





MONASTIC HERITAGE PROTECTION THROUGH THE URBAN PLANNING USE
AS A TOOL OF TUTELAGE AND CONSERVATION.
ÉCIJA AS A MONASTIC CITY IN ANDALUSIA.


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Abstract: Located in Andalusia, Écija is known for its wide and rich monastic architectural heritage. It was one of the cities with the largest number of monasteries and convents belonging to the Kingdom of Seville in the 16th century. The convents were the 11% of the urban scene. Due to its position on the border with the Kingdom of Granada, the convents generated transformations in the city, especially between the 16th and 18th centuries. Nowadays this situation is undeniable, occupying full urban blocks and making the characteristic urban landscape of Écija.

When the city was declared Historical Complex in 1966, the monastic urban structure required specific protection measures through the urban planning and protection plans. At present, the catalogues are the most common resources used as a way of materialising this protection in urban planning, added to the protection figures of the Andalusian heritage law. Both instruments are not effective, as they do not guarantee a correct conservation, do not provide measures for their reuse, and do not integrate the decisive urban role of the conventual structures.

The understanding and protection of the Ecijan convent heritage requires that the urban condition of the convents must be addressed from the urban planning.

Keywords: Monastic heritage, Écija, Urban planning.

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1. Introduction: The city of Écija

The first conventual settlements began to appear in Andalusia, after the first conquests by Fernando III in the 13th century along the Guadalquivir valley. The kings of Castile used the monastic foundations as the backbone of the occupation process in the ancient Muslim territories¹. From 13th until the 17th century, it was a deep conventual development focused on the medium-sized cities, where Écija stands out for being one of the greatest cities underlining the importance of its monastic buildings.

Écija is situated in the south of the Iberian Peninsula, in a central position in Andalusia. Currently, the Astigitan city² belongs to the province of Seville, reaching a population of 39,882 inhabitants by 2018³. Although today it is a not well known city, during the late Middle Ages and its development in the Modern Age, the city was an attractive focus for many travellers from all over the European continent. A sample of the reputation, which was acquired in the history by the Ecijans, is observed in the diverse iconography, texts, etc. The mainly iconography were carried out between 16th and 19th centuries. Nowadays the ancient draws have been changed by the use of the photography. The first graphic representation

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¹ MIURA ANDRADES, José María – *Fundaciones religiosas y milagros en la Écija de fines de la Edad Media*. Écija: Gráficas Sol, 1992, p. 16.

² DILS DE LA VEGA, Sergio García – *Colonia Augusta Firma Astigi: el urbanismo de la Écija romana y tardoantigua*. Sevilla: Editorial Universidad de Sevilla, 2015.

³ *Andalucía pueblo a pueblo – Fichas Municipales: Écija*. Available at: <https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/institutodeestadisticaycartografia/sima/ficha.htm?mun=41039>. Accessed on 28/03/2019.

(Figure 1) was made by Joris Hoefnagel in 1567⁴. This Flemish artist drew Écija cause his journey through Europe. He was in a search of the most important cities at that time. He could see in the city its excellent geographical location in the Genil river valley and its outstanding ecclesiastical heritage. These elements created a particular urban landscape made up of towers and belfries.



Fig. 1. View from Écija drawn by Joris Hoefnagel in 1567. From the book *Theatrum in quo visuntur Illustriores Hispaniae Urbes*, located in the National Library of Spain

As a convent city, Écija became one of the main monastic centres. It highlighted between cities of raised importance and monastic presence such as Seville or Cordoba. Furthermore, it should be added the words of López Martínez, where «the first foundations would take place in the big cities, [...] Seville, Jerez, Écija and Alcalá de Guadaíra were the towns where the first convents were founded in the 13th century»⁵. After the city of Seville, Écija appeared in a second place situated on the border of the Sevillian territory. First it was located on the border with the Muslim Kingdom of Granada, but later with the Christian Kingdom of Cordoba. The city was an urban centre standing out for its number of convents. They were the 11% of the Ecijan urban scene. The city became an important centre of the Christian religion spreading, due to its strategic position in the physical and political map in the centre of the current Andalusia.

2. The Conquer of Al-Ándalus through conventual foundations

It is not possible to understand Écija without a previous socio-political context, before the appearance of monasteries and convents in the city. After the conquest

⁴ FRANZ HOGENBERG – *Theatrum in quo visuntur Illustriores Hispaniae Urbes, Aliaeque Ad Orientem & Austrum Civitates celebriores*. Amsterdam: Officina Joannis Janssonii, 1657

⁵ LÓPEZ MARTÍNEZ, Antonio Luís – *La economía de las órdenes religiosas en el antiguo régimen: sus propiedades y rentas en el Reino de Sevilla*. Sevilla: Diputación Provincial de Sevilla, 1992, p. 35-36.

of the Iberian Peninsula by the Muslims in 711, the new occupied territory was renamed Al-Andalus⁶. The Muslim presence in the peninsula lasted more than 700 years. Because of monasticism was linked to the Christian religion, the presence of the Islam avoided its development in the cities (Figure 2). The conquest of the Muslim territories by the Christian kingdoms was not a one-time fact. It was a conquest based on stages, as a result of many wars, treaties and conflicts through centuries. Linked to the expansion of the northern Christian kingdoms, the monastic foundations appeared little by little towards the south of the Iberian Peninsula.

