotype to a certain extent through the near total omission of references to it and the Islamisms of Guas. Despite this, he refers to the capacity of late Gothic to assimilate external decorative elements, such as *mudéjar* adornments, and to the subject of the possible authorship of Simón de Colonia of the dome tower of San Juan de los Reyes⁵⁹, a topic he returns to without touching on any stylistic considerations in recent work, such as those dealt with here⁶⁰.

Javier Gómez Martínez is more critical of the tradition, despite this being limited to a very specific area, the rib vaults. He defines the national-formalist bias of Spanish historiography perfectly, and clearly proposes breaking with the idea of vaults created at the time of Juan Guas having anything related to Muslim tradition in them, since the design of the star rib vaults with tiercerons has its origins in European examples, with a limited number of exceptions that are morphologically different⁶¹.

In the extensive introduction to her book on the Rasines family, Begoña Alonso rejects the description of Hispano-Flemish, probably more as a consequence of it incorrectly attributing the origin of the Flamboyant style as exclusive to Flanders on its arrival in the peninsula (Castile) halfway through the fifteenth century, than because of its desire to emphasise the Islamisation

⁵⁸ BORRÁS, Gonzalo. “La arquitectura gótica”, RAMÍREZ, Juan Antonio (ed.). *Historia del Arte*. 2. *La Edad Media*. Madrid: Alianza, 2003, p. 258.

⁵⁹ MARÍAS. *El Largo...* p. 135. Neither are there any references in the work of PÉREZ GUZMÁN, Rafael. *Arquitectura mudéjar*. Madrid: Catedral, 2000.

⁶⁰ MARÍAS, Fernando. “Las fábricas de la Reina Católica y los entresijos del imaginario arquitectónico de su tiempo”, *Los Reyes Católicos y Granada*. Madrid-Granada: Ministerio, 2004, pp. 213-226. MARÍAS, Fernando. “Las arquitecturas de Isabel la Católica en Toledo: casas temporales y moradas eternas”, *Ysabel, La Reina Católica. Una mirada desde la Catedral Primada*. Toledo: Arzobispado, 2005, pp. 125-129.

⁶¹ GÓMEZ MARTÍNEZ. *El gótico...* pp. 81-82.



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(Hispanicization) of Northern Late Gothic⁶². When discussing Juan Guas, she does not make a great many references to Islamisms, but neither does she question them. Her work does however, focus on other areas⁶³. Other later studies, such as those on the mutuality of architectural influences between Castile and Flanders at the time of the Catholic Monarchs, have virtually ignored the question of Islamisms, which would in part suggest there are questions to be answered in this respect⁶⁴. More recently still, some brief contributions to the debate have rejected them directly⁶⁵.

II. Revisiting the Historiographical Stereotype

First, when referring to Islamizing elements in the most emblematic buildings of Juan Guas to justify the definition by the historiography of an entire style (in its own right, and also specific to an era and “nation”), it should be pointed out that certain decorative motifs found in these buildings undoubtedly have their origins in the repertoire of Islamic art. Hispanic craftsmen trained in the Islamic tradition would have used them in the professional domain of architecture, above all in the specialist fields of wood coffered ceilings, and plasterwork.

Juan Guas was happy to employ all kinds of figurative and geometric motifs of diverse origins, within his late Gothic and northern conception of decoration. Many allegedly Islamizing elements are however believed to have

⁶² ALONSO, Begoña. *Arquitectura tardogótica en Castilla: los Rasines*. Santander: Universidad de Cantabria, 2003, p. 23.

⁶³ ALONSO. *Arquitectura...* p. 33. What is surely most surprising of all is that Azcárate himself should allude to the inclusion of elements from other styles in the baroque phase of gothic. It is impossible to know whether this entails giving up on defining a separate style such as Hispano-Flemish gothic and accepting that certain complex and open stylistic phases are able to adopt superficial loans, or reinforces his traditional position. AZCÁRATE, José María de. “El estilo y sus fases”, *Homenaje al profesor Martín González*. Valladolid: Universidad, 1995, p. 701.

⁶⁴ DE JONGE, Krista. “Flandes y Castilla. La arquitectura en la época de los Reyes Católicos”, CHECA, Fernando and GARCÍA, Bernardo (eds.). *El arte en la corte de los Reyes Católicos. Rutas artísticas a principios de la Edad Moderna*. Madrid: FCA, 2005, pp. 167-181.

