

ABOUT THE SAN JULIÁN AND SAN ANTONIO CONVENT (LA CABRERA, MADRID)

A propósito del Convento de San Julián y San Antonio (La Cabrera,
Madrid)

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ABSTRACT: This paper reviews the history of the Convent of San Julián and San Antonio in La Cabrera (Madrid), declared an Asset of Cultural Interest in the Monument category by the Community of Madrid in 2020. At the same time, it shows its relationship with two of the greatest figures of Spanish painting of all time, Velázquez and Goya. In both cases, these are links generated after the death of the two painters.

KEYWORDS: Convento of San Julián and San Antonio, La Cabrera (Madrid), Velázquez, Goya, Heritage of Cultural Interest.

RESUMEN: El presente trabajo repasa la historia del Convento de San Julián y San Antonio, en La Cabrera (Madrid), declarado Bien de Interés Cultural en la categoría de Monumento por la Comunidad de Madrid en el año 2020. Al tiempo que muestra su relación con dos de los más grandes genios de la pintura española de todos los tiempos, Velázquez y Goya. En ambos casos, se trata de vínculos generados después del fallecimiento de los dos pintores.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Convento de San Julián and San Antonio, La Cabrera (Madrid), Velázquez, Goya, Patrimonio de Interés Cultural.

1.- INTRODUCTION

The Convent of San Julián and San Antonio is an example of medieval religious architecture representative of the beginning of Romanesque art in Madrid (Spain) and probably one of the oldest Romanesque buildings in Madrid province (López de Silanes Valgañón, 2014; Sendino *et al.*, 2020: 85-86). It is situated about 60 km north of Madrid City (coordinates 40.868326, -3.637209) and 2 km northwest of La Cabrera town (Fig. 1A), which gives its name to the mountain range where the Convent is situated (*Sierra de La Cabrera*) and the Convent short name (Convent of *San Antonio de La Cabrera*) (Fig. 1A-1B). The Convent is nestled on the southern slopes of *Cancho Gordo* (Fig. 1B), on the well-known hiking route GR-10 that passes within just a few meters, and at 1190 metres above sea level (MASL) has exceptional views. Differential erosion has produced the berroqueño landscape which is composed of local spheroid granitic boulders that are considered a Global Heritage Stone Resource, and the region is well-known for the tradition of granitic stone masonry.

2.- GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Archaeological remains found at *Cancho Gordo* (the highest peak of the *Sierra de La Cabrera*, at 1563 MASL) (Fig. 1A) confirm the presence of human settlements in the area during the Bronze Age, between the 3rd and the 1st millennium BCE. Iron Age Celtiberian remains from the 5th to 4th centuries BCE were found nearby at *Cerro de la Cabeza* (Fig. 1B) and the buildings were later occupied by the Visigoths in the 5th century (Mateos, 2013: 13-32). Researchers point out that although there have been no definite indications of a place of worship in the hill fort of *Cerro de la Cabeza*, it would not have been far away, perhaps at the site occupied by the current Convent (Mateos, 2013: 30). Possibly associated with the town, on the southern slopes of the same hill, is the Visigothic necropolis *La Tumba del Moro* (The Tomb of the Moor, 7th century) (Fig. 1B) consisting of ten tombs (Mateos, 2013: 29-30).

Although there are still many unknowns to be resolved about its origin, in a general view of the Convent, two stages (Fig. 1C) are seen: the Benedictine [Romanesque] and the Franciscan [Romanesque-Gothic] stages. The Benedictine part belongs to the Convent church (Fig. 2A) which preserves original architectural features and is of great interest. Although modest in size, its ornamentation and construction details display characteristics of larger Benedictine churches. The Franciscan stage is represented by the allotment and the bell tower.

The previous refurbishments throughout the Convent's history are shown through historical events and the characters that have inhabited it. Centuries of history lie buried just beneath the surface and in 1989 the first archaeological dig started to yield interesting results. The recent restoration is an excellent example of reconditioning, keeping the building's original spirit alive.

Over almost 1000 years the building has undergone several refurbishments, but always retaining its original connection with the medieval period. We will journey through the history of Spain, distinguishing five different periods. The first, from the

11th to 15th centuries, where the church remains are the only legacy. The second period starts in the 15th century, after a refurbishment. It is a period of splendor, when the building had different uses such as a center of studies, Inquisition prison, hospice and burial place for religious and illustrious personalities, as is speculated with the Velázquez tomb. The third period, the 19th century, shows the building in a dark time marked by looting and abandonment during the Peninsular War and the Confiscation of Mendizábal. By the turn of the 19th to the 20th centuries it had had several owners, including Goya's only grandson who used it as a residence. Finally, in 1987 it returned to the church's hands, when the Madrid Government took over its conservation bringing its authenticity alive.