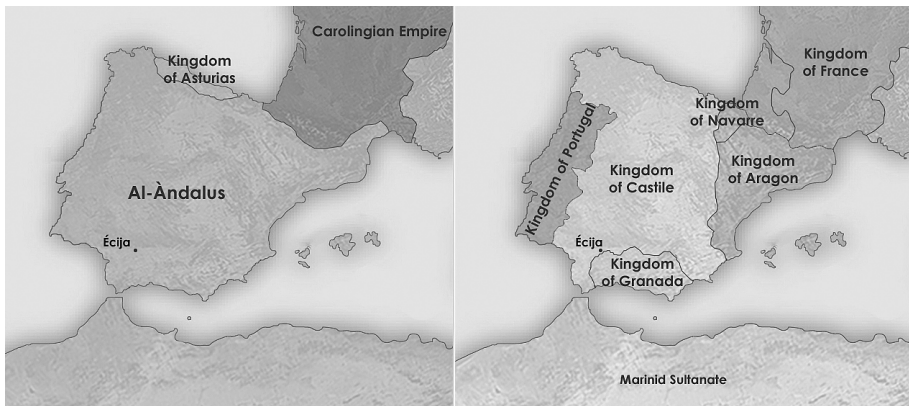


Fig. 2. Evolution of the Iberian Peninsula through Middle Ages. Left: 8th century; Right: 14th century. The city of Écija is marked with a red point in the South. Own elaboration. Data from *Gran Atlas Histórico Planeta*, Planeta, Barcelona, 2004

In the battle of Navas de Tolosa, in 1212, fought the kings of Castile, Aragon and Navarre against the Almohad caliph Muhammad an-Nasir, which was defeated. After this fight, it began the conquest of the inner Bética. In this process of conquest, Écija became Christian in 1240⁷. The Guadalquivir valley quickly was under the control of the king Fernando III. It ended with the siege of Seville in 1248. Although the Christians occupied a large part of the current Andalusia, the Kingdom of Granada was the last place of Muslim presence until 1492. On 2 January 1492, the Catholic Kings went into the city of Granada and finished the almost eight centuries of Islamic rule in the Iberian Peninsula⁸.

During this war, the Christian armies were not only composed with soldiers. They were joined all time by friars and priests, which belonged to religious

⁶ FERNÁNDEZ Y GONZÁLEZ, Francisco – *Historias de Al-Ándalus: por Aben-Adhari de Marruecos*. Granada: Ventura y Sabatel, 1860.

⁷ FERNÁNDEZ GRAJERA, Alonso – *Historia de la ciudad de Écija*. Sevilla: Fundación el Monte, 1995.

⁸ COFFIN, Judith G.; STACEY, Robert C. – *Western Civilizations: their history & their culture*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012, p. 219-223.

communities. These orders came mainly from other European Christian kingdoms. In addition, thanks to their help they received the «accommodation for those that collaborated in the war and religious orders that had accompanied the Fernandine hosts in the conquest of the city»⁹. Therefore, it started in Seville the foundation process, over the occupied territories by the Muslims, of the ancient Al-Andalus.

As a result of the religious conflicts, the high conventual production in the Andalusian region was between the 13th and 17th centuries. Although Seville had the largest number of monasteries and convents, Écija was behind the capital city. While Seville had 29 in the 15th century¹⁰, there were 7 in Écija. Its importance is not only caused by the number of monastic buildings in relation to the city, but also due to the ratio of population and number of convents (Figure 3). As it can be seen in the table, the resulting data in Écija is quite high, when is compared the number of convents with the number of inhabitants¹¹. The percentage is quite similar between the two cities, despite the fact that Seville doubles the population and quadruples the monasteries and convents with Écija.

| 15th century | Convents (co) | Inhabitants (in) [12] | Ratio co/in *1000 |
|--------------|---------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| Seville | 29 [10] | 40.000 | 0,725 |
| Écija | 7 [11] | 15.000 | 0,466 |

Fig. 3. Table which represents the relationship between the number of convents [10] [11] and inhabitants [12] in Seville and Écija in the 15th century. Own elaboration.
Data from sources referenced in the own table

In the 18th century, the city of Écija housed a total number of 21 conventual buildings¹². Likewise, they were organized into religious communities, which were subdivided into masculine and feminine gender. Among the male orders there were 13 monastic spaces, while there were 8 for the nun orders. The phenomenon of the conventual urban implantation was similar to other cities. At the early years, this kind of building were found inside the walled enclosure of the town. The

⁹ PÉREZ CANO, María Teresa – *Patrimonio y ciudad: el sistema de los conventos de clausura en el centro histórico de Sevilla: génesis, diagnóstico y propuesta de intervención para su recuperación urbanística*. Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, 1993, p. 64-66 (Thesis Doctoral in Urban and Management of the Territory).

¹⁰ MOSQUERA ADELL, Eduardo; PÉREZ CANO, María Teresa – *Arquitectura en los Conventos de Sevilla: una aproximación patrimonial a las clausuras*. Sevilla: Consejería de Cultura de la Junta de Andalucía, 1991.

¹¹ LADERO QUESADA, Miguel Ángel – Las ciudades de Andalucía occidental en la Baja Edad Media: sociedad, morfología y funciones urbanas. *En la España Medieval*. 10 (1987) 69-108. Dossiè «La Ciudad Hispánica siglos XIII al XVI».

