

edited by
SANDRO PARRINELLO
FRANCESCA PICCHIO

Architectures along James I itinerary in the Valencian Province



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Persistent forms in Valencia Cathedral. © Sandro Parrinello

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The Church of the Blood (*Iglesia de la Sangre*) in Llíria is perhaps one of the most representative buildings within the framework of the defined Cultural Route. The church is located on the hill in the old part of the urban nucleus of Llíria, on whose slopes once stood the Arab village, which later developed into the medieval town and the present-day city¹. Administrative centre of the district that bears its name, Llíria is located, about 30 km east of the city of Valencia, near the course of the Turia River. Its location, between the plain of Albufera and the hills of the Serranía, gives it a distinctive atmosphere, where the typical houses of the Valencian landscape blend with the surrounding rural environment, ranging from vast agricultural fields to hilly areas, passing through lush green and wooded zones.

Under Arab occupation, the city, known as Lyria, became an important fortified center comprising a medina and citadel, which occupied the upper part of the present urban layout. Moorish Lyria was conquered by James I in 1239, and in 1253 he granted it the status of a city². The construction of the church takes place in this temporal juncture and within the broader context linked to the events of the 13th century, related to the repopulation of territories conquered by the Aragonese sovereign³. In the early stages of urban development and the repopulation of the area, existing Arab buildings were utilised, leading to the initiation of new constructions. A notable example of this is the main mosque, which served as the foundation for the Church of La Sangre, built and expanded in several phases over time⁴. It was the first and main Christian church of Llíria until the mid-17th century⁵, when the Church of La Assumpció was built. From that year onwards, its use was limited to the Brotherhood of the Blood, which had been based in the church since 1574.

In 1919, the building was declared a national monument, and in 1985, it was designated as a Site of Cultural Interest⁶. The interest of this church lies in its construction system, whose most significant

Side page, Fig. 01

The Church and the Landscape
The church dominates the high ground overlooking the town centre of Llíria.



Fig. 02

Church Main Gate

Early 20th century photograph of the current main portal of the church (from *Geografía general del Reino de Valencia*, Sarthou Carreres, vol. III, t. II, p. 534).



¹ Escrivà Torres (1995), *La vila vella de Llíria: reflexions sobre el desenvolupament urbà a l'època medieval*, pp. 91-102.

² García (2011), *Llíria durant els segles XIII-XIV*, en *Llíria, història, geografia i art: el nostre passat i present*, pp. 129-138.

³ On the topic of the repopulation of the conquered territories and the process of establishing and building a feudal society in the occupied lands, see: Iradiel (1990), *Cristianos feudales en València. Aspectos sobre la formación del territorio i de la sociedad*, in *España-Al-Andalus Sefarad: síntesis y nuevas perspectivas*, pp. 49-67; Guinot (1997), *La creació de les senyories en una societat feudal de frontera: el Regne de València (segles XIII-XIV)*, pp. 79-108; Rodríguez (2012), *La construcció d'una nova societat feudal: la repoblació del regne de València al segle XIII*, pp. 367-391; Pecourt (2017), *La repoblació dels aragonesos a València, en Baixar al regne: relacions socials, econòmiques i comercials entre Aragó i València, segles XIII-XV*, pp. 13-30. Particularly in the specific case of Llíria cf. Llibrer (2003), *El finestrat gòtic. L'Església i el poble de Llíria als segles medievals*.

⁴ Escrig (2003), *De la mesquita a l'església: la construcció de l'església de la Sang de Llíria*, p. 9.

⁵ Cf. Sarthou Carreres (1900-1915), *Geografía general del Reino de Valencia*, vol. III, t. II, pp. 528.

⁶ Escrig (2003), *De la mesquita a l'església*, cit., p. 9.

*Side page, Fig. 04***Architectural Features**

Some recent images of the church reveal its massive and austere character, typical of the architecture from the Reconquista period.

elements have been preserved to this day and which can be perfectly traced back to a specific type of religious temple known as *Iglesias de la Reconquista*⁷. One of the characteristics of the original church was that it was an isolated building. Except for the bell tower, no other structures were adjacent to or nearby. Neither custom nor law – whether civil or canon – allowed it. A royal decree established in 1249 granted newly built churches in the cities of the recently conquered kingdom the privilege of keeping the perimeter around each church free, and the surrounding spaces had to be "*clear, with wide streets and without bridges*"⁸.

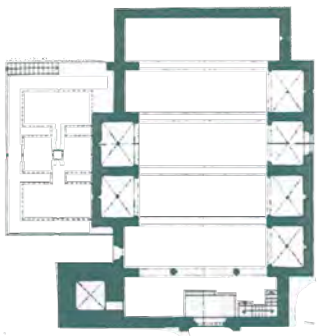
The church, at least in its original configuration, had a simple rectangular plan, with a massive, undecorated front and access on the side façade. The interior was characterised by a single, wide nave, although in the back of the building there are foundational remains that draw a trapezoidal outline indicating perhaps the former presence of an apsidal space⁹.