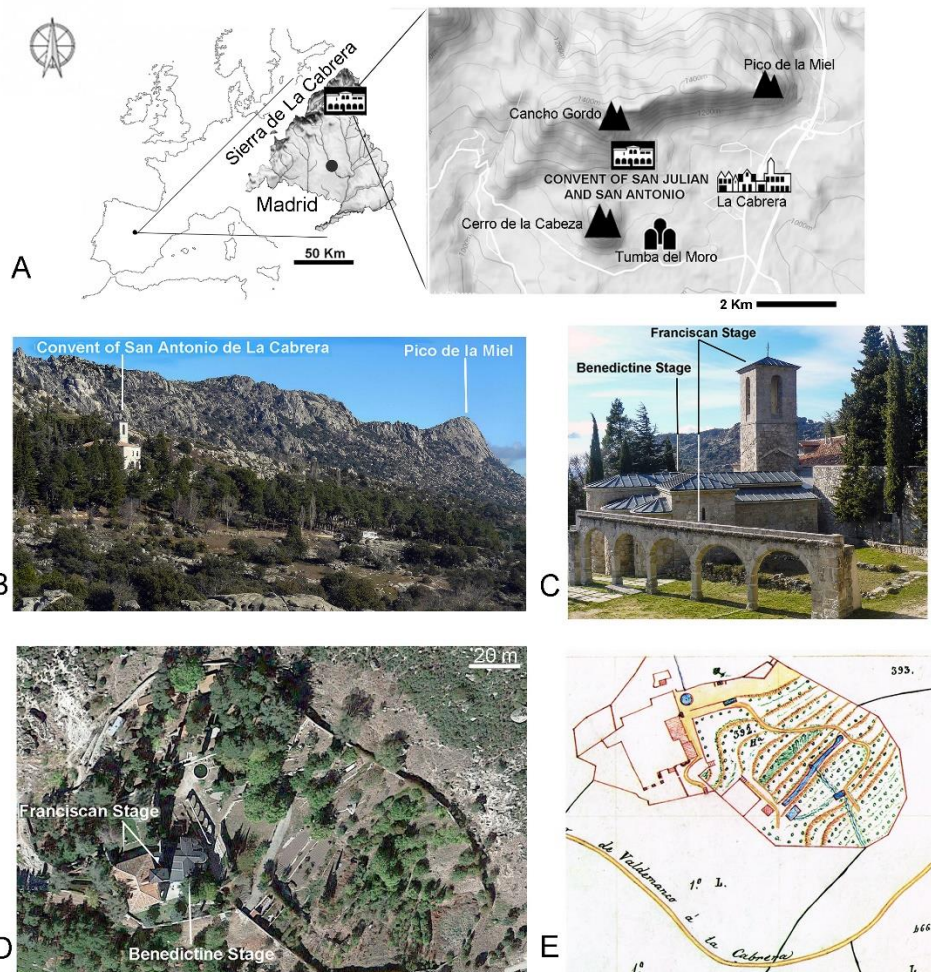


Fig. 1: A. Location of Madrid, Spain, and (inset) the Convent location within Madrid province, on the right magnified area with the Convent and some local archaeological sites - see text - with a topographic map in 3D made with Maps 3D. B. View of the Convent on the southern slopes of the Sierra de La Cabrera, to the west of the well-known Pico de la Miel. C. Present view of the Convent with both building stages: Benedictine and Franciscan. D. Aerial view of the Convent premises with Google Earth. The church and the bell tower can be seen by the dark roofs, added during restoration. E. Historical map of the allotment area with distribution of different crops (*Instituto Geográfico Nacional*, 1870). The circular blue area represents the pond. This map corresponds to the aerial view in D. (B&C taken by the authors).

2.1. First Period: Benedictine Stage

This is the original building. Despite the absence of any written documentation, it is believed there was a Christian settlement at the small hermitage of San Julián (7th century bishop of Toledo) during the Christian Reconquest and repopulation of the area at the end of the 11th century, probably during Alfonso VI's (1040-1109) kingdom. In about 1088 this territory would have been controlled by this northern Castilian king and, in order to repopulate the conquered space, the installation of Benedictine monasteries was ordered. The exact date of its foundation is not known, its small size perhaps being the reason for the absence of written documental evidence, but it is considered to be between the 11th and the 12th centuries (Quintano Ripollés, 1953: 41; Abad Castro and Cuadrado Sánchez, 1989: 24,26). Likewise, the construction date of a nearby building, the oratory of Santa María Egipcíaca, which was for women and depended on the hermitage of San Julián, is also unknown. This oratory is thought to be at the base of *Pico de la Miel* (Fig. 1B), where the fountain named after the hill is currently located.