⁶⁵ IBORRA, Federico. “Vinculaciones mediterráneas y orientalismos en la arquitectura profana de Juan Guas”, *La Multiculturalidad en las Artes y en la Arquitectura. Actas del XVI Congreso Nacional de Historia del Arte*. Las Palmas: CEHA, 2006, I, pp. 295-304. On page 300: “Given all the above, questions must be asked as to the custom of identifying the Palace of the Infantado with *mudéjar* architecture”.



their origins elsewhere. Structural elements certainly do not seem to bear any relation to anything other than Gothic. The elements in question will now be discussed, as will the extent to which they can be accepted as Islamisms.

The *muqarnas* or “stalactites” are almost always referred to in this respect, and have been cited at least since Lampérez⁶⁶. They derive, in the work of Guas, from the decorative embellishment of machicolations (Real de Manzanares). As described by Yarza⁶⁷, the goal was to imitate the *muqarnas* master craftsmen in the Islamic tradition continued to employ in wooden ceilings and other elements.

Yet, according to other scholars, their design, position and arrangement in the buildings of Guas are rather different. Layna Serrano, despite agreeing with Bertaux and Lampérez in pointing to *mudejarisms* in the palace in Guadalajara, criticises the supposed *muqarnas* (stalactites) on the façade of the palace as merely imitating these: “what appears to be Moorish work is in fact made with a base of small ogive arches”. Amador de los Ríos, already quoted above, despite being one of the main champions of studying Spanish art from a nationalist viewpoint, comments on San Juan de los Reyes as follows: “The single capital of each pillar in the apse contains three tiers of mini-vaults crammed together in the form of inverted terracing, alongside other more commonplace adornments”, and avoids any reference to *muqarnas* (stalactites)⁶⁸.

⁶⁶ LAMPÉREZ. *Historia...*, II, pp. 528-9. LAMPÉREZ. *Los Mendoza...* p. 37. LAMPÉREZ. *Arquitectura...* pp. 278-279. BERTAUX. “La Renaissance...”, p. 824. AZCÁRATE. “La fachada...” p. 318. AZCÁRATE. *La arquitectura...* p. 24. TORRES BALBÁS. *Arquitectura...* p. 340.

⁶⁷ YARZA. *La Edad...* pp. 398-9. He has the same opinion, but from a very different methodological starting point, COOPER, Edward. *Castillos señoriales en Castilla. Siglos XV y XVI*. Madrid: FUE, 1981, I, pp. 169-211. On page 197 he very explicitly points out: “The details of the gallery of the northern façade of the Palace of the Infantado are repeated in the southern gallery of the Castle of El Real, and in other parts of the building. The blind terraced machicolations appear all over the exterior and must be viewed as a hallmark of the style of Juan Guas”.

⁶⁸ Following on from Bertaux and Lampérez, the style of Guas and its *mudejar* elements had already been linked to the palace in Guadalajara: LAYNA. *El palacio...* p. 25. However, he points out that the *muqarnas* (stalactite work) of the façade are not what they appear to be, but rather imitate these: “the apparently Moorish work is made using ogive arches”. Above, references already made to AMADOR and ASSAS. *El monasterio...* p. 12 –cited, above-. Also IBORRA. “Vinculaciones...”, p. 298, who believes the cornice of the Palace of the Infantado, “has on occasions been defined as *muqarnas*, because of the appearance achieved

As mentioned above, Juan Guas did indeed employ an element from the Islamic repertoire in a very personal manner, and as part of his above-mentioned interest in appropriating different forms in order to embellish the decoration. His starting point was in all probability, the machicolations, the military function of which was all but removed, conserved as a purely symbolic allusion to war⁶⁹.

Image 1



Manzanares el Real Castle, Spain. Main entrance. *Wikimedia Commons*.

He designed tiers of ogive arches, in reality normally diminished arches, surmounted on one another, and gradually adapted to the reduced depth resulting from joining the line of merlons and the wall. Each small arch is mounted on prismatic supports, which are placed successively on the keystones of the tiers of arches of the lower levels. These prismatic supports

by the two tiers of terraced ogive arches, which are also reminiscent of some completely Gothic cornice models”, and cites some examples.