The single nave, whose origins coincide with the church's construction in the second half of the 13th century, is 15 meters wide and 30 meters long¹⁰. The church's plan is divided into five pointed diaphragm arches, which support a roof of Mudejar tradition and are decorated with chivalric scenes, mythological figures, and heraldic and vegetal motifs. The wooden roof, externally a double-pitched structure, consists of three internal planes or panels: the two larger inclined panels correspond to the external slopes, while the central panel, or *almizate*, is positioned where the two meet. The wooden beams, purlins, and roof boards rest on the five diaphragm arches. The original building included buttresses within the single nave, with the perimeter wall aligned with the outer edge of these supports. The arches rest on the buttresses, defining six longitudinal bays. The materials used for these arches are mainly stone, which was also used for the tower and the building's corners, while the rest of the structure was built with more straightforward local materials, such as adobe and mortar. These rhythmic interruptions on the lateral facades created small usable spaces but did not affect the perception of the nave's unified appearance¹¹.

The bell tower, located on the left side of the main façade, has a square plan, with no decorations or projections on the walls, crowned by a round arch for bell systems and a walkway. This feature was in harmony with the tower's original function, which served as an observation point for monitoring the territory and shelter for the inhabitants in case of enemy attacks¹².

**Fig. 03****Planimetric view**

Floor plan of the current layout of the church.



⁷ These churches, whose typical features are rigor and simplicity in construction, consist of a rectangular nave with a basilica-like plan, a rectangular presbytery in most cases, and a two-pitched roof with a wooden ceiling, supported by a simple series of transverse or diaphragm arches. This type of church, with its naves defined by diaphragm arches, represents the most extensive chapter in Valencian medieval architecture. Cf. Catalán (1996), *Naves de arcos diafragma y techumbre de madera en la arquitectura civil valenciana*, p. 21.

⁸ Cf. Escrig (2003), *De la mesquita a l'església*, cit., p.10; Burns (1967), *The Crusader Kingdom of Valencia*.

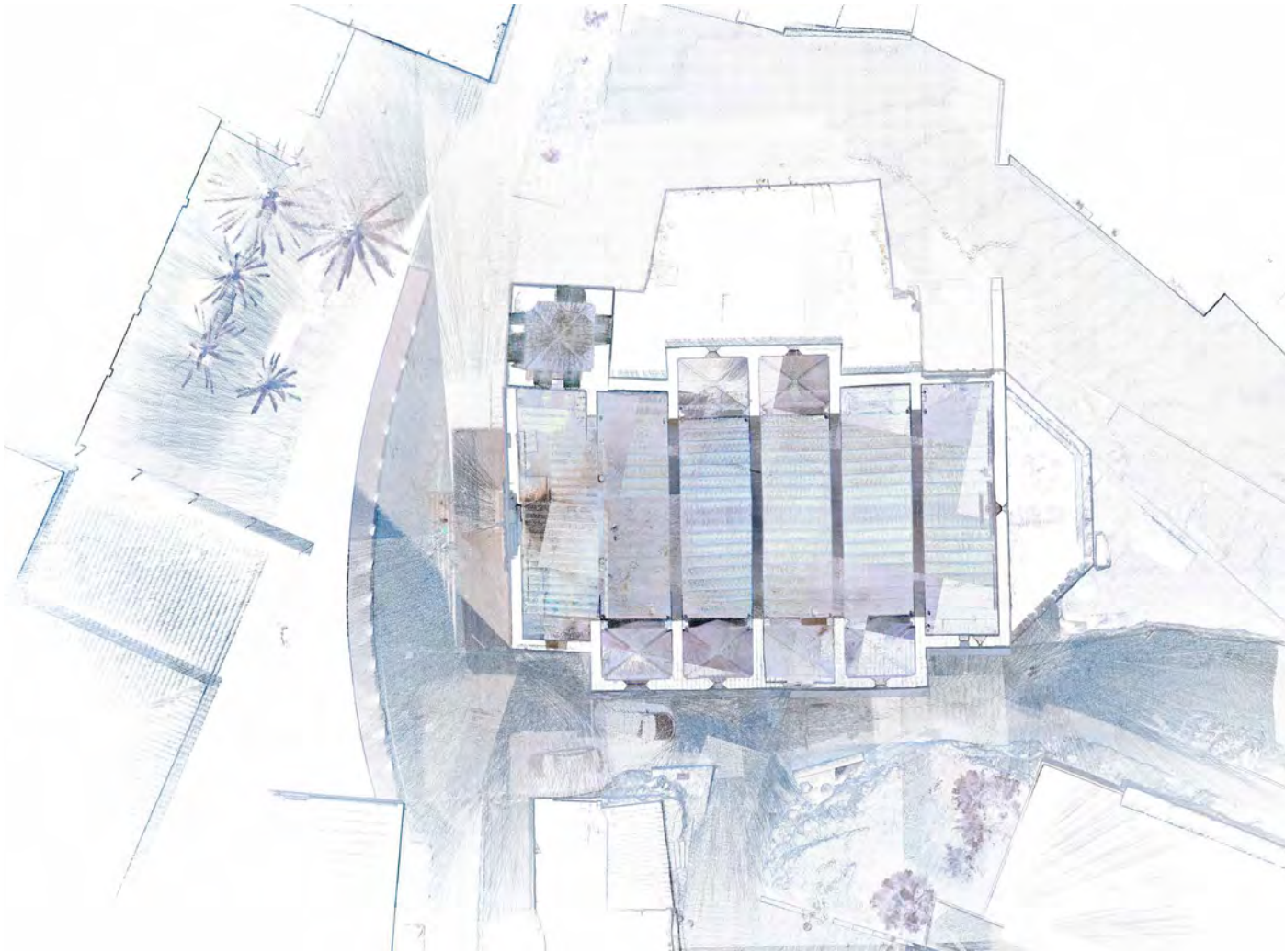
⁹ On the actual existence of an apsidal space contemporary to or subsequent the construction of the church and its typological implications related to the churches of the Reconquista cf. Escrig, (2003), *De la mesquita a l'església*, cit., pp.15-16.

