

THE RESTORATION OF THE CASTLE OF SEGURA DE LA SIERRA (JAEN)

An operation carried out by the General Directorate of Architecture, through the Department for Towns of Artistic Interest to the Nation.

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HISTORY OF THE SITE

"Segura", wrote Idriss, towards the middle of the 12th Century, "is a fort inhabited as though it were a town, situated on the top of a high and precipitous mountain. Its buildings are fair to look on. At the foot of the mountain are to be found the sources of two rivers, one of which is the river of Cordova or *Nhar-al-Kebir* ('great river'), and the other the river of Murcia or *Nhar-al-Ayad* ('white river')".

From those days to the present time the general aspect of the ancient town, perched inside its eagle's eyrie, has scarcely changed. The Christians rebuilt the castle and the houses have been replaced, but the general layout and character of the town with its two rivers, which has given its name to the region as a whole, have been retained, and the ancient atmosphere still pervades it.

It is said, though without much justification, that the city was founded by the Phoenicians from Tyre, who gave it the name of Tavera, and that it was subsequently populated by the Greeks, who gave the name of "Orospeida" to the chain of mountains in which the Baetis (Guadalquivir) rises.

What is more certain is that during the Roman period it was called Tader, and that it is Pliny's *Tades*. Pliny also gives the name of "Saltis Tugiensis" to the *sierra* where the Guadalquivir rises, though this would appear to be derived from the ancient town of Tugia, near Peal de Becerro, in the Province of Jaén.

Towards the end of the Roman period the town must have given up its non-Roman name and taken the more fitting one of *Castrum Altum*. The area was doubtless fairly well populated, owing to the large number of silver mines in the region.

After the defeat at Guadelete, the place preserved its independence in the face of Moslem penetration, as the northern outpost of the kingdom of Todmir. But in 781, on the defeat of the latter, it was taken by Yusuf's eldest son Abdul Asward, though only after three particularly

murderous battles on the plains of Santa Catalina, Bujaraiza and San Román.

Under the Ommayad Caliphate, Segura was frequently a seat of rebellion and a place of refuge for adventurers conspiring against the Emirate of Cordova. Abdul Rahman I was in fact obliged to advance right up to the walls of the town to reduce the sons of Yusuf, after Yusuf himself had been defeated in the Province of Algarve. Abdul Asward, his brother Casin, and Hajila, the famous guerrillero, reduced him to such straits that the Emir was forced to withdraw to Jaén; here he was able to gather a powerful army with which he gave the assault at Cazlona, where the rebel troops were concentrated, thus finally overcoming the conspiracy.

Abdul Asward escaped, to die in poverty and oblivion in a village near Toledo. Casin, who had been taken prisoner, was soon released by this sovereign, and power was concentrated once and for all in the hands of the first of the Ommayads.

The city at this time already went under the name of Sekura, which it has since retained. When the Almoravide Empire was overthrown, at the Battle of Las Navas de Tolosa, the Guadalquivir Valley was thrown open to the Christian armies, and in the two years (1212 to 1214) which were to elapse between this battle and the death of Alfonso VIII, Ubeda, Baeza, Segura and Upper Andalusia were all reconquered. Segura was given into the keeping of the Order of St. James, which preserved it as an outpost of Christian power against the Moors. The importance of Segura must have been very considerable, since soon the Commanders of the Order were to take up residence there. This probably made reconstruction of the fortress necessary, together with the building of a convent church inside the walls. The tower must have been the home of Don Rodrigo Manrique, and it was doubtless within its solemn walls that his son Jorge, the warrior and poet, first saw the light of day.

But during the 16th and 17th Centuries, with the loss of its strategic importance and the decline of the orders of chivalry, the castle became more and more abandoned, fell progressively into a state of neglect, and finally became one huge ruin.

Yet in 1808, during the Peninsular War, its stones, like those of so many other fortresses of Spain, were once again to be stained with Spanish blood. The city was finally occupied, and the fortress blown up by the French invaders on the day of their forced withdrawal.





Fig. 3. — The castle enclosure during restoration, aerial view.

II. THE CASTLE

It has already been said that the Castle of Segura must have undergone almost complete reconstruction following the Christian conquest. The building as we see it today was not built in accordance with Islamic methods, and the only features which may be part of the work seen by Idriss in the 12th century are partially uncovered remains inside the fortified enclosure, only a small portion of which are visible above the bare rock to tempt the archaeologist.