⁶⁹ PORRAS, María C. “Castillos y fortalezas en la segunda mitad del siglo XV: de la guerra al emblema”, *Biblioteca. Estudio e Investigación*. 17 (2002), pp. 129-143.

retain their resemblance to the corbels or “beam heads” of traditional machicolations.

This is all especially clear in the case of El Real de Manzanares, where the small arches even possess a tracery forming the classic three Gothic lobes (**Image 1**). The portal and straight wall screens of the castle are probably the clearest examples of this model.

Image 2



Manzanares el Real Castle, Spain. Tower. *Wikimedia Commons*.

The same building also possesses a more developed and complex version of this system, in the decoration of the machicolations of the high circular towers, and the keep. The small arches, as described above, are only found here in the top tier. The carving of the blocks of stone on the two lower tiers places the small arches on the angles of the prisms. The angle faces outwards, which creates a very different effect, without completely abandoning the basic design.

The tetrahedral blocks have, in essence, half-arches carved in them, which on the first tier are placed in pairs at right angles to each other, while on the lower tiers they are placed at an angle of 45 degrees, with the small arches carved in the visible faces (**Image 2**). All of this gives rise to a sensation of finding something very similar to *muqarnas* or stalactites, although the design has no affiliation with Islamic tradition.

Image 3



Palace of the Dukes of Infantado, Guadalajara, Spain. Gallery. Photograph by the author.

A more developed and refined version of the form is found in the other building for the House of Mendoza, the Palace of the Infantado in

Gudalajara. The type of stone (limestone rather than granite) enables finer carving, and therefore, the repetition of very similar motifs, so perhaps this exquisiteness is more suggestive of a line of *muqarnas* (**Image 3**). The model varies significantly however, in other buildings. What Amador characterises as a line of “mini-vaults crammed together in the manner of inverted terracing” in San Juan de los Reyes, is perhaps better described as tiers of simple and small ogive arches placed one on top of another in several sections.

The approach resembles, or is derived from, the first version of transformed machicolations seen in El Real, albeit with the prismatic supports removed, and the small arches, this time without traceries but with a kind of arrowhead inside them, supported directly on the keystones of their pairs on the lower tiers (**Image 4**). Close up, the sensation is of a kind of inverted terracing, but further away, they resemble fine *muqarnas*. They do however appear more like *muqarnas* than in other examples of Guas work.

Image 4



San Juan de los Reyes Monastery Church, Toledo, Spain. Interior view.
Wikimedia Commons.

Image 5



El Paular Charterhouse, Rascafría, Spain. Cloister. *Wikimedia Commons*.

The model for the terraced arches on the pillars of the crossing of San Juan de los Reyes, can be found in the cloister and courtyard of the El Paular Charterhouse cemetery court, built by Guas (**Image 5**), albeit in a coarser form and with only two tiers of small arches, and with a very striking but lot less “Islamizing”⁷⁰ effect. Juan Guas was not the only one to use this effect

⁷⁰ MORENA, Áurea de la. “La Cartuja de El Paular” in *La España gótica...*, p. 290. Reference is made here to the cloister when explaining that along the length “of the wall there is a cornice comprising two tiers of split triangles, which are arranged in rhombuses reminiscent of Muslim *muqarnas*”. She then adds: “The motif evolves, and is employed in

imitating *muqarnas*, stalactites. It can also be found in the cathedrals of Oviedo and León⁷¹. Consequently, similar methods can be found used by architects unconnected to the Toledo scene. It is not therefore possible to know whether these master craftsmen achieved similar solutions using their own imagination, or, as is perhaps more likely, by imitating the models of Guas. Examples found in the Palace of Jabalquinto in Baeza are surely imitating the Palace of the Infantado, for reasons of prestige⁷².

Distant Hispano-Islamic origins may possibly be behind the long epigraphical inscriptions –which, it should be pointed out, are not exclusive to Guas and his era–, but this cannot be proved⁷³. The widespread use of strips of Gothic letters in *mudéjar* and late Gothic buildings in the Iberian Peninsula, appears unparalleled in the architecture of the same period in the rest of Europe. This detail could perhaps be explained as a feature assimilated from “Islamic” schools in order for clients to keep up the use of these strips for clearly propagandistic and commemorative purposes. All of which means a disregard for the use of epigraphical inscriptions in smooth friezes, as seen in Italian architecture during the Quattrocento, which is very different.