¹² DE ROA, Martín – *Écija, sus Santos y su antigüedad eclesiástica y seglar*. Sevilla: Extramuros, 2009, p. 140-147; CALDERO BERMUDO, José Enrique – *Guía de los conventos ecijanos*. Écija: Asociación de amigos de Écija, 1984; HERNÁNDEZ DÍAZ, José; SANCHO CORBACHO, Antonio; COLLANTES DE TERÁN, Fernando – *Catálogo arqueológico y artístico de la Provincia de Sevilla*. Vol. 3. Sevilla: Servicio de Defensa el Patrimonio Nacional, 1951.

monastic pieces that appeared outside the Ecijan walls were located in relation to 4 roads, which are in the same position of the four cardinal points: north, south, east and west. The orders mainly looked for the most important entrances and they fled from the closeness to the river or the streams. The continuous floods were a serious problem for monasteries and the other surrounding buildings.

Among many Ecijan monastic buildings, it stands out the church belonging to the first convent, called San Pablo y Santo Domingo, which was founded by the Dominican order¹³. «The Dominican presence responds to the new expectations that have appeared in the bosom of the Church. We need orators, preachers who proclaim the word of God in every corner of Christianity»¹⁴. Despite the fact that the temple has persisted in the time, the situation of the tower has worsened over the years. The tower project was never completed and now suffers a high deterioration. For more than 20 years, the choice of an auxiliary structure has become almost definitive. Its current state reflect the inaction to aim for an appropriate alternative. Specifically, the building not only stands out for being the first monastic temple in the city. Also the importance of the temple come of



Fig. 4. Convent of San Pablo y Santo Domingo of Écija. Left: tower of the church; Right: the Virgen del Rosario chapel. Photographs taken by F. Javier Ostos Prieto in 2018

¹³ AGUILAR DÍAZ, Juan Jesús – *El convento de San Pablo y Santo Domingo de Écija: siglos XIV-XX: estudio histórico-artístico*. Écija: Ayuntamiento de Écija, 2006, p. 25-35.

¹⁴ GARCÍA TORRALBO, María Cruz – *Baeza Conventual, el espacio conventual en el contexto urbano de Baeza en los siglos XVI-XVII*. Ubeda : Gráficas Minerva, 1998, p. 32.

holding its own Baroque style, called Ecijan Baroque. It is well shown to a large extent in the Virgen del Rosario chapel, built in 1761 (Figure 4)¹⁵.

Inserted in the city of Écija, the conventual spaces have a huge degree of importance and significance for the urban level. The monastic structure is analysed and studied in depth, causing the possibility to acquire a fairly high level of understanding. This allows us to research the aspects related to the protection of these buildings. The lack of an appropriate recognition means that this architectural group should be considered in a special way. These elements form part of our heritage not only individually but as an urban whole. Therefore, the protection and tutelage through tools such as historical heritage laws or urban planning are essential.

3. Protection of ecclesiastical heritage

For a study of the current heritage state related to its protection and tutelage, it is necessary going through different scales under the current laws. In first place, it appears from a general area the Spanish Historical Heritage Law¹⁶ followed by the Autonomous Community of Andalusia, with the Historical Heritage Law of Andalusia¹⁷. Secondly, it finds the urban planning named General Urban Development Plan (PGOU)¹⁸ together with the special protection urban plan, called Special Plan for the Protection, Interior Reform and Catalogue of the Historic City (PEPRICCHA)¹⁹. Finally, they provide the necessary tools for safeguard the Ecijan heritage. The presence of these instruments does not mean that are produced the appropriate measures or applications. Currently, the most common way to materialize the protection in urban planning is through the catalogue cards, which often add the regional and state protection. These elements are not effective because they do not guarantee an accuracy conservation, measures for reusing, or a suitable integration for the urban role played by conventual structures.

¹⁵ GONZÁLEZ GÓMEZ, Juan Miguel; AGUILAR DÍAZ, Jesús, ed. – *Écija Barroca*. Écija: Ayuntamiento de Écija, 2011.

¹⁶ JEFATURA DEL ESTADO – Ley 16/1985, de 25 de junio, del Patrimonio Histórico Español. *Boletín Oficial del Estado*. 155 (29 of June 1985) 20342-20352.

¹⁷ JUNTA DE ANDALUCÍA – Ley 14/2007, de 26 de noviembre, del Patrimonio Histórico de Andalucía. *Boletín Oficial de la Junta de Andalucía*. 248 (19 of December 2007) 6-28; COMUNIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE ANDALUCÍA – Ley 14/2007, de 26 de noviembre, del Patrimonio Histórico de Andalucía. *Boletín Oficial del Estado*. 38 (13 of February 2008) 7785-7809.

¹⁸ AYUNTAMIENTO DE ÉCIJA. CONSEJERÍA DE VIVIENDA Y ORDENACIÓN DEL TERRITORIO. OFICINA MUNICIPAL DEL PLAN GENERAL DE ORDENACIÓN URBANÍSTICA – *Plan General de Ordenación Urbana (PGOU) de la ciudad de Écija de 2010*. Écija: Ayuntamiento de Écija y Consejería de vivienda y ordenación del territorio de la Junta de Andalucía, 2010.

