

JOHN HURST MEMORIAL PRIZE 2022

In 2004, the Medieval Settlement Research Group announced the launch of a prize, set up in honour of the late John Hurst, who did so much to promote the field of medieval archaeology and in particular the study of medieval settlement. This annual prize of £200 is intended to encourage new and young scholars in the field. Originally a prize for the best master's dissertation, since 2018 the prize is awarded for the best student presentation at the MSRG winter seminar (further details on the Announcements page at the start of this volume). For the 2022 award, we are delighted to announce that the prize winner is Alexandre Mateu Picó, a predoctoral fellow under the directorship of Professor Josep Torró at the University of València.

CHRISTIAN COLONISATION OF THE URBAN SPACE OF SAGUNT, VALENCIAN COUNTRY (1238–1350)

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This study addresses the process of appropriation of urban space by Christians in the Kingdom of Valencia, after the conquest by King James I in 1238. Using Sagunt as a case study, our aim is to examine what the *medina*, i.e. the older part of the town, was like during the era of Muslim rule (the 'Andalusi' period); and how it changed after the expulsion of its Muslim inhabitants in 1248. By utilising extant urban morphology and historical maps, alongside documents and archaeological reports, we can demonstrate the complete transformation of residential areas following Christian colonisation. During this process, the Andalusi street network was modified but never entirely transformed, retaining much of its historical character. The nature of these urban changes leads us to propose the crucial importance of the Christian settlers and the small- to medium-scale building operations they carried out as the principal subject of study when conducting this type of analysis.

Introducing Sagunt

Sagunt is situated on the Valencian coast, in the east of the Iberian Peninsula (Fig. 1). The first settlement here was built on the western peak of the hill on which Sagunt's castle now stands. This Iberian *oppidum* was encircled by a double line of walls (Martí Bonafé 1998, 114–22). After the siege and subsequent conquest by Hannibal in 218 BC, the Romans built a new town that stretched to the bank of the river Palància. The objective

of this occupation of the plain, as it was in many other *civitates*, would have been to control the bridge across the river (Ferrer *et al.* 2016, 143, 147). From the first century AD, the city experienced a great building boom, with the construction of the forum on top of the hill, the theatre on the way up to the forum, and the circus next to the river (Aranegui 2004, 98, 142, 165).

During the Visigothic period (fifth to eighth centuries AD), the town went into a period of decline, but it did not disappear, as is shown by the intermittent striking of coinage in the local mint, by different kings of Toledo between 600–700 (Ripollés 2002, 313–17). After the Arab-Berber conquest of 711, the town was virtually deserted and the population was composed mainly of *Imazighen* (Berber) settlers who lived in agricultural hamlets (*qurā*) surrounded by small farms. This settlement and agricultural pattern, coupled with limited influence from the state, led to an escalating trend of de-urbanisation in the eastern region of al-Andalus (*Šarq al-Andalus*) (Guichard 1969, 112–23). The toponym *Saguntum* was relocated to the hinterland of the former town, while the now-ruined city came to be known as *Murbīṭar*. This name, originating from *muri veteres* (old walls), remained in use until the nineteenth century, appearing as *Muriveteris* in Latin, *Morvedre* in Catalan and *Murviedro* in Castilian (Guichard 1969, 120).

In the forum, a castle (*ḥiṣn*) was built, mentioned in the tenth century by al-Rāzī and in the eleventh by Ibn Hayyān (Catalán and De Andrés 1974, 37; Viguera and Corriente 1981, 245; Guichard 1990–1991, t. I: 215–21; doc. 38). After the proclamation of the Caliphate of Córdoba by Abd al-Rahmān III in 929, the state managed effectively to dominate the whole of its