At present the church is the only Benedictine element that has survived, and this is considered to be the most interesting unit from an architectural point of view (Fig. 1C & 2A-2B). Although it is small, 15 meters long and 14 meters wide in the transept and just over 9 meters in the naves, and has an austere design, the floor plan stands out for its originality. The church consists of three simple naves with transept and the altar at the end with five semi-circular apses, staggered, arranged in a battery and of different heights, giving five independent chapels. The central chapel (Fig. 2A) is deeper and larger than the lateral ones, following the Benedictine architecture prototype. The three central apses correspond to the naves, and those at the ends open at the transept arms, all with half-point windows. Inside, it is plastered and presents four columns each composed of three granite drums of circular section. Externally, there is granite stone masonry (Fig. 2B). On the other hand, the church floor plan has characteristics of larger churches of the Cistercian Provençal Romanesque style (López de Silanes Valgañón, 2015: 47), partly why it is believed its construction was interrupted.

It is known that King Enrique II (1334-1379) and also the aristocratic family Mendoza (which was granted with the *Señorío de Buitrago*, including La Cabrera), favoured the arrival of Franciscans to La Cabrera. A '*Señorío*' was a large territory given by kings to nobles who had contributed to the Reconquest of Spain, where peasants worked the land for their landlord, who had ultimate power over them.

2.2. Second Period: Franciscan stage

This corresponds with the first building extension (Fig. 1C) when Franciscans established the first convent of the Order in what is now the Madrid province (*Cisneros*, 1982: 8). The presence of Franciscans is well documented, mainly because of the chronicles and research by the Order itself (Salazar, 1612: 241-244; Omaechevarría, 1956: 129-186). It was around the year 1400 when they occupied the building and added the name of San Antonio to the previous Convent of San Julián, in honour of the Portuguese Franciscan saint Anthony of Padua. The Convent was

founded by Pedro de Villacreces (1350-1422), a relevant figure of the Franciscan Order and supporter of the more radical position that imposed values such as austerity, poverty, study, prayer and meditation, opting for small hermitages instead of large convents. Soon after, the Villacreces Reform would be absorbed by the Observance Reform, less rigorous and giving more importance to the development of a convent. The Convent (Fig. 1C) was built attached to the old church in the 15th century, which was later expanded and reformed as it gained fame and received donations and privileges of nobles and kings of Castile, without losing the Franciscan qualities of simplicity and austerity. No doubt the splendour of the building arrived along with the presence of the Franciscan Order.

In 1413, the Antipope Benedict XIII, also known as Pope Luna (1328-1423), authorized Franciscans to occupy the hermitages of San Julián and Santa María Egipcíaca and to construct a dwelling in the former and an oratory in the latter. In 1435, Pope Eugene IV (1383-1447) authorized the construction of the bell tower, located in the southwest corner of the church (Fig. 1C-1D). The normal procedure in those times was to build before asking for permission to do the works (Palanco Aguado, 2013: 38). Therefore, it is likely that the house and the oratory already existed at that time.

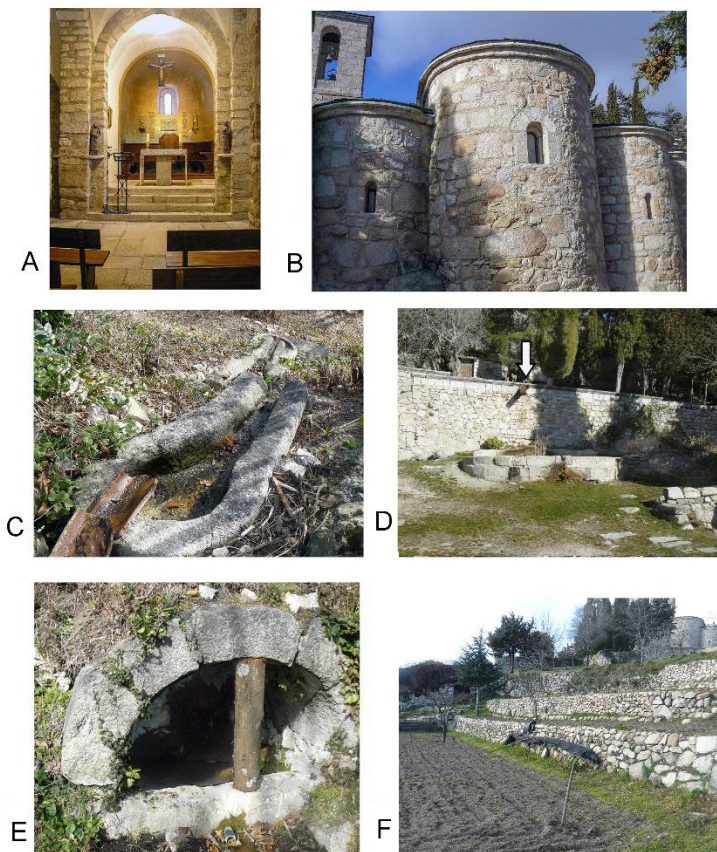


Figure 2. A. Central chapel of the church showing altar in the main apse. B. External view of the central apses. C. Part of the water network on the Convent premises, transfer from one channel to another. D. Supply to the pond (white arrow above the water supply). E. The allotment spring, La Fuente del Duque. F. Stepped terraces of the allotment on the east hillside. (Photographs taken by the authors).

