

Abstract

The Maestrazgo de Teruel has a distinctive landscape marked by the presence of the numerous *masías*, a feature of the area since the Middle Ages, in which the towers erected inside some of the largest farmsteads stand out from other buildings in this rural environment. Although the phenomenon of the *masía* fortified by the tower extends to the neighbouring regions of Teruel and Castellón, its significance is very noteworthy in the Maestrazgo of Teruel.

Although most of the towers are in disuse and now show signs of years of abandonment and neglect, they still testify to a monumental build quality that belies the ‘rustic vernacular’ concept attributed to this architecture by recent history, and generally, they retain a high degree of authenticity. They should therefore have great documentary value, but in fact, in most of the fortified *masías*, the architecture itself is the only historical source, since, due to their nature, there are hardly any written documents about them. Yet, there are very few works that have focused on documenting and analysing their architecture.

This thesis approaches the analysis of the fortified *masía* of the Maestrazgo of Teruel from an architectural perspective to characterize and objectively assess its value and state of conservation, by documenting the architecture that differentiates it from all other farmhouses and substantiates it as fortified, invariably by its tower. It also seeks to contextualize it by examining the same phenomenon in other locations. To this end, we started by compiling the existing inventories and documented *in situ* those cases of which there was prior knowledge of the existence of a tower, from which twenty-seven have been selected to form part of a catalogue. The catalogue has been georeferenced in a GIS, in which the *masías* key characteristics are included. Eleven case studies, involving a complete architectural survey and in-depth analysis have been carried out. This methodology has enabled the creation of a document that will testify to the current state of the architectural heritage of the Maestrazgo, based on objective data, which will deepen our knowledge and inform our approach to the character of these towers, as well as any analysis of the state of the structures and their needs. This has allowed us to define guidelines for the conservation of these towers, whose patrimonial importance has been fully justified.