The Christian fabric, *Mudéjar* in style, is, however, of vital importance for the history of Spanish architecture in the Middle Ages. The ancient walls, which date, so to speak, from the very days of the conquest, represent the most southerly frontier reached by a style which is to be met with from Sahagun all the way to Upper Andalusia and embodies the most "Spanish" phase of our mediaeval architecture. The main centre for this blending of Romanesque structural principles with forms belonging to the local Moorish tradition was Toledo, where its origins may be seen in the hermitage of "Christ of the Light". Hence it is in *Mudéjar* Toledo that we must seek for the most immediate forerunners of the Castle of Segura.

The fortress which has come down to us is an irregular ring of walls with barbicans, linked with a double wall

Fig. 1. — General view of the whole before restoration started.

Fig. 2. — General view after restoration.

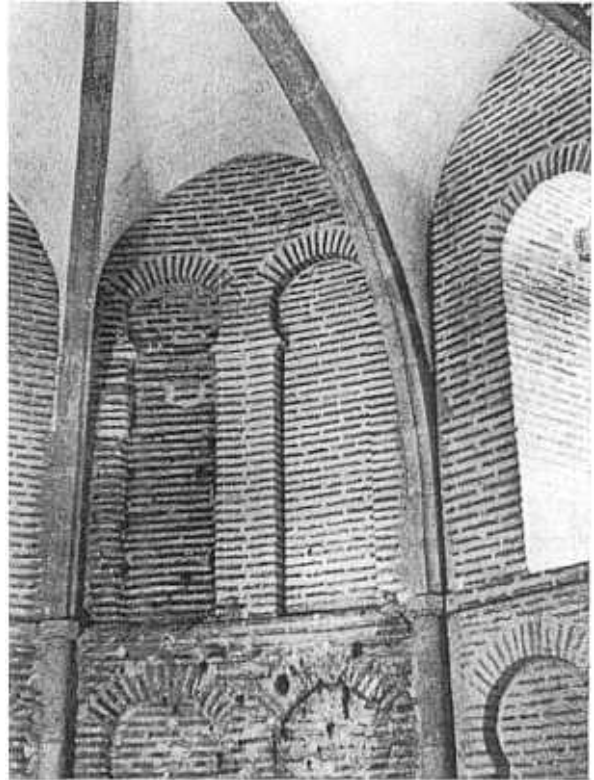


Fig. 4. — Apse of the church and "Tower of Homage" (background), before work started.

Fig. 5. — Inside view of the apse after restoration.

Fig. 6. — Reconstruction work on the vaulting in the tower.

which descends by degrees to join the fortifications encircling the town.

The innermost enclosure has a single entrance, placed obliquely in the Islamic tradition. The outer walls are protected by six towers, most of them rectangular but one circular and one no more than a buttress. The "Tower of Homage", which may be called rectangular rather than square, stands out among the rest as the largest and most impressive. It formed a single mass up to a certain height, in the manner usual to this type of construction; above this there were three floors with vaulted ceilings. The lowest of the three was divided by an interior wall into two long galleries and had vaults of brick set edgewise. The bricks themselves had disappeared, but their positions and the traces they had left were still visible in the cement work.

On this floor the inside structures were missing, but there were the remains of two cruciform brick pillars and the imposts of the six bays of vaulting on pendentives the manner of whose brick construction was perfectly clear; they correspond to the six divisions on each floor.

The window openings, few in number as is logical in the case of a tower built for purposes of defence, are of various types: in the main room there is a semi-circular arch with reveal, while others are in pairs, accommodated in niches, taking all the thickness of the wall and describing horseshoe arches.

Of the two upper floors, the higher one is the less delicately proportioned, though the arrangement of the vaulting is the same in each.

The three floors are connected by a staircase hollowed out inside the walls, its position varying at each floor-level. Each flight is a handsome brick construction, with false staggered brick *Mudéjar* vaulting in every way resembling that of the *Mudéjar* bell-towers in Toledo.

Yet more interesting than the tower is the church, which was quite certainly founded by the Knights of St. James. It has a single nave and an interior likewise deriving from the *Mudéjar* of Toledo, with an apse polygonal inside and circular outside, and three very plain windows with reveal, the wall spaces between which are decorated with blind horseshoe arches, likewise in the *Mudéjar* manner.