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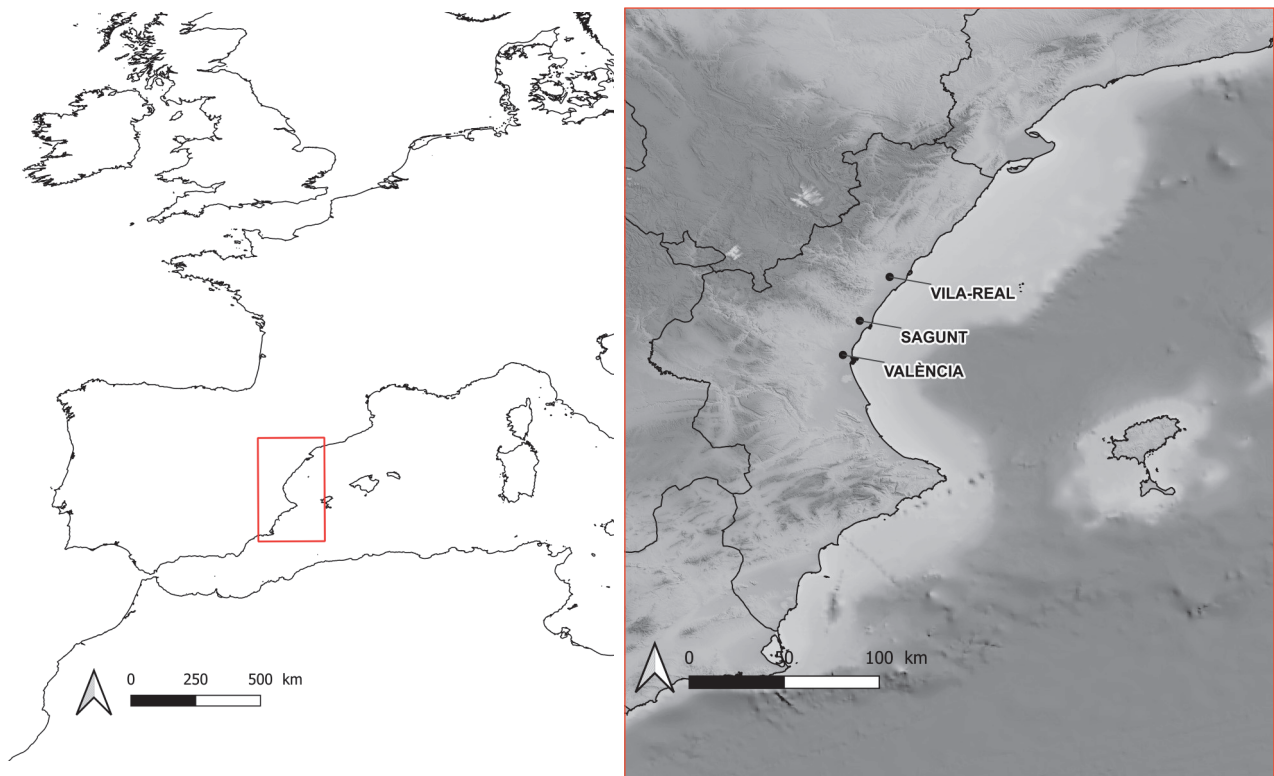


Figure 1 Location of main cities mentioned in the text.

territory, and the *ḥiṣn* of *Murbīṭar* became the administrative centre of a district slightly larger than the modern region of *El Camp de Morvedre* (Guinot 2007, 103).

Urbanisation began in the eleventh century, as in other towns in eastern al-Andalus – notably Valencia, Murcia and Tortosa (Guichard 1990–1991, I: 57–58). The new town was located on the slopes of the hill and has been inhabited ever since. This continuity of occupation has been conducive to the persistence of different features on the map. The most obvious survivals are the streets, whose rigidity is due to the inherent difficulty of altering them: transformation would require all the houses next to them to be demolished at once and rebuilt with a different layout – a very infrequent occurrence (Lavedan and Hugueney 1974, 162; Rossi 1984, 55–61). This resilience makes it possible to study extant urban morphology as historical evidence, provided that we are able to distinguish between medieval and modern urban developments.

Methodology

The first step was to make a map of the current blocks of houses within the walls of the Muslim town. Next, all the most modern alterations to the streets were eliminated, using a GIS tool to exclude all but the blocks and streets that were in existence at the beginning of the nineteenth century, according to maps made during the Napoleonic invasion by General Suchet (Collin 1834) and Alexandre de Laborde (1811, t. I, second part, 89). The resulting map (Figs 2–3) thus illustrates the Andalusi (i.e. Muslim-period) urban fabric with all the changes made to it during the late medieval and early modern periods. The next step is to discern which street morphologies belong to each period

– Andalusi or Christian – by considering the morphological differences between Muslim and Christian towns, and the social contexts which explain those differences.