¹⁰ Escrig (2003), *De la mesquita a l'església*, cit., pp.5-17.

¹¹ Cf. Mas (1984), *Arte en Lliria. Iglesia de la Sangre*, pp. 73-77; Escrig (2003), *De la mesquita a l'església*, cit., pp.5-17.

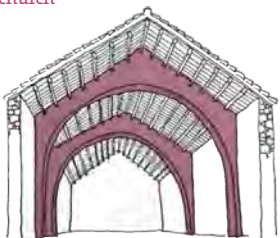
¹² Cf. *Ibidem*.





↑
Fig. 05
Digital Database
Planimetric view of the
integrated point cloud of the
Church Complex.

↓
Fig. 06
Diaphragm arches
Compositional diagram of the
arcos *diafragma* structure of the
church

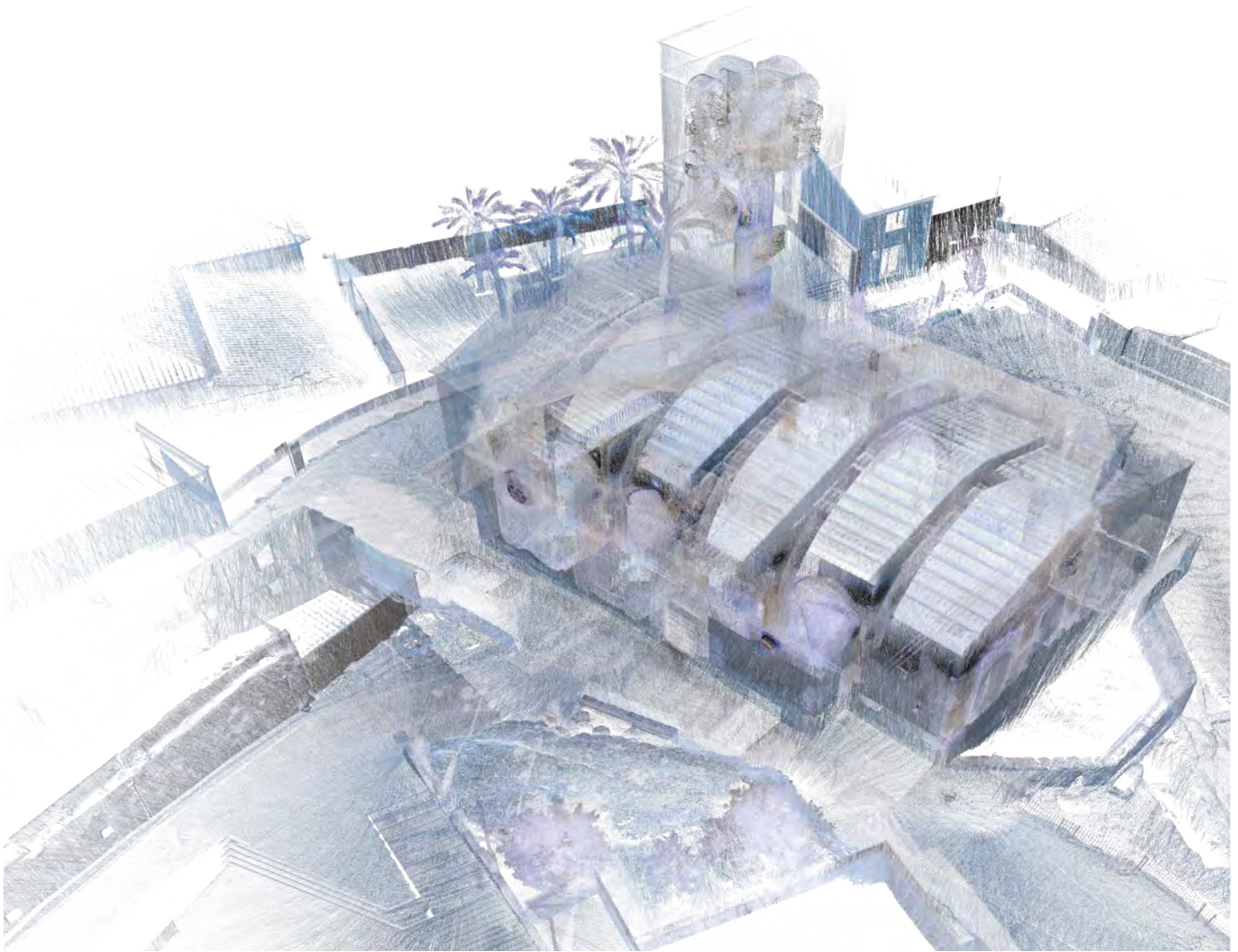


The tower's wall equipment presupposes a construction or extension that occurred in later stages. It is also documented is the construction at the top of the tower of a sail-shaped belfry (*espadaña*), which took place in the 18th century¹³. This feature is no longer present, as it was removed during restoration work in the last century due to structural issues¹⁴. The appearance of the church that the citizens of Lliria could admire between the 16th and 17th centuries was already very different from that conceived by its builders. On the exterior, the massive perimeter of the building was modified by the addition of protruding chapels, a new choir, a sacristy, and an updated portal¹⁵. Starting from the 14th and 15th centuries, the church underwent a general renovation that altered the spatial configuration of the building. Five side chapels and a gallery for the local authorities and the choir were constructed. The chapels feature ribbed Gothic vaults and columns attached to the walls. In the 16th and 17th centuries,

¹³ Cf. Martí Ferrando (1974), *Crónica de la Iglesia de Santa María o de la Sangre de Liria*.

¹⁴ García (1997), *Restauración de la iglesia de la Sangre en Lliria* (Valencia), p.68.