In the angles of the polygon there were still to be found the bases on which small stone columns had rested, and these have been restored. There can, in effect, be no doubt as to the authenticity of this Gothic feature, in view of the vaulting in the apse, which already shows ribbing as in Franciscan Gothic. The original roof over the nave must have been a mere timber frame construction.

Fig. 7. — Vaulting over the main gateway, restored.

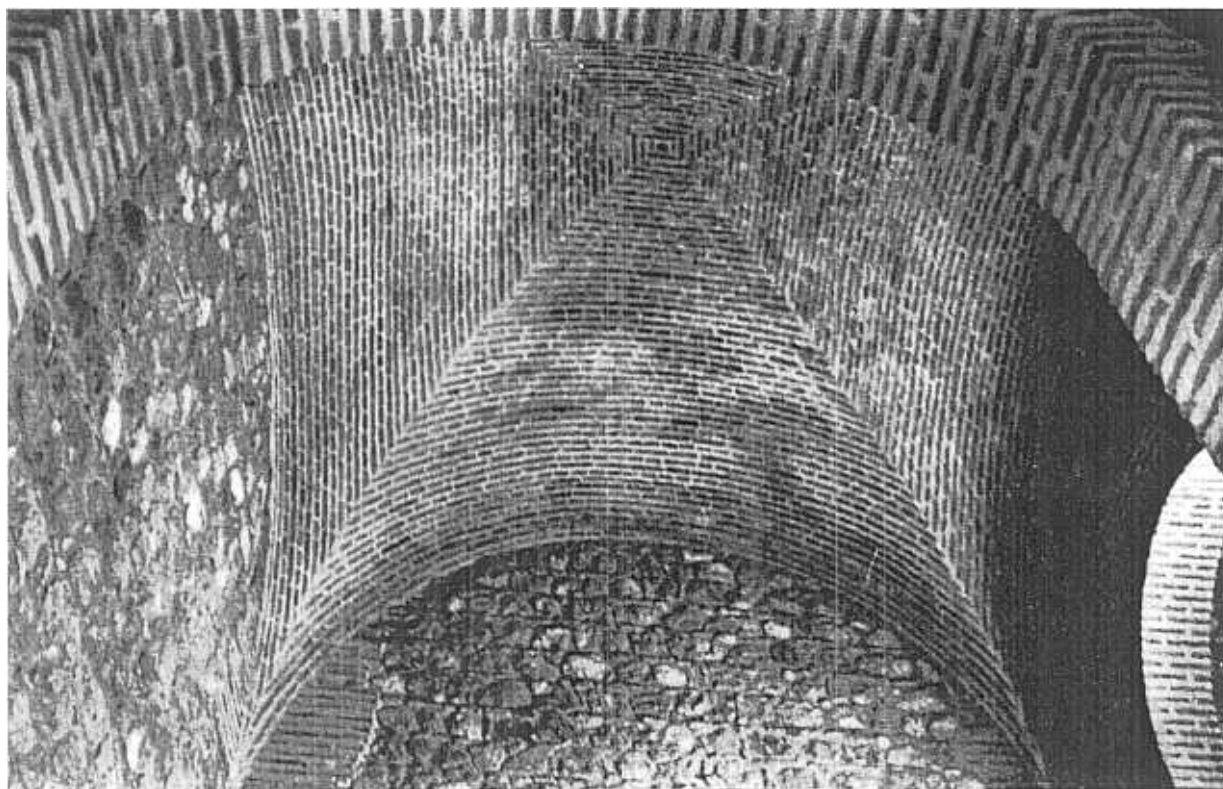




Fig. 8. Crenellations and staircase entry (detail), at top of tower.

The castle is of masonry construction, using stone from Torredonjimeno. This is of poor quality and is unfit for hewing, so that the builders were obliged to round off all the corners; this however, may not be from mere practical necessity but from adherence to an ancestral tradition. At Melque and in other places in the Province of Toledo buildings with intentionally curved corners are to be found, and there is sometimes an attempt to rough out a small angle column.

All features with sharp edges — window-mouldings, door-frames, vaulting, etc. — are of brickwork. Most of these have been removed for use on other buildings; however, with the fragments remaining and what is left of the housings into which they fitted it has been possible to restore a large number of such features.