The inspiration for the portal of the Palace in Guadalajara can to a certain extent be found in Toledo, but, possibly, solely in regard to the columnar framing, since the design of the tympanum with a lintel (or diminished arch) housed under an ogive arch is so typically Gothic, it is impossible to see any influences outside of western traditions (**Image 6**)⁷⁴. There is therefore nothing that appears to be of *mudéjar* origin in other portals, such as those opening onto the cloisters in El Paular, or in the San Juan de los Reyes

the Castle in Manzanares, the Palace of the Infantado, and San Juan de los Reyes in Toledo”.

⁷¹ LABRA, Carmen M. “El impulso constructivo de la catedral de Oviedo durante el reinado de Isabel la Católica: el pórtico y obras contemporáneas”, *Arte*. 5 (2006), pp. 107-123. CARRERO, Eduardo. “Una alegoría y un sarcasmo en la librería de la catedral de León”, *Imágenes y promotores en el arte medieval. Miscelánea en homenaje a Joaquín Yarza*. Barcelona: Universidad Autónoma, 2001, pp. 289-298.

⁷² COOPER. *Castillos...*, I, p. 197.

⁷³ Reference is made to this element by BERTAUX. “La Renaissance...”, pp. 841-842, and TORRES BALBÁS. *Arquitectura...* p. 340, among others.

⁷⁴ The allusion to *mudéjar* portals in Toledo as a source of inspiration for the portal of the Palace of the Infantado: AZCÁRATE. “La fachada...”, p. 315. AZCÁRATE. *La arquitectura...* p. 21.

monastery in Toledo itself, described as examples of the *mudéjar* style, above all by Azcárate⁷⁵.

Image 6



Palace of the Dukes of Infantado, Guadalajara, Spain. Main entrance.
Fotograph by the author.

⁷⁵ Many authors refer to the inspiration of *mudéjar* portals in Toledo in those built by Juan Guas in El Parral and San Juan de los Reyes. See AZCÁRATE. “La fachada...”, p. 307, and AZCÁRATE. “La obra”, p. 30. TORRES BALBÁS. *Arquitectura...* p. 340. In this case, there is not even the columnar framing to justify it.

And so the fundamental idea is reached that when the decoration is arranged in geometric designs and boundless in its saturation, it is not necessarily more Islamic than late Gothic. More pointedly, the distribution of arches, heraldry, canopies, figures, column ribs and foliated friezes in the work of Guas is so thoroughly late Gothic, only the purposeful seeking out of Orientalisms at any cost could explain the desire to see any Islamic influences. Several examples could be quoted in this regard, but it is only necessary to refer to examples such as the fireplace in the Palace of Justice in Poitiers to obviate further examples of such a familiar theme, despite many of the above-mentioned scholars viewing the heraldry on the headwalls of the crossing of San Juan de los Reyes as highly Islamic, and despite the noteworthy importance of heraldry in the late Gothic style in the Hispanic world (for sociological reasons).

Image 7



Manzanares el Real Castle, Spain. Gallery and tower. Taken from José María de Azcárate, *La arquitectura gótica toledana del siglo XV*. Madrid: CSIC, 1958, plates.

The organisation of the walls in the Castle of Real de Manzanares and the Palace of the Infantado can be described in similar terms. Balls or pyramids (nail heads or diamond tips) are placed in the cavities of a rhomboid geometric grid. The grid is conserved in some areas of the Castle of Real de Manzanares, as a render on the masonry wall –and even includes Gothic decorative details– (**Image 7**), but is not apparent in the ashlar stonework of the palace (**Image 8**).

Arrangement in a rhomboid grid is such a thoroughly Gothic method of covering and organising surfaces, it is a surprise to find several authors pointing to Islamic origins. But what is more astonishing still, is to find references to the Muslim *sebka* grid (a late reference in the case of Azcárate⁷⁶). Numerous non-Italian examples in paintings and on walls (several publications cite the Palazzo Negri in Vicenza with no mention of anything from northern Europe, but Lampérez and Azcárate rejected Italian examples) show how the Gothic style commonly used these grids. In the interests of brevity, it is only necessary to cite the Palais de la Bénédictine in Fécamp (with its polychromatic brickwork), the Château de Blois (Luis XII wing) and the Doge's Palace in Venice.