¹⁵ Cf. Martí Ferrando (1974), *Crónica de la Iglesia de Santa María*, cit.



significant changes were made to the interior. Some chapels and walls were painted, new altars were installed, and the bases of the altars, as well as the steps leading to the chapels and the chancel, were covered with tiles¹⁶.

Despite these changes and later ornamental additions, the church was finally abandoned in the 18th century in favour of the Church of *Assumpció*, which was built during that period. The building we see today, despite the last restoration carried out at the end of the last century, which strived to respect the original structure as much as possible, is the result of the transformations that took place between the 14th and 17th centuries. Internally, the back wall, is decorated with floral motifs of classicist historicist style¹⁷. Externally, the main façade, built in rammed earth (*tapial*), features an entrance portal with a full arch of Gothic inspiration, formed by a triple archivolt decorated and enriched at the base with a bust wearing a ruff. Slender columns, typical of Catalan Gothic, support the arches.

↑
Fig. 07
Digital Database
Perspective view of the
integrated point cloud of the
Church complex.

¹⁶ Escrig (2003), *De la mesquita a l'església*, cit., p.13.

¹⁷ Cf. García (1997), *Restauración de la iglesia de la Sangre en Llíria (Valencia)*, cit., pp. 64-75.



Fig. 08

Sanctuary back wall

The rear wall of the sanctuary features a flat composition with three decorative niches framed by painted architectural motifs, highlighting a later intervention within the medieval stone structure.

Side page, Fig. 09-13

2D Drawings

Technical and descriptive documentation of the church.