Vaults of the type we have just described, built of bricks set edgewise, belong to the period when Toledo *Mudéjar* was spreading southwards to the areas recently conquered by Christian armies. The same is true of the brickwork between the stone ribs above the naves in the chapel at the Castle of Calatrava la Nueva (Ciudad Real) and of other churches in the Mancha region. However, in Toledo itself there exists a secular building in which we can recognize the model on which the

“Tower of Homage” in Segura is based; this is a fortified palace standing on the banks of the Tagus, in the “King’s Meadow”. It is known as the “Palace of Galiana” and may be the remains of the ancient palace of An-Nora. This building, which consisted of three parallel galleries originally roofed with wood, underwent complete transformation in the 13th Century, certainly following damage by fire. The original three galleries were divided into nine small rooms with vaulted roofs, visibly inspired by those of the Mosque of the Turners close by.

This is doubtless the origin of the type of construction which in Segura acquired, as it were, a legitimate status, when the Knights of St. James rebuilt the castle in the first quarter of the 13th century.

III. THE RESTORATION WORK

After it had been blown up by the French, the Castle of Segura seems to have slowly decayed with the passing of time. It was left to the complete mercy of the elements and its walls were cracked by lightning, as well as through normal ageing. As so often happens, the work

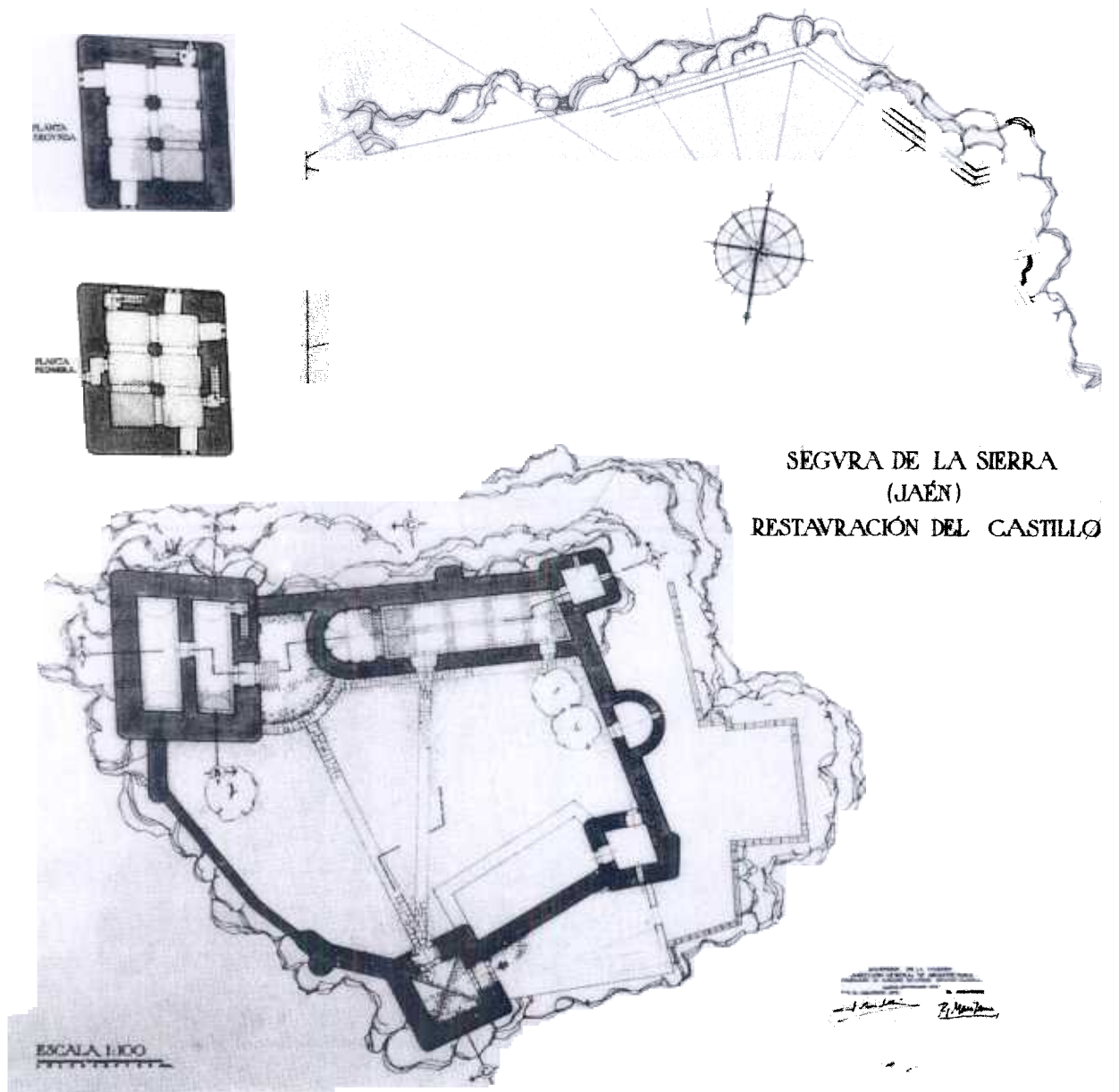


Fig. 9. General plan of the castle and plan of the tower.



Fig. 10. Western elevation of the castle.

of destruction was assisted by the hand of man, for from quite ancient times onwards the building was used as a quarry and its bricks were removed for use on later works.