Following through with Azcárate's (Palace of the Infantado) line of argument, it is not just walls; late Gothic columns are often clothed in the same rhomboid grid with balls, as is the case in Blois in a very similar way. And the Palace of Jabalquinto appears to be derivative of the Palace of the Infantado. There are however, also other earlier Spanish examples, which are not derived from the Palace of Guadalajara, such as the Casa de las Conchas in Salamanca⁷⁷.

⁷⁶ The first allusion to the *sebka* as the origin of the rhomboid grid organizing the wall faces is thought to be in AZCÁRATE. *La arquitectura...* p. 21. Previous reference had been made to the Muslim nature of the grid (as opposed to those looking to an Italian bossage origin, he says), LAMPÉREZ. *Los Mendoza...* p. 37.

⁷⁷ LAMPÉREZ. *Arquitectura...*, I, p. 345: "The system is today viewed as belonging to Muslim tradition". However, Iborra insists on the Italian origin of its articulation based on grids of diamond tips: IBORRA. "Vinculaciones...", p. 296.

Image 8



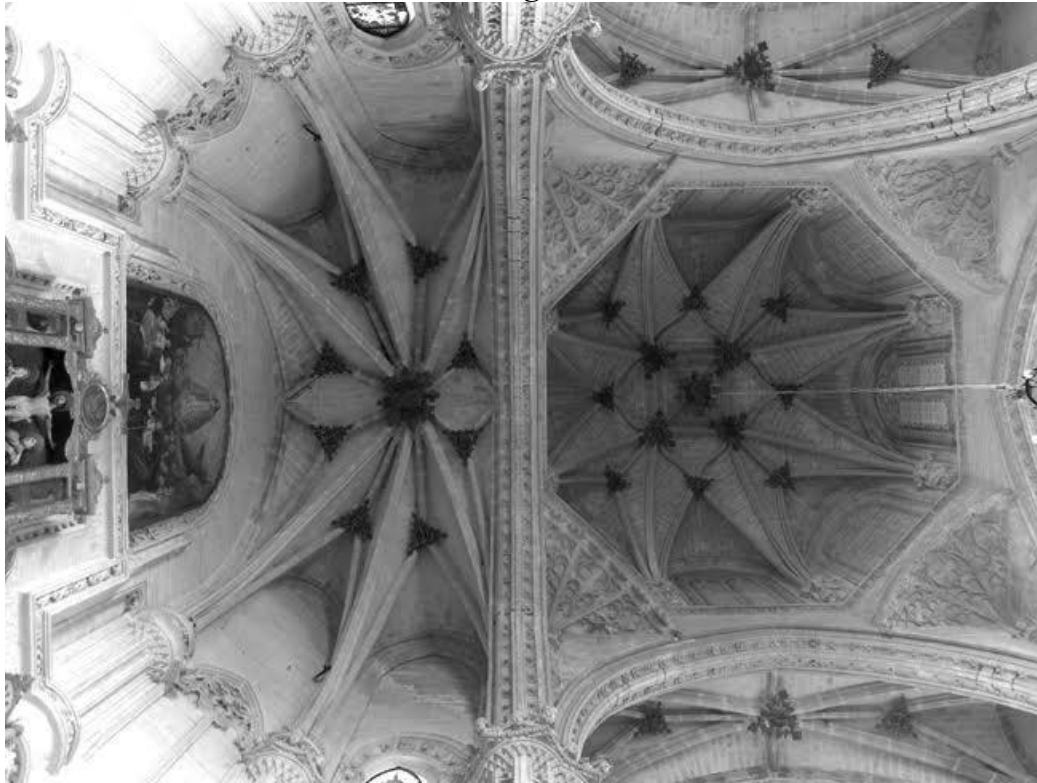
Palace of the Dukes of Infantado, Guadalajara, Spain. Façade. Photograph by the author.

Another obvious reference can be made to the arrangement of the vault (notably German) to explain the late Gothic nature of the dome tower of San Juan de los Reyes (more marked than its Islamism), as described in monographic studies on this topic.