¹⁹ BEVIÁ GONZÁLEZ, Fernando J.; SANJUÁN MARTÍNEZ, Desiderio – *Plan Especial de Protección, Reforma Interior y Catálogo del Conjunto Histórico Artístico (PEPRICCHA): Écija (Sevilla)*. Écija: Ayuntamiento de Écija y Consejería de Cultura de la Junta de Andalucía, 2014

4. Cultural Interest Assets

Due to its current situation, it is necessary the protection of the monastic heritage. The laws, which belongs to the Spanish State and the Andalusian Community, offer the appropriate guidelines for its conservation, whose norms must be used to preserve our heritage.

According to the Spanish Historical Heritage Law, the highest Spanish protection is the Bien de Interés Cultural (BIC)²⁰, translated as Cultural Interest Asset. In chronological order, the table (Figure 5) shows the different elements declared BIC of the city, as well as its declaration year. There are 12 elements declared throughout the 20th century and 4 at the beginning of the 21st century²¹. It is striking the high considerations and concern for heritage until 2009. Since then, no more buildings have been declared like BIC for the last 10 years. According to the graph, the elements in the table are shown in a numerical way. They show their quantity with percentages that allow a quick visualization of the data. It is important to point out that the conventual heritage is next to the palatine equalled in number, both with a 17%. With 34%, defensive architecture stands out against other architecture, although is not chance. In 1949²² the Spanish government approved the whole protection of all the walled elements, castles, fortresses... and all the defensive architecture in a national scale. This is the main reason why it appears a large number of walls or fortifications in the BIC list.

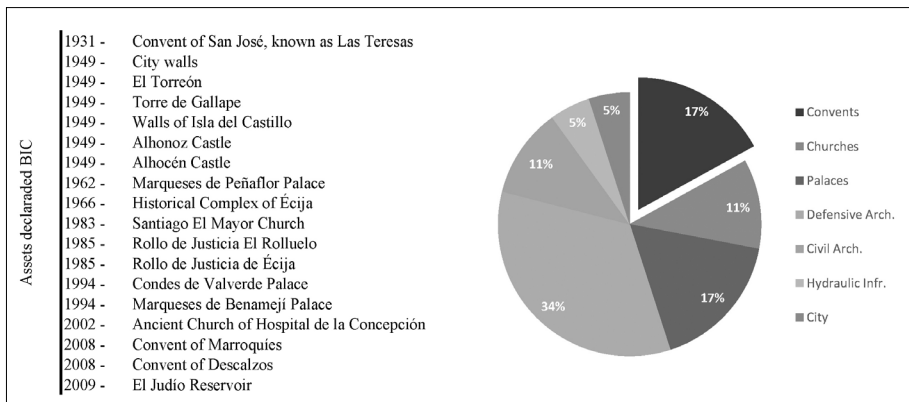


Fig. 5. Table of declared BIC in Écija. Right: graphic with the percentage and architecture about the different protected buildings. Own elaboration

²⁰ JEFATURA DEL ESTADO – Ley 16/1985, p. 20344, art. 14, point 2.

²¹ COMUNIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE ANDALUCÍA – Ley 14/2007, p. 7787, art. 6.

²² MINISTERIO DE EDUCACIÓN NACIONAL – Decreto de 22 de abril de 1949 sobre protección de los castillos españoles. *Boletín Oficial del Estado*. 125 (5 of May 1949) 2058-2059.

On the one hand, it is so interesting to observe that the first BIC of the city was the convent of San José. The building was declared in 1931²³. It was considered an outstanding example of architecture, because the building was firstly in the 14th century a Mudejar palace and later was turned into a convent. This process took place with the arrival of the religious order of the Discalced Carmelites in 1634. On the other hand, the next monastic protection would not be carried out until 2008. In this year, not one but two religious buildings were declared: the Convent of the Santísima Trinidad y Concepción de Nuestra Señora²⁴ (with order of Franciscan Conceptionists) and the Monastery of Limpia Concepción de Nuestra Señora²⁵ (with order of Barefooted Carmelites) (Figure 6). About this last building, only the temple and the facade of the ancient convent still live. The other two are the convent buildings, which have less architectural alterations. Finally, in the Ecijan urban scene, there are only 3 buildings with BIC category between the



Fig. 6. Photographs of Ecijan convents. Left: Convent of San José; Middle: Convent of Las Marroquíes; Right: Monastery of Los Descalzos. Photographs taken by F. Javier Ostos Prieto in 2018

²³ MINISTERIO DE INSTRUCCIÓN PÚBLICA Y BELLAS ARTES – Decreto de 3 de junio de 1931, declarando monumentos Históricos-Artísticos, pertenecientes al Tesoro Artístico Nacional, los que se indican.

Gaceta de Madrid. 155 (4 of June 1931) 1181-1185.

²⁴ CONSEJERÍA DE CULTURA – Resolución de 21 de julio de 2008, de la Dirección General de Bienes Culturales, por la que se incoa el procedimiento para la inscripción en el Catálogo General del Patrimonio Histórico Andaluz, como Bien de Interés Cultural, con la tipología de Monumento, del Convento de la Santísima Trinidad y Purísima Concepción, «Las Marroquíes», de Écija (Sevilla). *Boletín Oficial de la Junta de Andalucía*. 155 (5 of August 2008) 55-65.