Andalusi houses carefully considered the arrangement of the paternal extended family: multiple married couples sharing a common ancestor, residing together in one dwelling, overseen by the *sheikh* or patriarch. This familial organisation was articulated in houses arranged around a central courtyard, from which access was gained to living quarters, not interconnected, where the married couples lived (Pascual *et al.* 1990, 306–9; Guichard and Van Staëvel 1995, 46–49; Fentress 2013; Gutiérrez 2013). This familial structure was expressed in urban life through the sheikh's regulation of family affairs, particularly in relation to women – influence that was then reflected in the very layout of the town. Control over women was enforced through their seclusion and familial restrictions within the household. The home served as the designated sphere for women, but they were able – though not recommended – to visit other places such as cemeteries, markets, baths, or mosques (Romero 2008; Mazzoli-Guintard 2022, 27–36; Camacho 2018). Within this overall urban context, narrow dead-end alleys provided a transitional zone between domestic privacy and communally-controlled public domains. Women had to be accompanied by a male relative through the streets (Marín 2000, 218), until they reached the expansive communal areas within the city, which were designed to allow collective surveillance of their activities. This resulted in the creation of environments characterised by heightened mutual visibility.

Consequently, the regulation and seclusion of women emerged as the pivotal factors around which the



Figure 2 Plan of intramural Sagunt, illustrating the blocks existing in 1811, and highlighting streets which existed in the Andalusi (Muslim) period and dead ends which existed in medieval period.