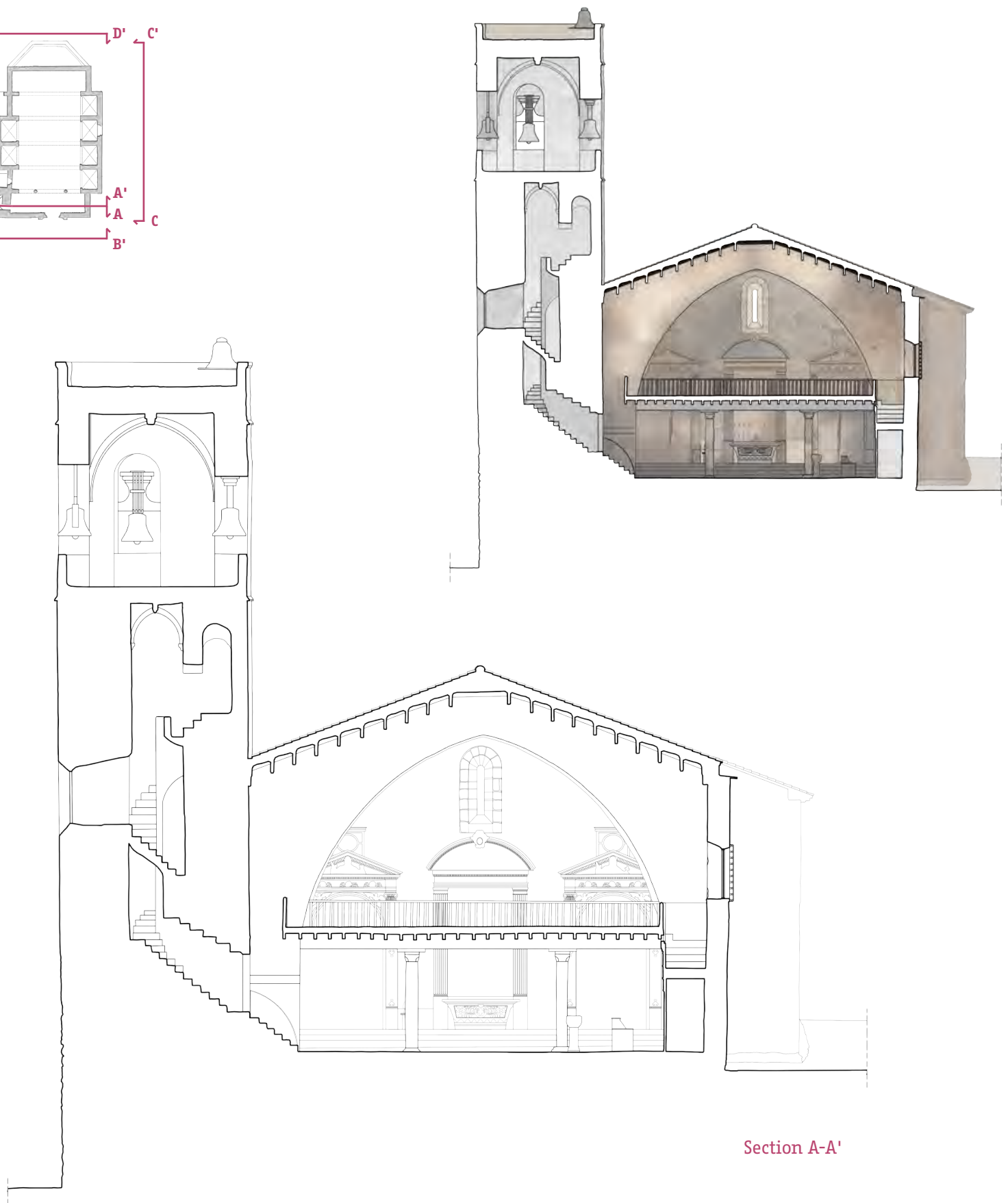
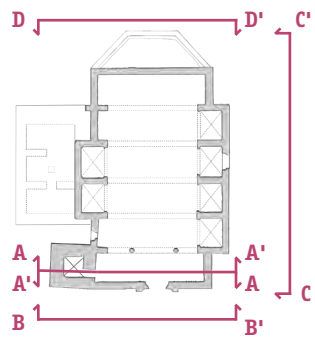
Another entrance is located on the southeast façade; it is in Romanesque style and does not correspond to the original entrance of the church. It is topped by a simple round arch made of well-squared ashlars and framed in stone. On the opposite northeast side façade stood the abbatial house, the ruins of which are still visible. The façade itself is entirely flat, except for a central pointed window, which internally marks the focal point above the altar¹⁸.

The entire church is practically devoid of openings. The overall structure conveys a sense of solidity, characteristic of massive constructions, which define the distinctive features of the earliest pioneering churches, forming a model based on diaphragm arches.