The vaulting was missing over the gateway, in the "Tower of Homage", and in the apse of the church; at the higher levels the walls were half in ruins where they had not actually disappeared completely, as will be seen from the photographs taken before restoration work started.

In view of the advanced state of the damage and of the plan to use the place as a centre and lecture-hall for summer schools, thorough restoration was necessary, though naturally the ancient fabric needed to be retained and only those parts replaced which could be rebuilt with absolutely scientific certainty. For these, modern bricks were used, though the tones were harmonized with those of the original materials. Moreover, despite the damage they have suffered through ageing, the original portions will remain as permanent witnesses to the accuracy of the reconstruction work.

The first task was to consolidate the walls, fill up holes and build up the towers to their presumed original height. The battlements have not been restored, except on the "Tower of Homage"; where bricks and masonry work have been used in the Toledan manner; in this instance pieces of the coping had been found. In the case of this tower this was clearly an aesthetic necessity, but elsewhere not only were there no fragments to go by, but the proportions as a whole were quite fine enough to show the aesthetic value of the building. Inside the building the different floors have been completely and satisfactorily rebuilt; any features which had survived have been retained and any traces which could serve as a guide have been scrupulously made use of. In both the window openings and the staircase, restoration has been confined to those features on which there could be no doubt.

In the church, the presbytery has been restored, and the original decorated portions have been preserved untouched. The vaulting over the apse and all the roofing have been restored to their original height, and the nave

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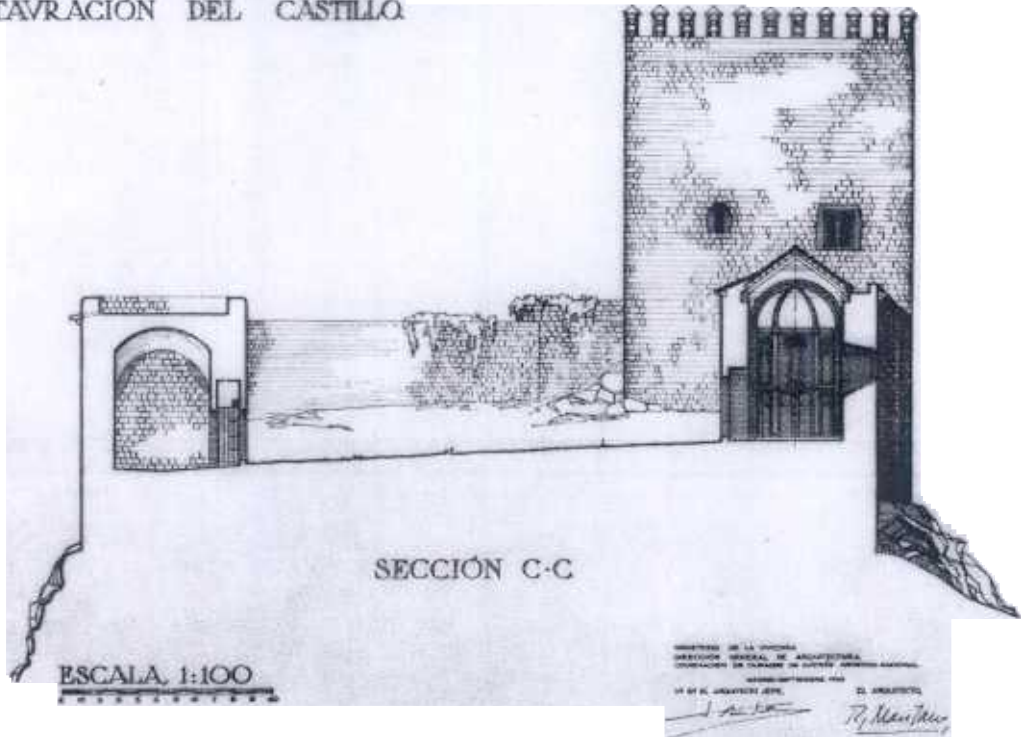