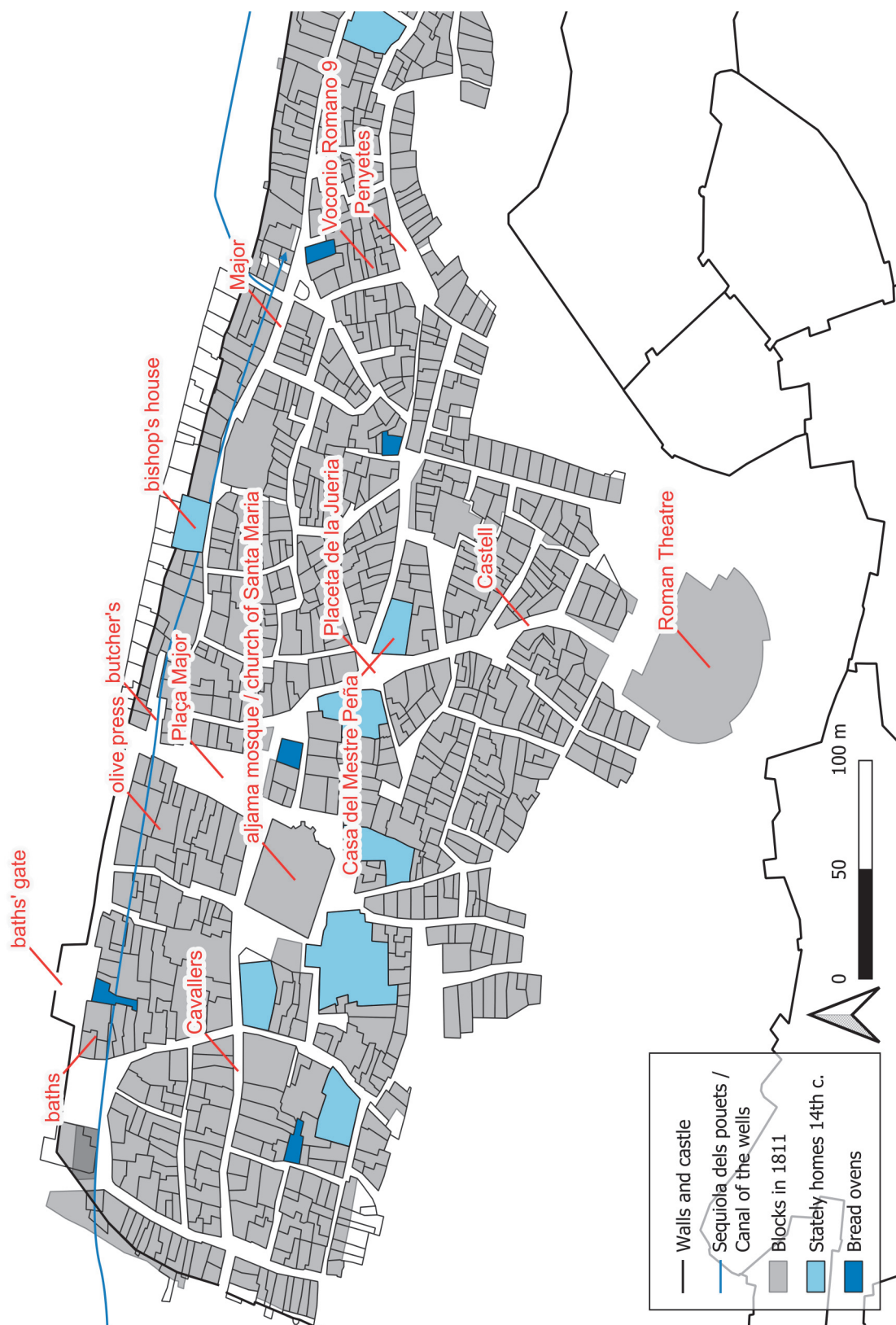


Figure 3 Map of places and streets within Sagunt, mentioned in the text.

arrangement of residences developed (Pérez Ordoñez 2009). These dwellings were meticulously designed with limited egress points, preventing any external view into the interior. The entranceway stood as a vital nexus in preserving this sense of privacy. In alignment with this concept, the establishment of cul-de-sacs, secluded thoroughfares exclusive to inhabitants, served as a prevalent strategy to diminish the exposure of domestic entrances to public view (Brunschvig 1947, 131; Van Staëvel 2000, 41). These 'dead ends' led to side streets, which structured the neighbourhoods by connecting the cul-de-sacs to the main streets of the town which ran from the gates to the centre, where the great mosque stood. As it was necessary for the public to pass along them, they were ideal places for the market (Torres Balbás 1970, 130–31, 335, 369–71; Youssef 1993; Jiménez Castillo and Navarro Palazón 2001, 87; Hakim 2010, 63–101).

Latin Christian society, for its part, was shaped through the accrual of public power by lords, who implemented policies aimed at grouping the peasant population together in close-knit centres, with just one nuclear family living in each house (Higounet 1979, 143–44). With numerous nuclear families residing in the same town, it was impossible for peasants to accumulate large compact estates and they were forced to relate socially with the local community, which was ultimately dependent on the lord. Large families were thus broken up, and neighbourly relations replaced kinship ties as the key elements that structured residential spaces, communal solidarity and mutual vigilance (Morsel 2007, 137–47). Socialising therefore took place not in the courtyards of houses but out in the streets. These were designed to be passed along continuously, and long, narrow, rectangular single-family houses were arranged transversally on either side (Torró 1995, 537). The aggregation of these rectangular houses in rows resulted in a rectilinear street layout. Such arrangements could be seen in the new towns founded throughout Latin Christendom by seigniorial authorities with a threefold objective: (i) grouping together the settlers, (ii) increasing rents, and (iii) effective control of recently conquered territories, like those founded in Wales by King Edward I of England (1272–1307) (Lilley *et al.* 2007). The majority of the towns founded in east al-Andalus after the thirteenth-century Christian conquest adopted this rectangular morphology. There is some evidence for the presence of Occitan surveyors hired for the construction of rural and urban plots – the most regular street layouts having been developed in the fortified 'bastides' of Languedoc, Gascony and Aquitaine (Higounet 1975, 387–97; Torró 2022, 291–92).

So, to summarise, there is a marked distinction in urban morphology between the Andalusi and Christian periods. Andalusi urbanism created cul-de-sacs, widely regarded as one of its most distinctive morphological characteristics (Guidoni 1981, 59–63; García-Bellido 2000, 254–55; Jiménez Castillo and Navarro Palazón 2001, 87, 90; Mazzoli-Guintard 2010, 62–63). Cul-de-sacs were a solution, included and ordained by Islamic jurisprudence, to the need for privacy for the extended families living in urban areas (Van Staëvel 2000; Vidal-Castro 2020, 131–37). Meanwhile, Christian planners arranged houses on streets that were straight, perpendicular and connected to one another (Lavedan

and Hugueney 1974, 6; Linazosoro 1978, 41–43; Guidoni 1989, 197–212; Boucheron *et al.* 2010, 136–44). Of the 40 Valencian towns analysed by Rosselló (2017), 22 have no cul-de-sacs, while in the rest the number ranges between one and four – located, in most cases, next to the town walls. Since cul-de-sacs date back to the Andalusi period, the streets onto which they open must have already been in existence at that time.