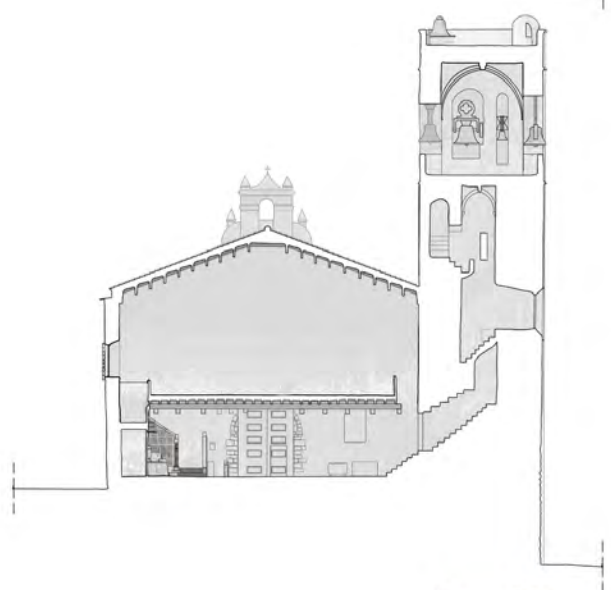
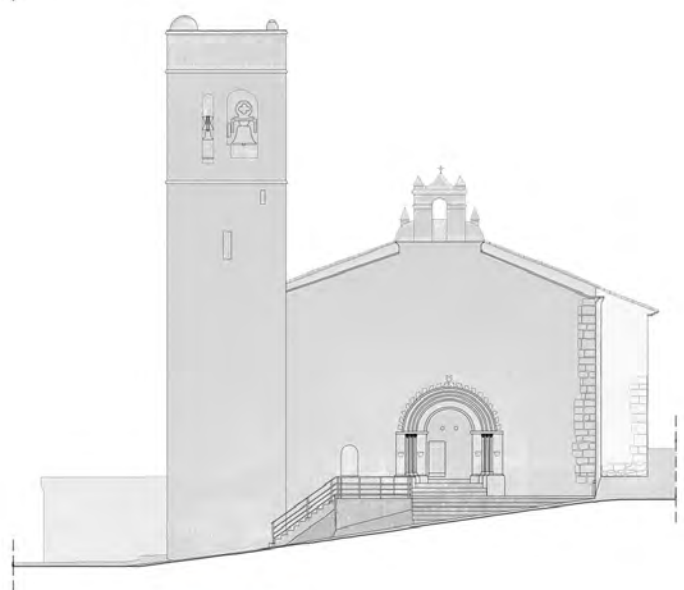
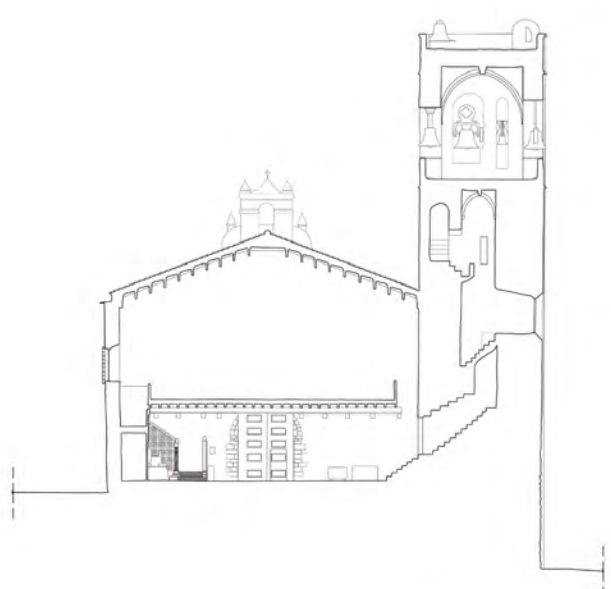
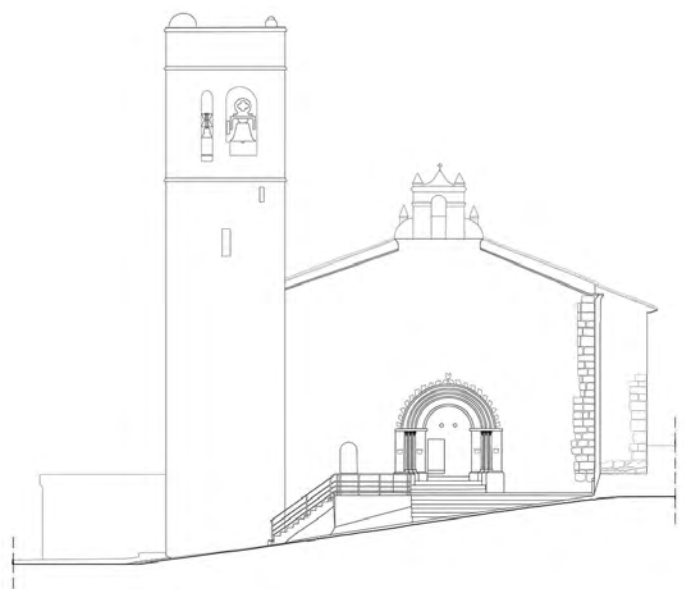
Within the actions related to the cultural route and the defined project objectives, the study of the church's features, accompanied by a documentary analysis, was complemented by a phase of digital surveying of the building, representing a fundamental step in understanding and documenting the structure¹⁹. This approach made it possible to collect data and information useful for identifying the church's main morphometric and material characteristics, providing a clear view of its features.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*