²⁵ CONSEJERÍA DE CULTURA – Decreto 497/2008, de 11 de noviembre, por el que se inscribe en el Catálogo General del Patrimonio Histórico Andaluz, como Bien de Interés Cultural, con la tipología de Monumento, la iglesia de la Limpia Concepción de Nuestra Señora y la portada del antiguo convento de los Carmelitas Descalzos, en Écija (Sevilla). *Boletín Oficial de la Junta de Andalucía*. 233 (24 of November 2008) 56-60.

total of 16 at present. In addition, they are practically so next to each other and could shape a type of protected complex due to their proximity to each other, but they are not.

About the three BIC building protected, two of them have been occupied by closure orders since their foundation. These communities help to maintain and conserve the buildings. This is the main reason that we still have entire buildings in the city, thanks to those women and men who have inhabit in these convents. However, the years of 2014 and 2015²⁶ were decisive. Two religious communities left the conventual dependencies putting at risk the monastic spaces. After their departure, the two buildings lost their use without being changed and adapted to new uses. They were totally abandoned. Joined with this abandonment, it should be pointed out that these two buildings are two of the three that have the highest heritage protection. Despite this importance degree, the municipality has not taken any measures in this respect. In order to understand this fact it would be necessary to refer what is determined by the BIC Law, where point 2 of article 13 stipulates this way:

«2. Likewise, the owners and, where appropriate, the holders of rights in rem in such property, or those who own them by any title, are obliged to allow and facilitate their inspection by the competent institution, their study by researchers, upon their reasoned request, and their public visit, under conditions of free of charge to be determined by regulation, at least four days a month, on days and at times previously indicated. This last obligation may be totally or partially exempted by the competent Administration when there is a justified cause».²⁷

It is possible to read in the legislative text about the requirement in the conservation for the declared conventual buildings. As well as to be able to guarantee a public visit, if there is not a justified cause which it cannot be possible. In this sense, although the law is mandatory, it does not guarantee the effectiveness in the protection of heritage without a participation of the local administration and the citizens. It is very important to disseminate and raise awareness of conventual spaces between people. Monasteries and convents must be understood and valued by all as an inherent part of the heritage. This is necessary to avoid their loss. With the same guidelines, in the autonomous area, the Andalusian law directly absorbs the figure of BIC as a higher protection. The Andalusian Institute of Historical Heritage has created the General Catalogue of Andalusian Historical Heritage as

²⁶ LORA, Ángela – *El incierto futuro de los conventos de Écija tras la marcha de tres órdenes religiosas*. [Online]: ABCdesevilla. (13 of March 2015). Available at: <https://sevilla.abc.es/provincia/20150313/sevi-hacemos-conventos-201503121730.html>. Accessed on 29/03/2019.

²⁷ Translated from the original. JEFATURA DEL ESTADO – Ley 16/1985, p. 20344, art. 13, point 12.

an instrument for the protection of assets divided into: Assets of Cultural Interest, General Catalogue and those of the General Inventory of Movable Assets of the Spanish Historical Heritage. For this reason, the Cultural Interest Assets are included in the Andalusian legislation. The Andalusian law also tries to guarantee the correct safeguard by means of particular instructions appearing in point 1 of article 14: stipulates this way:

«1. The owners, holders of rights or simple holders of assets that make up Andalusian Historical Heritage, whether or not they are catalogued, have the duty to conserve them, maintain them and guard them in such a way as to guarantee the safeguarding of their values. To this end, the competent Department in matters of historical heritage may advise on those works and actions necessary for compliance with the duty of conservation».²⁸

As it has appeared in the Spanish Law, in Andalusia there is a search for a necessary conservation of heritage. Also there is the obligation to make public and free visits to the building, as mentioned in point 3 of article 11:

«3. In the case of Goods of BIC, a free public visit will also be permitted, at least four days a month, on days and at times previously indicated, and this information will be made public and accessible to citizens in an appropriate place of the Goods of BIC. Compliance with this obligation may be waived in whole or in part by the competent Department in matters of historical heritage when there is a justified cause».²⁹

After a sample of the legislative texts relating to heritage, it is shown how the law can protect heritage without being in many cases effectively or adequately. As previously mentioned, 3 of the total number of convents declared BIC show symptoms of deterioration in architectural terms. A necessary review is needed on the protection of the conventual heritage over the city of Écija to ensure, as stipulated by law: its protection, conservation, safeguard and enjoyment by the society.

5. Declaration of Écija as Historical Complex

The Cultural Interest Assets have different groups or categories where appear the Historical Complex. This kind of protection represents a physical structure relative to an urban area, including a delimitation of the same one. A city declared

²⁸ Translated from the original. JUNTA DE ANDALUCÍA – Ley 14/2007, p. 11, art. 14, point 1.

²⁹ Translated from the original. JUNTA DE ANDALUCÍA – Ley 14/2007, p. 11, art. 14, point 3.

Historical Complex proposes an area that guarantees special protection for those buildings which are within its limits. In this sense, the city of Écija was declared Historic Complex in 1966 (Figure 7) by Decreto 1802/1966 of 16th June published in BOE: 22 de Julio de 1966³⁰. Its particular geography, history and rich heritage make that the city grants a special regime of protection at an urban level.