With the Franciscans came not only the building extensions, but also the Gothic reforms in the old Romanesque temple (Quintano Ripollés, 1953: 41-42). During the first decades of the Franciscan presence, aqueduct works were undertaken and they continued in the following centuries, bringing water from several springs in the mountains and forming a network of supply to the ponds (Fig. 2C-2D), fountains and allotment, a considerable achievement of hydraulic engineering. The friars maintained the rich allotment (Fig. 1E), well-known in the region, with the water coming from the *Cancho Gordo* (Fig. 1A) which supplied an effective irrigation system and created a microhabitat. The friars grew a large variety of trees and plants which made the space stand out for its greenness in relation to the drier, more arid surrounding environment, a fertile fruit and vegetable garden between rock cliffs. The soil, of good quality, was taken there from more fertile places as gifts to the friars or as payment for their religious services (Gómez Merino, 2013: 82). This allotment, at one hectare, occupies over half of the premises (Fig. 1D-1E), with virtually all of the steep eastern part on stepped terraces (Fig. 2F) on the mountainside. It has its own spring, *La Fuente del Duque* [The Duke's Fountain] (Fig. 2E), and a pond six meters in diameter and one meter deep (Fig. 1D, 2D & 1E), constructed in the 16th century. The allotment was used occasionally as a place for walking and exercise and the Convent for retreat or for rest during the hunts by monarchs and members of the nobility (Quintano Ripollés, 1953: 42).

In about 1530 the Convent became the place of scholarship, or Theological University, for Castilian provinces, where renowned Franciscans such as Fray Francisco Gonzaga (1546-1620), the later Cardinal Gonzaga, studied (Quintano Ripollés, 1953: 42). Later, it became a place of retreat and prayer from 1570 until 1797. It was so commonplace to use the Convent for meditation that one of the most eminent ecclesiastic figures, Jiménez de Cisneros (1436-1517), also known as Cardinal Cisneros, used to visit the Convent as one of his favourite places for contemplation (Quintano Ripollés, 1953: 42; Fernández Peña, 2007: 462). The Cardinal felt very close to the Convent as he belonged to the Franciscan Order and was born in Torrelaguna, only 12 km away from La Cabrera. His reputation came from being the confessor of Isabella the Catholic Queen, as Cardinal Archbishop of Toledo, as well as governor of Castile twice and third General inquisitor of Castile. During his tenure, he supported the Franciscan Order giving them more buildings in Torrelaguna for recovering sick friars. At one point, so many people lived in the area that he felt the necessity to create rules, such as forbidding games and noise near the buildings in order not to disturb the recovering friars (Meseguer Fernández, 1974: 272) and allow meditation. He had so much affection for the Convent that he buried his father, Alonso Ximénez de Cisneros, in the main chapel of the Convent's church in 1488; later in 1661 the body was transferred to the Franciscan monastery of Torrelaguna. According to one of Cardinal Cisneros' biographers, this Convent was the most favoured by him as it was the largest Franciscan sanctuary in Spain (Aranda Quintanilla y Mendoza, 1653: 212).

Another well-known Franciscan who stayed in the Convent was the controversial Fray Diego de Landa Calderón (1524-1579) who, after having been a guardian in about 1547, was sent to South America to evangelize the Indians. He would return to Spain after the *Auto-da-fé* of *Maní* in 1562, when, due to the resistance of many

natives to abandon their beliefs, thousands of images, sacred objects and codices of the Mayan culture were burned (Palanco Aguado, 2013: 43). Landa, as Great Inquisitor in that unfortunate event, was judged at the Council of the Indies in Spain and finally acquitted. He then retired to the Convent of San Antonio in La Cabrera, where he wrote part of his well-known work *Relación de las cosas del Yucatán* (1566-1568) [Regarding Yucatan issues, Landa Calderón, 1566], perhaps repentant and with the intention of recovering part of the lost Mayan culture.