Fig. 11. — Vertical section through entrance and Moorish church.

Fig. 12. Sections through "Tower of Homage" and church.



has been given a single-bay barrel vault, to preclude any possibility of erroneous archaeological interpretation. For the pavings, earthenware tiles of a traditional type have been adopted.

In the fortifications enclosing the parade ground, the vaulting of some of the towers has been restored, so that the sentry's walk along the battlements is now complete. The vaulting over the gateway has likewise been restored.

RESUME

Ségura de la Sierra et son Château sont perchés au sommet d'une haute montagne très escarpée qui fut toujours habitée. D'abord par les Phéniciens et les Grecs, ensuite par les Romains et, après leur conquête de 791, par les Arabes. Au pied de cette montagne prennent naissance deux grands cours d'eau : le Guadalquivir et le Ségura qui, avant de se jeter dans la mer, baignent : l'un les plaines de Séville, l'autre les jardins de Murcie.

La reconquête chrétienne eut lieu entre 1212 et 1214 et Ségura devint une Commanderie de l'Ordre de Saint-Jacques et un poste avancé contre les Musulmans.

Ce fut alors que l'on reconstruisit la forteresse et une église en brique de style gothique primitif, fortement influencée par l'art de l'Islam, comme celles que, bien plus au nord de l'Espagne, construisirent les maîtres-maçons arabes pour le compte des rois chrétiens.

Le Château, lui, n'est déjà plus de style maure, mais, par ses caractéristiques, il est d'une importance capitale

In the courtyard itself there has been some general tidying-up, and also some excavation work which has revealed the remains of an Arab furnace and the original pavings of passageways belonging to earlier buildings which have disappeared. There are still to be seen traces of inside walls, springers of arches, bases of columns and the lower part of a cistern.

The reconstruction work was carried out between 1964 and 1968, costing a total of 5,938,929 pesetas.

pour l'architecture médiévale espagnole, comme il est expliqué dans l'article publié ici. La Tour des Hommages est très belle, avec ses trois plans superposés couverts de voûtes et d'arcs, communiquant entre eux par un escalier pris au plein de la muraille.

Le Château est construit en maçonnerie de pierres de médiocre qualité, qui se prêtent mal à la taille, c'est pour cela que tous les éléments à arêtes vives, voûtes et parements des fenêtres, sont en brique. Toutes les voûtes, du type tolédan, sont d'un intérêt extrême.

Le monument nous est parvenu à moitié en ruines, mais étant donné son importance et du fait que l'on possédait des données sûres pour tous ses éléments, il a été jugé possible de réaliser une restauration importante, sans pour autant perdre la rigueur scientifique voulue et en conservant tout ce qui existait avant la restauration. Les travaux ont été exécutés dans la période allant de 1964 à 1968 et sont revenus à environ 86.700 dollars.

Fig. 1. — Vue de l'ensemble avant la restauration.

Fig. 2. — Vue de l'ensemble, restauré.

Fig. 3. — Vue aérienne de l'enceinte du château, pendant la restauration.

Fig. 4. — Chevet de l'église avec, au fond, la « Tour des Hommages », avant restauration.

Fig. 5. — Vue intérieure de l'abside, après restauration.

Fig. 6. — Reconstruction des voûtes à l'intérieur de la tour.

Fig. 7. — Voûte de l'entrée principale, restaurée.

Fig. 8. — Crénélures du sommet de la Tour, avec départ de l'escalier.

Fig. 9. — Plan général du château et plans de la tour.

Fig. 10. — Façade ouest de la tour, en élévation.

Fig. 11. — Coupe verticale à travers l'entrée et l'église mauresque.

Fig. 12. — Vue en coupe de la « Tour des Hommages » et de l'église.