This is made patently clear when a wide range of vaults from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is analysed, and not exclusively in Castile (**Image 9**)⁷⁸.

⁷⁸ On the topic of the Hispanic late gothic vaults and their Islamization, and the rejection of the restrictive criteria of Lampérez, Torres Balbás and others, see GÓMEZ MARTÍNEZ. *El gótico...* p. 14. References to the Islamization of the vault of the dome tower of San Juan de los Reyes appear from LAMPÉREZ. *Historia...*, II, pp. 278-9. AZCÁRATE. *Arquitectura...* p. 24. TORRES BALBÁS. *Arquitectura...* p. 340.

Image 9



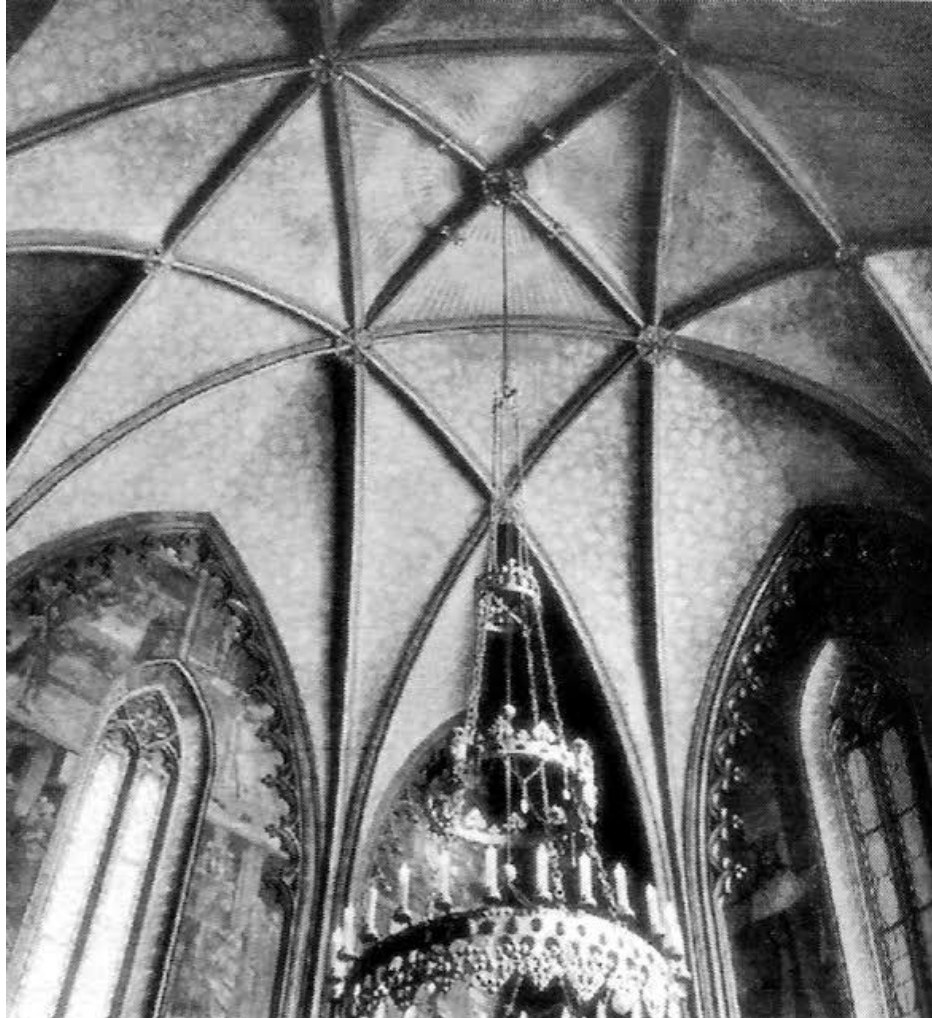
San Juan de los Reyes Monastery Church, Toledo, Spain. Vaulting of the dome tower. *Wikimedia Commons*.

The fact that parallel arches crisscross to form a central square does not mean they were inspired by models with their origins in the Caliphate of Cordoba, or Toledo, such as the Cristo de la Luz Chapel. In Castile there are numerous examples of vaults employing the same typically late Gothic geometry (the Chapel of Mosén Rubí de Bracamonte, the portico of Oviedo Cathedral, Astorga Cathedral, etc.). The case discussed here involves a central space occupied by ribs that cross each other with their keystone, which makes the distinction from Islamic models even clearer. Points of reference can be found in Central and Northern Europe. There is for example a very expressive parallel with the vault of St. Wenceslas Chapel in St. Vitus Cathedral in Prague (**Image 10**).