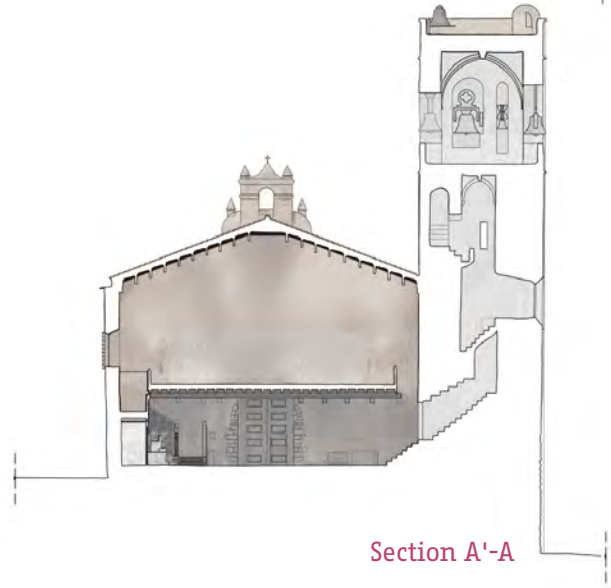
¹⁹ Parrinello, Picchio (2023), *Digital strategies to enhance cultural heritage routes: from integrated survey to digital twins of different European architectural scenarios*.



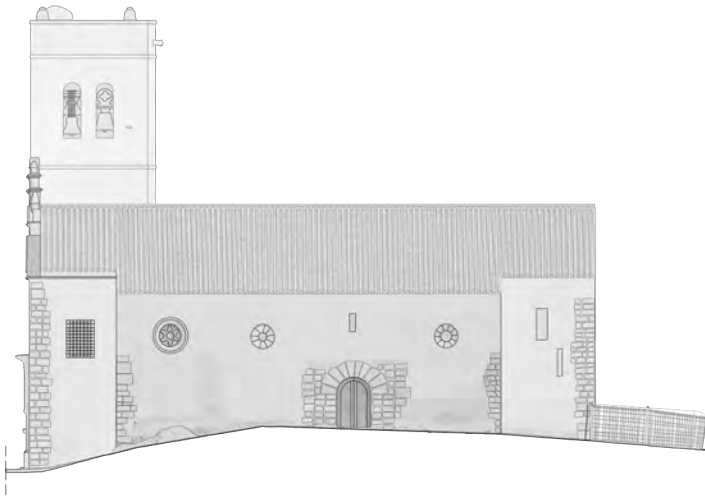
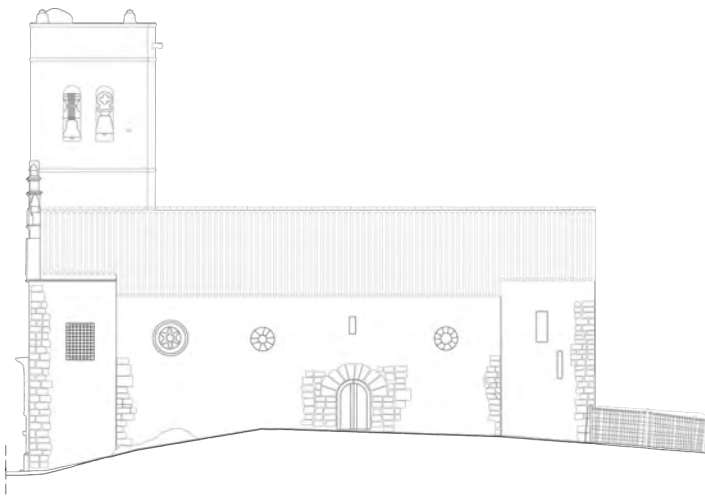
Section A-A'



Section B-B'