***Madīna Murbīṭar*: urbanism in Andalusi-period Sagunt**

The Andalusi town was encircled by the walls, which descended from the castle, enclosing a surface area of about 22 hectares. The town was arranged on an east–west axis, formed by the modern streets *Cavallers* and *Major*. These ran from the east gate to the west gate, passing the great mosque (now the church of Santa Maria) in the centre of the *medina*. In many towns, the street which after the Christian conquest was called *Major* in Catalan or *Mayor* in Castilian had previously been the main street in the Andalusi period, called *ṣāri' al-kabīr* ('high street') (Tamari 1966, 58; Torres Balbás 1970, 335–38). In Sagunt, the *carrer Major* toponym existed as early as 1275, when the king granted to Pedro Garcés some houses located '*in carraria maiori Muriveteris*'. The bishop's house was built on this street, on a site between two houses, the town wall (*muro ville*), and the 'public thoroughfare' (Huici Miranda and Cabanes Pecourt 1978, III: doc. 708). The plot was given by the king to the bishop in 1256, just eighteen years after the Christian conquest, and eight years after the expulsion of the Muslim inhabitants. The street, therefore, had existed since the Andalusi period and was virtually unchanged in the mid-thirteenth century.

Running off these two main streets was a series of side streets that led to the dead ends and alleys. Parallel to *carrer Major*, but narrower and more winding, *carrer Penyetes* ran between *Major* and *carrer del Castell*, which went up to the theatre and the castle. Today it is generally straight and wide; at its narrowest point, the houses are just over three metres apart. In the Andalusi period, however, it would have been significantly narrower, continually twisting and turning, as demonstrated by the discovery of several living quarters found in an excavation in what is now *placeta de la Jueria* (Vizcaino 2001, 90–95). This discovery shows that the square did not exist until the fourteenth century, and had hitherto been occupied by residential plots. The adjacent streets must consequently have been narrower.

Both *carrer Major* and *carrer Penyetes* adapt to the curving slope of the castle's hill. These streets are designed to stay as even as the intricate topography allows, yet they still exhibit noticeable undulations. Between them, we find a series of streets that climb towards the hill, perpendicularly from *carrer Major*. They lead to the narrow winding alleys in an almost dendritic structure. While the modern alleys are interconnected, many of them might not have been linked in the Andalusi era: after the Christian conquest, arrangements were often altered by extending cul-de-sacs to establish connections between them. There are numerous cases in Valencia of houses being demolished to elongate dead-end alleys into intersecting streets: the city council frequently undertook such modifications,



Figure 4 Dead-end streets in Sagunt: between the carrer Major and Sant Miquel (top); at the eastern end of carrer Major (middle); at plaça Sant Tomeu (bottom).

especially from the fourteenth century onwards (Cárcel and Trenchs 1985, 1491–94; Rubio Vela 1994, 30–37).

In other cities, such as Toledo or Murcia, numerous dead-end streets were removed through private acquisition or else integrated into adjoining houses during the same period (Passini 2000, 211–13; Jiménez Castillo and Navarro Palazón 2001, 114–15). Hence, it is reasonable to suggest that Sagunt originally had a greater number of cul-de-sacs than the fifteen documented cases. These fifteen can all be attributed to the Andalusi period for two key reasons: first, none of them are due to streets terminating at the city walls, as is visibly the case with cul-de-sacs in certain other Christian settlements; and second, among the fifteen instances, six display an irregular morphology characterised by twists and turns – a feature which is uncommon in known Christian contexts.

In summary, Sagunt presents an urban layout similar to many Andalusian cities, characterised by a plethora of dead-end streets (Figs 4–5) and a predominantly non-rectilinear street grid. There is a conspicuous absence of any Roman remnants within the urban plan. This absence is common to most cities in the Iberian Peninsula, leading to their categorisation as fundamentally new urban entities from the Andalusian period onwards (Acién 2001, 23). In this context, the urban layout of *Murbīṭar* mirrors that of the majority of cities in al-Andalus. Only a handful of Roman cities which sustained their urban existence until the Islamic conquest of 711, such as Zaragoza, retained a street grid with rectilinear characteristics inherited from Roman urban planning (Almagro 1987; Kennedy 1998, 57).