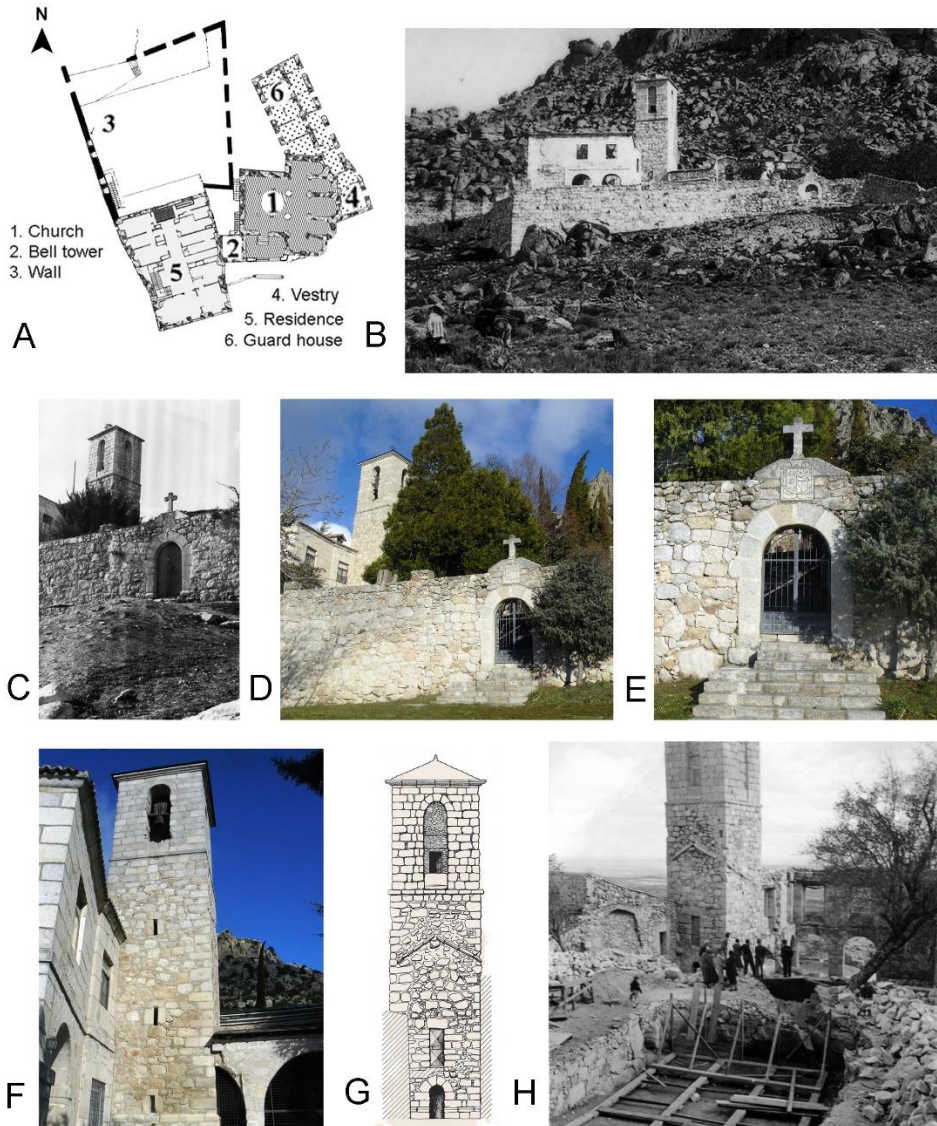


Figure 3. A. Floor map of the Convent premises. The vestry and guardhouse were demolished during the 20th century renovations. B. Photograph of the Franciscan part of the building taken around 1917; south gate at right. C. Photograph of the south gate of the building taken around 1935 (Franciscan part.) The wall is of 15th-16th centuries with a Franciscan symbol above the gate and a stone cross above that. D. Current view of the south gate. E. Closer view of the Franciscan shield above the gate crowned by a granite cross dated to 1563. F. View of the bell tower from the south. Note the windows of closed off semi-circular arches. G. Drawing of the north side with remains of a gable. H. Photograph taken around 1935 during the construction of the swimming pool in the cloister's central courtyard. (B, C, & H Courtesy of the Convent Archives). (D, E & F taken by the authors).

For several centuries the Convent was considered very prestigious, playing an important role in the religious life of the region, and successive extensions and renovations were carried out to the building. The bell tower has large, semi-circular arched windows which were later closed off. The lower part of the tower dates to the 15th century and the height of the tower was then increased in the 17th century to that which we see today (Fig. 1C & 3F-3G). In 1622 the old cloister was demolished and a new one built with three arches on the larger sides and two on the smaller ones. The arches have been dated to between the 15th and 16th centuries and it is thought that they may have been moved from their original place in the construction of a new cloister in the 17th century.