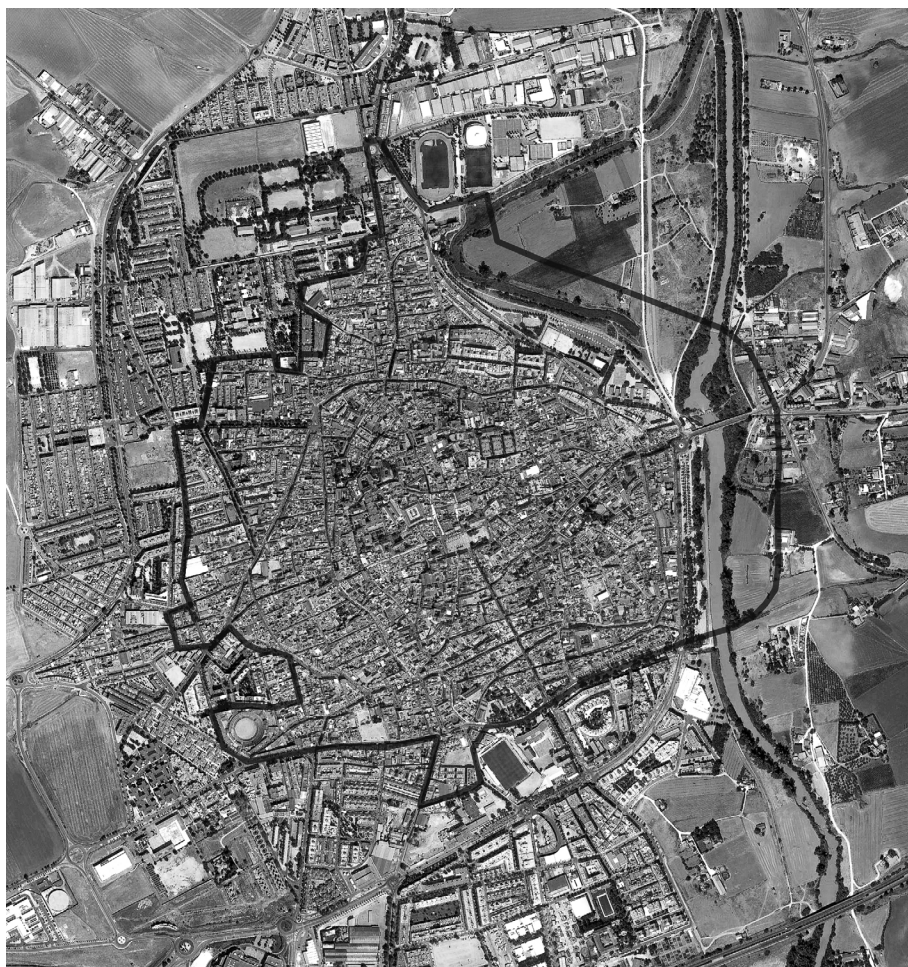


Fig. 7. Area from the Historic Complex of Écija. Own elaboration.
Data from the special protection plan – PEPRICCHA

³⁰ CENTROS DE ENSEÑANZA MEDIA. CLASIFICACIONES – Decreto 1802/1966, de 16 de junio, por el que se declara Conjunto Histórico Artístico la ciudad de Écija (Sevilla). *Boletín Oficial del Estado*. 174 (22 of July 1966) 9324-9325.

The monastic spaces have a high degree of importance and significance for the urban area of the city. These buildings, together with their goods, make up an unparalleled religious heritage. The majority of this heritage is located in Écija within the area delimited by the Historic Complex. There are some exceptions for convents which have disappeared, such as the Monastery of Nuestra Señora del Valle and the Monastery of San Agustín. In both cases, it is not necessary to consider them in relation to the Historic Complex because there are no apparent remains over them. The importance of the heritage declaration of the city «will determine the obligation for the Municipality or Municipalities in which they are to draw up a Special Protection Plan for the area affected by the declaration or other planning instrument provided for in urban legislation that meets in any case the requirements of this Law established».³¹ In addition to the general conditions previously indicated from the figure of BIC, at an urban level there are differences. The general urban planning (PGOU) in Écija requires, due to the Historic Complex, the development of a special protection urban plan. In this case, this plan is called with the acronym PEPRICCHA. It was elaborated in 2002 with the last modification developed in 2014.

The consequences of both plans are related between each other, as they are too two similar urban tools. While the PGOU analyses the urban area in general terms and organises the territory, the PEPRICCHA focuses on guidelines with a strong heritage character and conservation of the entire urban complex. Therefore, the BIC declaration in the city affects the urban structure and each of the buildings, also including the different conventual spaces in Écija.

6. Analysis of the current urban planning

With the state and autonomous heritage laws is deeply related the urban planning in each city. In the urban planning the different protection levels are designated to the buildings of the city. They appear granting a series of measures for their conservation. The PGOU in Écija includes a protection applied to a more general scope, while the PEPRICCHA establishes in more detail the level of each building. The categories are Comprehensive Protection, Structural Protection and Protection of Singular Buildings in Rural Areas. The section dedicated to Level I of Integral Protection has been extracted from all of them. Here it is stipulated what type of protection is applied to these buildings. As established by the PGOU:

«Level I. Integral Protection

Included in this level are the elements, buildings and complexes declared to be BIC, as well as the buildings worthy of Specific Inscription in the General

³¹ JEFATURA DEL ESTADO – Ley 16/1985, p. 20344, art. 20, point 1.