***Murbīṭar* to Morvedre: Christian colonisation of an Andalusī city**

In 1238, the Catalan-Aragonese armies successfully captured Valencia under the leadership of King James I (ruled Valencia 1238–1276). The Muslim residents were not immediately displaced from Morvedre (*Murbīṭar*). However, their uprising in 1247 prompted the king to decree their expulsion in 1248, an expulsion which was enforced especially strongly in regions under direct royal jurisdiction (Torró 2019, 78–83). In this period, settlers began arriving in Morvedre, attracted by ambitious colonisation policies manifested in the sharing out of land and houses, and the granting of financial and political privileges. The settlers arrived in cities of unfamiliar morphology, in which they were given plots of land that contained several Andalusī-style buildings. These houses were gradually demolished in order to build new dwellings in a process that was not completed until the middle of the fourteenth century, hence the removal at this time of the houses in *placeta de la Jueria*, for the purposes of widening the street (demonstrated by the excavated evidence discussed above: Vizcaíno 2001, 95). Another example is to be found at No. 9, *carrer Voconio Romano*, where the party walls which had divided up the living quarters in the Andalusī period were eliminated in the fourteenth century, and replaced by a tiled floor (Sánchez Martín 2005).

When the Christians built their houses, they had to comply with the laws of Valencia. One of these obliged anybody rebuilding a house to set the front back from the public thoroughfare by half an *alna* of Valencia (45.5 cm) (López Elum 2001, 113). The law was

