

THE TOWN OF XÀBIA: A MEDIEVAL CREATION

By the year 1244 the town of Daniya (Dénia) and its territory were conquered by the troops of Jaume I ending more than five centuries of Moorish / Islamic culture. The lands of the valley of Xàbia, now in the hands of the new feudal lords, were integrated into the new Kingdom of Valencia.

The incoming Christian settlers, mostly originating from Catalunya, created a new settlement model, influenced by the low demographic potential and the insecurity and fear arising from first the Saracen raids and then from the North African pirates.

These circumstances forced them to concentrate the population in one urban nucleus, newly created on the site of a small, old, prehistoric settlement, dating from the Final Bronze age (late 2nd millennium BC), which had also seen a small settlement in the Moorish period. The feudal arrivals were bearers of a new culture and new language, and they installed themselves around the present church, where they built a walled enclosure.

Within this area they began the construction of a fortress with a moat which according to current documents would be "... from the atrium of the church tower up to the houses of En Cayrats". It probably formed part of the medieval fortress, the apse of saint Bertomeu, which we consider is probably the church tower mentioned in the document and the foundations which appeared in the excavations of the ancient chapel of Sant Cristòfol (under the Town Hall building). The remains of this appear to correspond to the square base of a tower which would have flanked the east side of a gate of the fortress, whose access would have been retained in the arc of the stairs.

We do not know if that fortress was ever finished. As a hypothesis we can assume that it would have taken a square shape which would have occupied the area around Sant Bertomeu. Inside the fort, the tower of d'En Cayrat would have been included, a building that probably corresponded to the tower that was retained in the convent of the Augustines. We can thus hypothesise that the southern and northern boundaries of the fort would be framed by the Town Hall and the Municipal Market, the space which was occupied by the convent until 1936.

It is more complicated to define the site of the old walls of the town. The information provided by archaeological excavations allows us to mark out an area where structures (and materials) were located prior to the 15th century. Combining this information with a street plan of the town and the possible base of a wall found at Carrer Roques 5, we can define an enclosure bounded on the east by Carrer Roques, on the south by the Ronda Sur (called Muralla de Baix), to the west by the streets of Sant Josep, Verge del Pilar and Pastors, and to the north by Avendia Princep d'Asturies and Ronda Nord (popularly known as the Muralla de Dalt).