Catalogue of Andalusian Heritage. These are buildings, in general public, or the heritage of the Church, many of which are under the direct protection of the Cultural Administration, which must authorize any action on them. Its regulation will enable a wide range of interventions given the uniqueness of the buildings and that the authorization of them is discretionary. The regulations established for them in the Plan allow for actions aimed at restoration and rehabilitation, demolition of added bodies and, in general, the recovery of their values. Thus, the BIC declared both in the urban area (protected in the PEPRICCHA) and in the territory, and those proposed in the PEPRICCHA, as well as the Street Altarpieces, the chimney of the old oil factory of Ruíz – Canela and the elements of interest in the rural and urban environment belong to this Level».³²

Once again, the protection overlaps between different legislation areas. Those elements declared BIC are also protected by the urban planning with the highest protection level. Among these are the ecclesiastical buildings that continue under the urban planning supervision. In addition, the urban planning scale addresses aspects relating to interventions on buildings. Although it is not mentioned the mandatory of maintenance, previously designated in the law. It is in the special urban plan where the classification of protected buildings appears in detail. Point 5 of the PEPRICCHA stipulates:

- A| Monumental Protection
- B| Integral Protection
- C| Global Protection
- D| Typological Protection
- E| Partial Protection
- F| Environmental Protection
- G| Composition Protection

In the plan is specified the relation between what means each letter with each protection. It is also included not only the element protections, but also the type of intervention that can be carried out on them. All of them are referenced in points: 5 (Classification of Protected Properties) and 6 (Protection rules). Finally, there is in Écija a division of seven protection types that affect directly the heritage. The conventual spaces not included in the BIC declarations are not exempt from protection. They are included among the different levels of in the Ecijan planning, located between letters A and C (Figure 8). Luckily, they are among the three highest protections, which guarantees a good defence of the conventual ecclesiastical heritage.

³² Translated from the original. BEVIÁ GONZÁLEZ; SANJUÁN MARTÍNEZ – *Plan Especial de Protección*, p. 4.

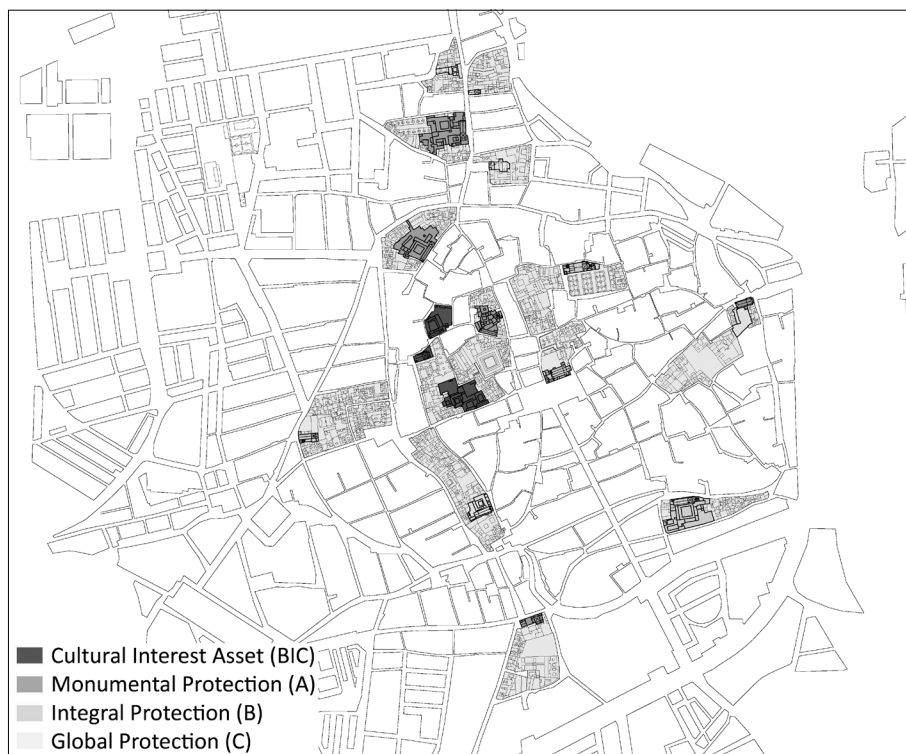


Fig. 8. Convent plans from Écija, which represents the protection level according to the urban planning in 2018. Own elaboration. Data from the special protection plan – PEPRICCHA

As can be seen in the table, there are three conventual spaces declared BIC opposed to five with A protection. There are another five more with letter B. Leaving in C letter there are only three and part of the old conventual structures related to the monastery of Santa Ana. This peculiar case consider the temple in a A type protection while its dependencies are in a smaller one, C type. Based on the table, the graph shows the percentages related to the number of protections according to their letter. If those elements that have disappeared are not considered, the balance between BIC and A protection against B and C protection, grouped respectively, are 50% (Figure 9). Although the protection levels are high, the half of the monastic spaces have a really low degree in relation to their architecture and importance. An example of this fact is the first convent building in the city. It is the monastery of San Pablo and Santo Domingo which only has a B protection. This implies the need for a revision of the feature established for each of the current buildings.