3.- THE SHADOW OF THE GREAT PAINTER VELÁZQUEZ

During the celebration of the fourth centenary of the painter's birth it was speculated that the remains of the brilliant Spanish painter Velázquez and his wife, who died a little earlier in 1660, may be buried in the Convent. The media quickly echoed the news in 1999 (Amado, 1999: 86; Otaí, 1999a: 31 & 1999b: 28), when researchers analysed an important document deposited in the Historical Archive of Protocols of Madrid. This had been signed in 1664 by Gaspar de Fuensalida (1569-1664), royal secretary and intimate friend of the painter. In this document Fuensalida asked for his own remains to be buried in his family tomb at the Convent on his death. At that time the tomb was under construction, therefore his remains were taken to the Church of San Juan Bautista in Madrid and later transferred [in secret] with those of Fuensalida's parents and grandparents to the Convent (Lasso de la Vega, 1949: 478). This inferred that his friend the painter Velázquez and the painter's wife, who were both buried in a crypt given by Gaspar de Fuensalida in that same church in Madrid, could also have been transferred and buried in the Convent. Unfortunately, there are no documents that can confirm this (Corral, 2004: 113). Other researchers raised the possibility that Velázquez's remains had been transferred to the Madrid convent of San Plácido (Amado, 1999: 86). On the other hand, the Church of San Juan Bautista was demolished in 1811 during the Independence War and turned into a central square. None of the archaeological excavations carried out since the mid-19th century at the church, currently in *Plaza de Ramales* (Madrid), have provided more information. The first archaeological campaign carried out at the Convent of San Antonio in La Cabrera, in 1989, documented some burials under the floor of the Convent church, from between the 15th and 18th centuries. Unfortunately, other burials have been lost due to works carried there in the middle of the 19th century and subsequent abandonment. The fact that some burials were neglected made them the goal of vandalism, removing tombstones probably in search of valuables. Currently, the whereabouts of the Velázquez remains is an enigma.

4.- THE INQUISITION

From the mid-17th century the Convent began a period of decline, as reflected in the numerous alms they received and the decrease in the number of friars. In the 18th century part of the extension that had been constructed was used as a prison of the

Archbishopric of Toledo. Therefore, during the last decades of the Spanish Inquisition, which was begun by the Catholic Monarchs in 1478, some opponents of the institution were imprisoned in the Convent. This was the case with Manuel Quintano Bonifaz (1699-1774), Bishop of Farsalia, who had represented the highest official authority of the Spanish Inquisition for two decades and was exiled and imprisoned in the Convent by Carlos III. Another ecclesiastic who suffered imprisonment as a result of his criticism towards the Inquisition was Juan Antonio Llorente González (1756-1823), canon and former secretary of the Court of the Inquisition (Madrid) and one of the first historians of it, who was imprisoned by the General Inquisitor (Rodríguez Burón, 1823: 24). Both of them were not there for too long. The former was released after asking the king for forgiveness in 1761 and the latter for a month in 1801.

5.- DARKNESS

The fact that La Cabrera town was located on the royal road that linked Madrid with Burgos, one of the main roads between the capital and the north of the peninsula, made it a popular place of pilgrimage over the centuries, particularly pilgrimages regarding San Antonio, but also had tragic consequences for the Convent. In November 1808, when Napoleon's troops passed through the area on their way to Madrid, one of the toughest battles of the War of Independence took place at nearby Somosierra, with the French troops victorious thanks to the support of the Polish horse regiment. La Cabrera town and the Convent were annihilated by the Napoleonic troops, and the remains of the Convent were used as a barracks for French forces. The inhabitants of the town and the friars fled to places further from the Burgos road to be safe. In the case of the Franciscans, they did not return until 1812 and it is then that they began the arduous task of restoring the Convent. Once the war was finished in 1814 and Fernando VII returned to Spain, it was used again as a prison, hosting luminaries such as the liberal deputy and canon Antonio Oliveros Sánchez (1764-1820), who served a four-year sentence and died in the Convent in 1820, and the erudite writer, archaeologist and geographer Basilio Sebastián Castellanos de Losada (1807-1891), who was imprisoned for his liberal ideas in 1824 (Hualde Pascual, 2013: 225).

In 1834 the friars were again forced to leave the Convent, this time due to a decree of exclaustation and disentanglement signed by Juan Álvarez de Mendizábal (1790-1853). This was one of the successive expropriations of Church property that the liberals carried out in the 19th century in Spain, in order to clear up debt in public finances but resulting in the loss of a good part of Spanish cultural and artistic heritage. The law affected the movable and immovable property of what they considered 'dead hands' and was sold at public auction. Many of these buildings became ruins after being used as factories, warehouses, barracks, etc. and of others nothing remains. The practice of repurposing religious buildings to serve residential purposes was widespread. The disentanglement process transferred ownership of the Convent to private hands. With this transfer, the first refurbishments to make the Convent a home started, but nothing was recorded until the 1930s. As part of one of

the 20th century renovations, the guardhouse (Fig. 3A) was demolished to give more visibility to the 15th and 16th century cloister arches (Yáñez Santiago, 2001).

6.- THE SHADOW OF THE GREAT PAINTER GOYA

One of the inhabitants of this house was the grandson of the great painter Francisco de Goya, who bought the Convent and its surrounding lands. Pío Mariano de Goya y Goicoechea (1806-1874), the only grandson of Goya, lived without a known profession and invested the great family wealth in the most common speculative business of the time, the sale and purchase of disentailed goods and mines. By 1859, the painter's only grandson had already sold the extensive estate *Quinta de Goya* or *Quinta del Sordo*, leaving on the house walls *Pinturas Negras* made by his grandfather Francisco de Goya. He arrived at La Cabrera in 1865 from Madrid, whence he had fled from his numerous creditors, having already lost almost everything inherited from his grandfather and father including many paintings. With him he was able to take what he could of the large inheritable family patrimony. In 1866 he sold *El Autorretrato* of 1815 to the Museo del Prado along with three other works (Álvarez Lopera, 2004, as cited in Antigüedad del Castillo, 2020: 171). The same year some of the landscape paintings were sold at an auction. Eventually, a painting of King Fernando VII would be kept by the painter's grandson until the end of his days, which would later be sold by one of his daughters due to his deprived economic situation (Olmo Losada and Olmos, 1955: 9).