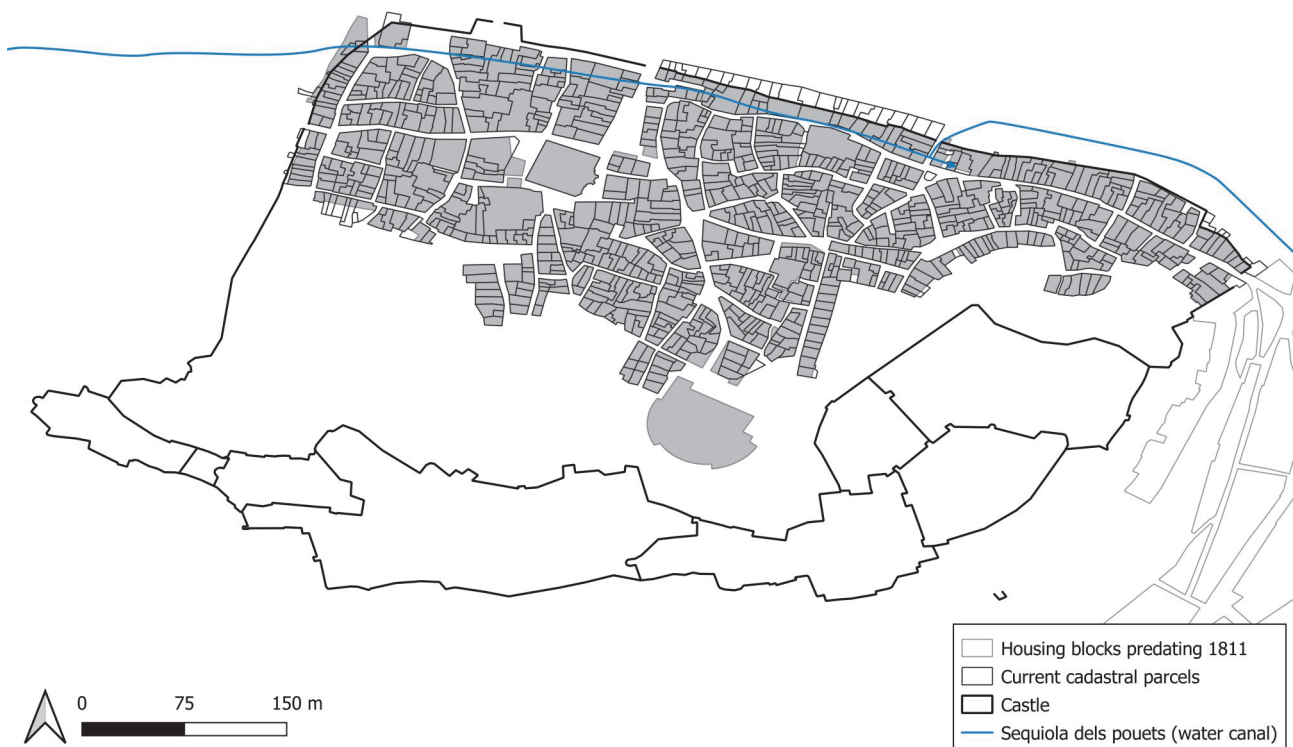


Figure 5 Current cadastral plots (thin black lines) in the islands of existing houses in 1811 (grey). The plots tend to be rectangular, but set within a non-rectilinear street layout. The thick black line represents the walls and the blue line the Sequiola dels Pouets, the main urban water supply canal in medieval times.

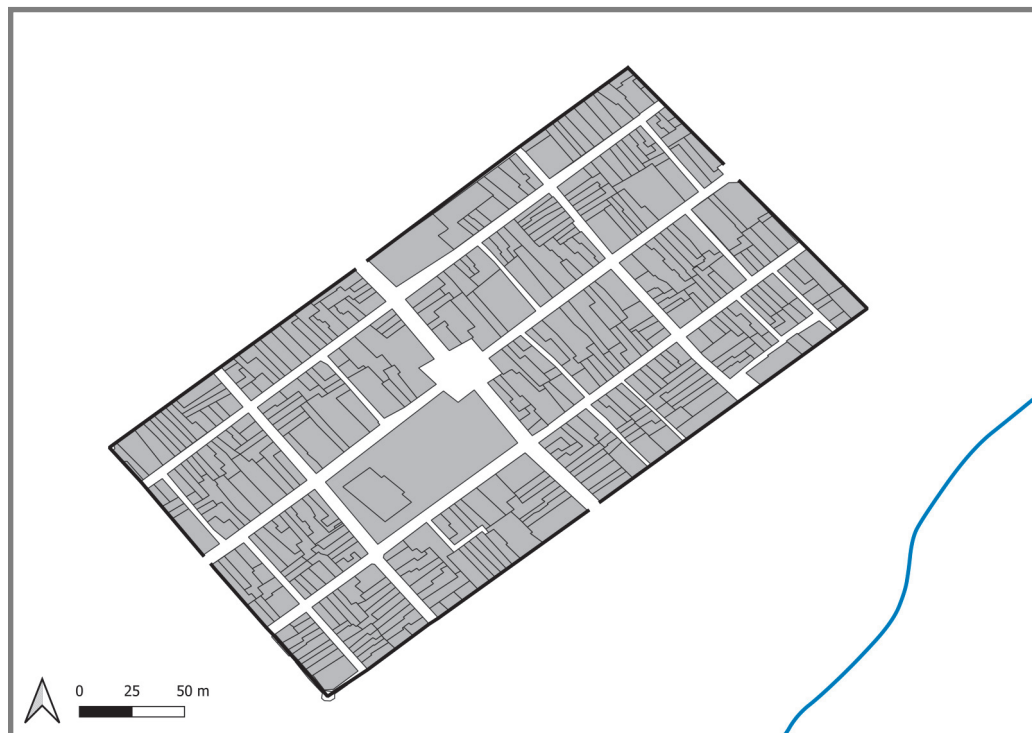


Figure 6 Plan of Vila-Real, a new town founded by James I in 1274. The outer black line represents the wall, in grey the blocks and in black lines the current plots of land, heir to the rectangular, elongated houses with party walls of the medieval period. The blue line represents the Séquia Major de Vila-Real.



Figure 7 Parish church of El Salvador, Sagunt.



Figure 8 The house of Mestre Peña, now the historical museum, is an example of fourteenth-century modular architecture based on pointed arches.

sometimes enforced rather leniently, while in other cases it was not even necessary to comply with it: a privilege granted everywhere in the Kingdom of Valencia in 1271 lifted this obligation whenever the owner wished to create arcades and the street was more than 3.96 m wide (Baydal 2023, 73–74). This relaxation led to a general widening of streets, as well as variations in how far some house fronts were set back from the street, due to the multiplicity of ways and periods in which new houses were built. Overall, this evidence clearly shows that the process of transforming dwellings was dominated by small- and medium-scale building work that, to a large extent, resulted in the fossilisation



Figure 9 Portico in the Plaça Major reusing a Tuscan column.

of the Andalusí street layout within piecemeal adaptations – as opposed to large-scale replanning of the urban morphology.