What is more, as mentioned above, the dome tower of San Juan de los Reyes was quite possibly not even designed by Guas, but by Simón de Colonia, which would sit perfectly with the central European tradition of its design (his family arrived from Cologne). It would also result in a preposterous increase

in the extension of Toledo's Islamic influence all the way to the Burgos hub, and therefore, invalidate the assumptions of Lampérez and Azcárate.

Image 10



Saint Wenceslas Chapel, St. Vitus Cathedral, Prague, Czech Republic. Vaulting.
Taken from Paul Frankl, *Arquitectura Gótica*. Madrid: Cátedra, 2002, p. 62.

Numerous references to geometry as proof or evidence of the Islamic origins of many of the designs cited, as by Azcárate, underscore two points. First, as has already been suggested, the common geometrical base for structural and decorative compositions and arrangements in late Gothic and Islamic architectures, can on occasions give rise to similar results⁷⁹. Second, this could

⁷⁹ De Jonge has insisted on the importance of geometric designs in late gothic tradition in the Netherlands, DE JONGE. "Flandes...", p. 176.



SALVADOR GONZÁLEZ, José María (org.). *Mirabilia Ars 2* (2015/1)

El Poder de la Imagen. Ideas y funciones de las representaciones artísticas

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well have caused confusion when interpreting the origins of forms found in various buildings of Juan Guas.

Nevertheless, and in the light of both questions, the conclusion cannot be avoided that it was these very same similarities arising out of the common geometrical base that were used by historians to justify their arguments and make them more plausible. Although the arguments might not have been intentionally planned; they are however replete with glaring exaggerations.

Lastly, some scholars have once again placed the emphasis on the Italian nature of the upper galleries, which are no longer seen as an architectural transposition of an *arrocabe* (wooden frieze), but are instead said to be inspired in elements of military architecture with extensive parallels in Italy, in contrast to the ideas of Azcárate⁸⁰.

In reference to all the above, the conclusion can be reached that some of the most distinguished exponents of the study of the architecture of Juan Guas came to attribute national origins –even though these were Islamic- to a large number of features in some of the buildings of Juan Guas (there is no discussion of his other buildings in this regard), immersed and adrift as they were in a very singular ideological-methodological approach to historiography.

The intention that can be discerned behind this approach is to endow the art of the reign of the Catholic Monarchs with a national-nationalistic significance and backdrop. Artistically and culturally, it was clearly unacceptable for the era of “Spain’s National Unification” to be characterised by such a manifest lack of “native artistic brilliance”. Having identified *mudéjar* as the quintessentially distinctive Spanish style from the nineteenth century on, the best way of imbuing the golden age par excellence for everything Spanish with its own special characteristics, was surely to furnish the late Gothic style with Islamisms, without regard to the importation of Low-Country artists and models. In truth, this was originally based on certain details, which despite being purely decorative, were inspired in Hispano-Islamic styles, and the

⁸⁰ MORENA, Áurea de la. “Palacio del Infantado”, *La España gótica...* p. 172). IBORRA. “Vinculaciones...”, p. 299. MUÑOZ, José. “El arquitecto Juan Guas (a. 1453-1496), la primera fortificación española de transición y los modelos italianos”, *Actas del III Congreso de Castellología Ibérica*. Guadalajara: Diputación, 2005, p. 615. More than anyone else, Azcárate insisted on the *mudéjar* nature of the gallery: AZCÁRATE. “La fachada...”, p. 318.



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continuation of construction techniques and forms originating in this tradition.

However, what began as a limited and level-headed proposition, turned into a generalization that overwhelmed any kind of interpretive review. There is surely nothing to justify a short list of decorative motifs defining an entire architectural style all on its own. Even if validation is sought in arguments involving hybrids and artistic-cultural mystifications, despite Hispanic cultural endeavours preserving exotic features such as those derived from Islamic traditions, and late Gothic being more than capable of incorporating decorative motifs from any place or tradition.