He was quite well known in La Cabrera mountain range, as he had been the owner of a popular silver mine in the region and of another in the same mountain range ten years earlier (Chamorro Villanueva, 2016: 58-59). A few months after his arrival, he bought the Convent, probably with his second wife's money since he was practically bankrupt, perhaps with the intent of staying in a secluded place where he could not be easily found. In 1872 he mortgaged the property of the Convent in his wife's name. He died in the town in 1874, and is buried in the town cemetery. One of their daughters died in the Convent in early 1891 after complications giving birth, as did the child (Palanco Aguado, 2013: 56-57). In 1894 the title passed to his other daughter, Francisca de Goya Vildósola (1865-1925), who in turn left as her heir her husband, Dr Mariano Sainz García-Limones (1858-1933). The descendants of Goya lived in the guardhouse (Fig. 3A), the only habitable building at that time, but the exact date of its construction is unknown and it is no longer preserved. In 1928, a friend of the Goya family, Araceli Márquez Aranguren, took over the property, renting rooms in the Convent during the summer (*El Heraldo de Madrid*, 1929: 15).

7.- DR JIMÉNEZ DÍAZ

In 1934 she sold the old Franciscan Convent, with other estates, to the prestigious Dr Carlos Jiménez Díaz (1898-1967), considered one of the most important Spanish doctors of medicine of all time and a key figure in contemporary medicine. This was the last private owner, who lived in the Convent as his second residence. It was he

who undertook large restoration works, mainly preserving the original structure, but also doing specific works to adapt it to be a home.

Dr Jiménez Díaz used to travel close to the Convent for many years and he was attracted by the large green patch of vegetation, i.e. the vegetable and Convent gardens, which he could see between the rock cliffs (Jiménez Casado, 1993: 205). He bought the Convent and the Goya family estates in 1934, as his second residence for weekends and summers, the same year that the Institute of Medical Research with his name was created. By then only the building's walls, the tower and the guardhouse (built in the 19th century after the confiscation) remained standing. At the time of purchase the doctor was unaware that the old church remains still survived, buried under the ruins of an adjoining building. This discovery was a surprise, and fortunately its state of conservation was good; with the exception of the demolished roof and the exterior of some apses (Fig. 3B & 3C), it was in good condition internally.

Dr Jiménez Díaz took the decision to renovate the building. For this, his brother Eusebio, an engineer, directed the restoration (Jiménez Casado, 1993: 209). Eusebio made use of the stone ruins, but he did not have time to finish the work as the Spanish Civil War broke out in July 1936. The doctor was enjoying his historical summer residence at the time. He took refuge there and also admitted some of his neighbours from the nearest town, La Cabrera. These included the town's mayor and other personalities who had left their residences after seeing assassinations. During the first days of the war, the doctor transformed his Convent residence into an improvised hospital, deploying his maids as nurses. This was one of the reasons why, years later, he had to testify at the Tribunal of Political Responsibilities, accused of establishing a clinic on his estate at the service of the Republican side (Jiménez Casado, 1993: 309; Pérez Peña, 2005: 120).

Being a privately-owned building at that time, the Convent was spared the destruction or burning suffered by a lot of religious buildings during the Civil War. After the war, the prestigious doctor took over the works of restoration of the Convent to turn it into a private retreat. The small church was transformed into a family chapel after permission was obtained, before the Civil War, to celebrate semi-public masses (Fernández Peña, 2007: 465). It was plastered inside, the doctor and his wife decorating with their own hands, adding Romanesque ornamentation in bright colours, reproducing those preserved in the church of *Sant Climent de Taüll* in Lleida. They also renovated the gardens and part of the old water channel from the mountains, and also built a swimming pool in what was the central patio of the cloister, for which they had to dynamite the rock (Jiménez Casado, 1993: 210) (Fig. 3H).

There, the doctor developed his hobby of botany and took care of the trout farm that the Franciscans had created. It seems that of all private owners of the Convent after the disentailment, Dr Jiménez Díaz was the only one who took care of its restoration, halting the deterioration that had threatened it. Although he did not restore it to its original condition, carrying out works to turn it into a private residence with swimming pool and destroying part of the old structures and graves in the cloister's courtyard, he did rebuild some of the building, therefore partly preserving the former structure. In other words, he combined the restoration with present-day needs. The

doctor died in 1967 and his wife two years later, bequeathing the property of the Convent in the long term to the Franciscan Order by testamentary donation, but more immediately as a lifelong usufructuary to a niece who, after removing her belongings, left the property abandoned.