Given that many Andalusí dwellings were completely demolished, we must ask why the streets nonetheless remained intact. The reason lies in the ‘capillary’ transformation of the houses: a complete mutation of individual domestic spaces, but no collective endeavour across larger areas. Every new Christian resident independently redeveloped their assigned plot of land. When a resident of the street razed their plot of one or more houses in order to build a new one in the Christian fashion, they did not do so at the same time as the rest of the settlers in their street. Hence, while all the plots were gradually transformed, the street remained. The modern cadastral map is a reflection of this process of colonisation. In it, one sees urban plots similar to those which were laid out in new towns, among which the Valencian city of Vila-Real – founded by the king in the thirteenth century – stands out as one of the best examples of Christian rectangular urban planning (Fig. 6; Torró 2022, 288–92). Nevertheless, this rectangular layout at the level of individual plots contrasts with a wider urban morphology that in many cases maintains the Andalusí-period street network.

Thus, the town gradually took on a Christian shape, whilst keeping what was essentially the Andalusí street layout. The settlers built long rectangular houses, divided into bays supported by ogival diaphragm arches (i.e. curved to a point), between which wooden beams were placed. This represented a basic modular structure of a kind of rapidly-built but long-lasting architecture that was used after the conquest in the construction of

most buildings, not just single-family houses (Zaragoza Catalán 2008, 13–15). It was also used to build churches, like that of El Salvador (Fig. 7); to make aristocratic houses wider and more spacious, like that of the bishop in *carrer Major*; or in exchange buildings, like the house of El Mestre Peña, now the historical museum (Fig. 8; Muñoz Antonino 1999, 5–74 and 180–96).

The Andalusi streets remained as the structural axes of urban spaces, even amidst a complete architectural transformation. The endurance of the original street grid did not impede its modification. Consequently, in numerous instances, streets were extended to interconnect with nearby counterparts, making them passable where previously they had been dead ends. The great mosque was converted into the archpriest's church, the exit towards the walls became a porticoed square (Fig. 9), and mansions and other more modest houses were built along the streets, with numerous workshops and wine cellars, as well as five bakeries inside the walls (Chabret 1901, 56), olive oil mills (Roca Ribelles 2004) and butcher's premises (Chabret 1888, II: 265–66).

Conclusions

Murbīṭar was established as an urban centre in the eleventh century, during the Muslim rule, and was subsequently settled by Christians following the conquest of 1238. This appropriation entailed the transformation of individual dwellings, and thus a piecemeal modification – and partial fossilisation – of the Andalusi-period urban fabric. Residential plots tended to change the most, while the streets are the elements that remained the least changed: comprehensive modifications to the housing stock failed to give rise to a new street layout (Rossi 1984, 61).

The intense building activity carried out by the settlers in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries has left little trace in the historical record. This has caused it to be underestimated by historians, who have tended to highlight what was done by the promoters of 'urban *pobles*'. These were large areas of land purchased by private individuals, upon which to build houses that were established in emphyteusis (i.e. with the aim of charging the occupiers an annual income). This particular urbanisation mechanism resulted in a morphology of straight streets, similar to that of the new towns (Rodrigo Pertegás 1923, 292–98; Torró and Guinot 2001–2002; Kovaks *et al.* 2022, 34–58).

These new building projects were undoubtedly one of the principal mechanisms in the construction of residences for settlers. However, this type of action tells us little or nothing about how Andalusi urban space was colonised, as it mostly took place in previously unbuilt areas – in the city of Valencia, for example, where the majority of the new residential areas were located outside the walls; or in Morvedre, where one of the few documents that describes an operation of this kind locates it outside the Baths Gate of the rampart (Torró 2022, 263).

All of the considerations above lead us to one conclusion: that the settlers – whether residents with a house of their own, or wealthier people who demolished a group of Andalusi houses and built new ones in order to lease them – were the principal agents of the colonisation of the Kingdom of Valencia. Their small-

and medium-scale actions were pre-eminent in the process of appropriating and modifying Andalusi towns. Consequently, any study that sets out to analyse this process of urban colonisation must look for this building work, carried out in every individual distributed plot of urban land, and not in large urban development operations.

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