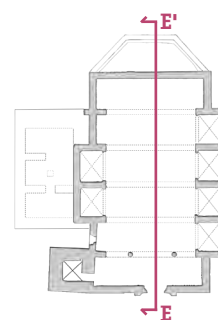
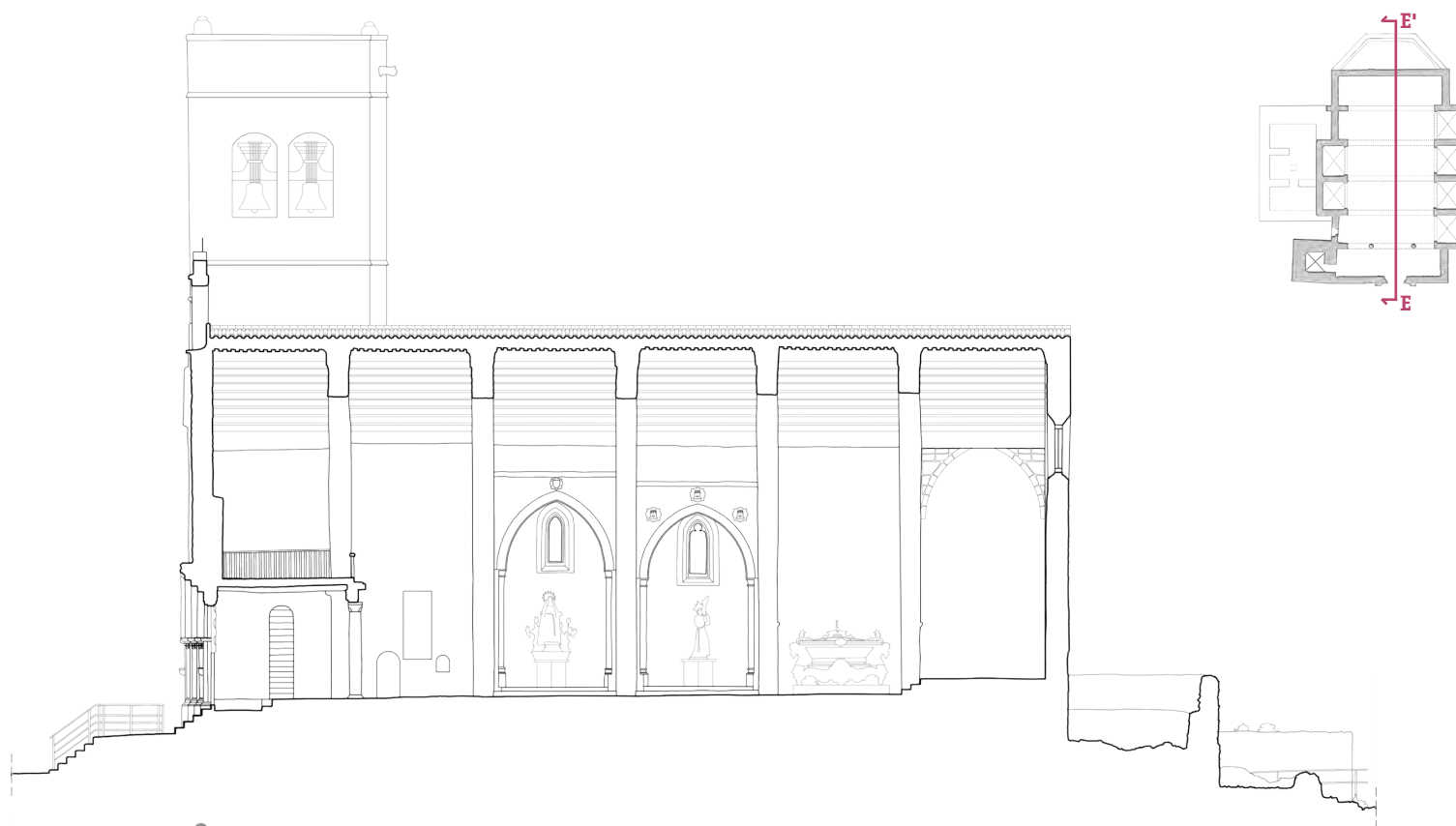


Section A'-A



Section C-C'

Section D'-D



Section E-E'



Section E'-E'



Fig. 14

Traces of lost element

Early 20th-century photograph of the church, showing the sail-shaped belfry (*espadaña*) at the top of the bell tower, which is no longer present today. (from *Geografía general del Reino de Valencia*, Sarthou Carreres, vol. III, t. II, p. 525).



This enabled the development of critical insights through the comparison of data derived from digital survey activities, the corresponding two-dimensional outputs, archival documentation, and the most recent scientific literature on the church.

The three-dimensional database should not be understood merely as a representational tool, but as a structured environment for the organisation and interpretation of information. Its morphometric accuracy supports a multi-level reading of the building, from masonry structures to spatial configuration, while also enabling the identification and documentation of specific elements, such as the remains of the apse, which contribute to defining the architectural value of the structure.

In the transition from the three-dimensional database to drawing, a process of selection, synthesis, and interpretation takes place, through which geometric information is reorganised according to representational and communicative logics.

Drawing thus assumes a central role, as it is not limited to being a means of representation, but acts as a critical and interpretative device, capable of encoding, selecting, and communicating architectural knowledge²⁰. Through the integration of digital models and graphic outputs, drawing becomes a space of interaction between interpretation and representation, enabling a deeper understanding of the building and its components.

²⁰ Parrinello (2024), *Forma e linguaggio. La comunicazione nell'interazione grafica*, pp. 4-11.

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