Other artistic elements that have been incorporated in more recent times are those introduced by Dr Jiménez Díaz. These include a granite bench, made from one piece of stone, and an octagonal fountain designed by him. There are also inscriptions with the names of two of the founding Franciscan friars carved into the stone and written in Latin, therefore not clashing with the original elements of ornamentation.

Although Dr Jiménez Díaz, as the last private owner, added stone sculptures, these were in keeping with the rest of the building and its environment. The granite sculptures included, among others, two stone bulls or boars (in consonance to ancient sculptures located on the hill of Guisando, Ávila) placed at the entrance (Gómez Merino, 2013: 76). These sculptures and the swimming pool have since been removed over the last few decades.

8.- BACK IN CHURCH'S HANDS

In 1982, the local authorities acted on the total abandonment of property and the vandalism that had taken place there for years. The doctor's niece decided to renounce the usufruct, preferring that the building could be declared an artistic historical monument, meaning she would no longer be financially responsible for renovations. Therefore, the ownership reverted back to the Franciscan Order in 1987, after a century and a half of forced absence. That same year, the Department of Culture of the Madrid Government commissioned a project starting with the restoration of the church initially, which would continue with the remains of the Franciscan Convent and the allotment. Between 1988 and 1993, there were several archaeological campaigns and the restoration of the monastic building took place (*Franciscanos*, Lopera Arazola and Yáñez Santiago 1994: 2-3). The cost of this restoration and consolidation was shared between the Madrid Government and the Franciscan Order. The Franciscans returned to the Convent in 1991 and transferred it to the Idente Missionaries in 2004. Nowadays the Convent is occupied by a small community of ecclesiastics who preserve it and try to maintain this architectural treasure. Its doors are open to the public for cultural use such as conferences, concerts and spiritual retreats and they have the support of the Association of Friends of the Convent of *San Antonio de La Cabrera*.

In January 2020 the Convent, including the stone remains of the water supply system, the terraced allotment (well known in the region for centuries) and the perimeter wall with two entrances surrounding the monastic complex, was declared an Asset of Cultural Interest (*Boletín Oficial de la Comunidad de Madrid*, 2020: 28-29).

The medieval religious spirit has been respected through the centuries, and the building reformations also follow the original structure as is seen with the walls and the main gate (Fig. 4A & 4C-4E). An example of how the building is merged with the natural environment can be seen from the stairs carved into the rock accessing the allotment (Fig. 4F).



Figure 4. A. Convent wall where the preserved older section meets the restored one. B. Roman stele. C. Photograph of the west and current main gate of the building before the Convent's restoration. D. Closer view of the door; the Duke of Infantado shield is on the door lintel. E. Current external view of door. F. Stairs carved into the rock accessing the allotment on the Convent premises. G. Pathway running from the main gate to the building. (A, B, E & F taken by the authors). (C, D & G Courtesy of Convent Archives, taken around 1935).

Although there are more recent buildings in the complex, they do not clash with the surroundings. Some of them combine ornamental features from other times, as is the case of the Franciscan building shown in Figure 4G. This was probably built in the 18th century and has an exceptional element on its facade, a Roman funerary stele (Fig. 4B), the only one found in the region, placed into the main south façade at about

one and a half meters above the ground. Surprisingly, it is made of limestone and not the local granitic rock. Although reused in previous construction, probably in the 18th century, it has been dated to between the 1st and 2nd centuries AD; it has a bas-relief of high quality with two birds pecking a bunch of grapes. There is an inscription on the lower part (Transcription: *G(aio) · Val(erio) / Marc[e]lo / an(norum) LXIV / M(arcela?) M/ON[um(entum) / ...* Translation: to Gayo Valerio Marcelo, sixty-four years old, M(arcela?) (Hoyo, 2002: 284).

The grandiloquent eclectic facades that elevate the environment's status, all reflect the significance attached to religious medieval times. The restoration has been made with precision, using all the current available information, to make an accurate renovation of the medieval monastic complex that was once the Convent. All the details incorporated later do not detract from the authenticity and identity to the building. They generate coherence and contribute richness with their texture and qualities. The use of natural materials, the granitic stone, gives the setting an air of quality, colour and texture.

The idea of a building that is more than its physical structure resonates across many European heritage properties, like the Gregorian chants that once echoed from the stones of the Convent when it first served as a monastery in the 11th-12th centuries. Additionally, the environment here also plays a crucial role in helping the visitor to feel the peace that the friars enjoyed almost 1000 years ago. There are many unknowns about the Convent's origin and its history, to which another can be added: did the Diego de Velázquez remains coincide in the convent along with Francisco de Goya's descendants and works? If this occurred, it may have happened between the last third of the 19th century and the first third of the 20th century.

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