In addition to the protection figures, the use of cataloguing cards as a tool for urban planning has been mentioned. Within the catalogue of protected buildings,

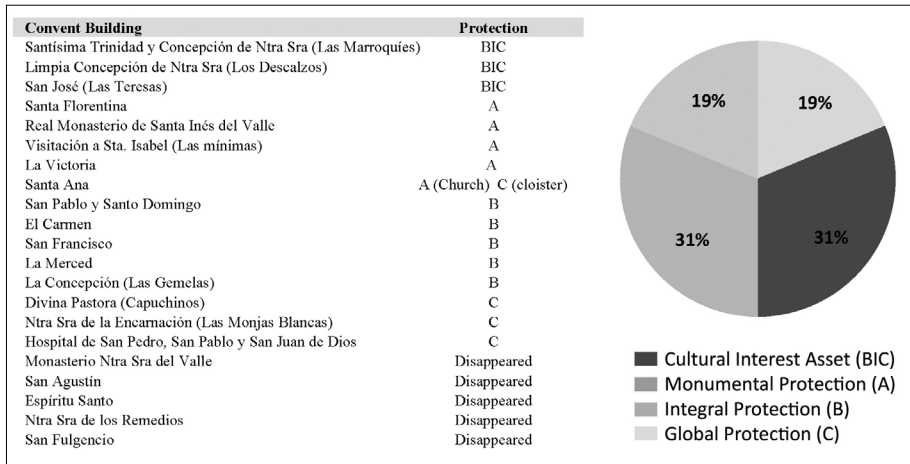


Fig. 9. Table of the Ecijan convents and monasteries with their level protection according to the urban planning in 2018. Right: graphic with the percentage and architecture about the different protected buildings. Own elaboration. Data from the special protection plan – PEPRICCHA

these cards are divided into several sections. On the one hand, it is usually found: a brief numerical description, a plan of the location of the building, photos, perhaps planimetry and a brief historical review. On the other hand, they are standard models whose function do not guarantee a correct valuation of the building, as well as a real protection. Only current architectural or artistic values are taken into account. Another heritage values are being forgotten and they could elevate the conventual heritage above many aspects. In this case, only the current building is taken into consideration, without thinking about the historical plot of the convent or other buildings that may have ancient remains. A photographic or planimetric collection is included as part of the complete document, although this is quite lacking. The photographs taken do not include the complexity and totality of the building. The planimetry is produced from other documentation without making any reference to its source or environment. In addition, it is found a description made basically in historical terms with some contributions on the construction phases throughout the development of the building. Definitely, an instrument that has nothing to do with the current state of the convents, which is focuses so much on historiographic aspects instead of defining or highlighting a heritage evaluation. During the ecclesiastical disentanglements carried out in Spain, a large part of the religious buildings were affected. Most of them disappeared forever or in such as cases they lost their conventual dependencies, holding only the church³³. This last situation is quite normal, when the temple preserve its religious

³³ LAZO DÍAZ, Alfonso – *La desamortización de las tierras de la Iglesia en la provincia de Sevilla (1835-1845)*. Sevilla: Diputación Provincial de Sevilla/ Instituto de Estudios Sevillanos, 1970.

use. In this way, the ancient conventual properties, which belong to cloisters, courtyards..., suffered transformations into residential building. However, there are some exceptions in many cases, where the use has changed into educational or commercial purposes. Sadly, the majority of the old monasteries and convents have been occupied by new dwellings or they are in a current state of abandonment. In spite of this situation of changes, Écija has got to maintain the religious use in the main conventual churches, avoiding a total disappearance.

7. Conclusions

It is impossible to make references to Écija without knowing and understanding its high heritage relevance in the conventual field. With a large number of 21 convents and monasteries, the city stands out in the ancient and current Andalucía. Related to a specific protection of its heritage, it is necessary looking out about the tools of protection, tutelage and safeguard. It is important to point out the existence of two laws, one national and the other autonomous, which are complemented between each other. Both reflect the protection of Cultural Interest Asset (BIC), as the maximum Spanish level of protection that guarantees the conservation of the BIC buildings. In Écija, there are three convents under this high protection although its correct defence is not carried out. Among these buildings only one has been rehabilitated and has taken into a great consideration leaving the other two in a present state of abandonment and progressive deterioration.

The declaration of Écija as a Historic Complex was positive for the development of the Special Plan for the Protection of the Historic Complex. Joined with the General City Plan, they made up a fairly efficient legislative system. It has been established multiple categories in levels of protection, from letters A to G. Although a large part of the monastic heritage is not taken care with a suitable esteem. The catalogue files try to reflect a taking data of all the different buildings but, again, unsatisfactorily. Most cases only show historical or numerical guidelines that are not taken into account. Often they leave the real heritage values in a second or almost zero place.

Finally, the study carried out on the application of urban planning in the city shows results that do not guarantee a correct safeguarding of the monastic heritage in Écija. The taken data are key to think that the legislation fails. Although it is quite good in content, it is not good in application since it requires public administrations and governments to act. If there could be a perfect law on heritage, it would not be necessary such as protection as now. The Ecijans and the institutions must become aware of the valuation of the convent buildings. The value given to them does not come from something imposed or inherent in a building. It is given by the people and those who turn it into heritage. A conventual heritage, builder and symbol of the city of Écija.