

The San Antonio Neighbourhood of Valencia and the Church that Gives it its Name

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Abstract

In the city of Valencia (Spain), there is a neighborhood within the district of Zaidia called San Antonio, with a church currently bearing the same name. On the current Calle Sagunto, formerly Murviedro, caserio "dels Orriols" and just 1400 meters from the Torres de Serranos, this monument is found, unremarkable on the outside, beautiful on the inside. The land was purchased in 1333 and the church was founded in 1409 by the Hospitaller Brothers of San Antonio Abad, who built a house and hospital to treat erysipelas or St. Anthony's fire. The objective of this research is to study the evolution of the urban environment from the 14th century to the 18th century, when due to the construction of the General Hospital of Valencia in 1512, the hospital lost its functions and the Antonian Order had to transform and adapt to the style and circumstances of each era to avoid disappearing. Archival documents and historical cartography help to uncover this unknown part of Valencia extramuros.

Keywords: Antoniano; hospital; neighbourhood; neoclassical church

1. Introduction

The city of Valencia, located in the east of Spain, is made up of 19 districts and each district is subdivided into neighbourhoods. Within all of them, we focus on the district number 05, called 'Saïdia' or Zaidia. (Moreno Pérez, 2017) The district shares borders with 6 other regions: Rascanya, Benimaclet, Pla de Reial, Ciutat Vella, Campanar and Benicalap, and in this area runs a part of the old riverbed of the Turia, from the bridge of San José, through the bridge of Serranos and the 'Trinitat', and cuts off before reaching the bridge of Real..(Moreno Pérez, 2017). Zaidia gets its name from the disappeared monastery of Zaidia, called "Royal Monastery of Santa María de Gratia Dei," which was located at the intersection of the current Constitución

Avenue with Málaga Street. Founded in 1265 by Teresa Gil de Vidaurre, third wife of King Jaime I the Conqueror, who donated her estate for this purpose. After being abandoned by Jaime I, Teresa Gil retired to the Zaidia monastery, which she herself had founded, and where she died in 1285. Zaidia was a country house and recreation place for the Muslim king Abú Zayd. The monastery of Santa María de Gracia, located in this almunia, was known as "de la Zaidia" due to its location and the Muslim king Zayd. (Diez Arnal, n.d.) The monastery was destroyed during the War of Independence (1808) along with the Royal Palace of Valencia to stop the French invasion. The nuns managed to build a new one after the war, but it did not survive the Valencia flood of 1957 (Diez Arnal, n.d.).

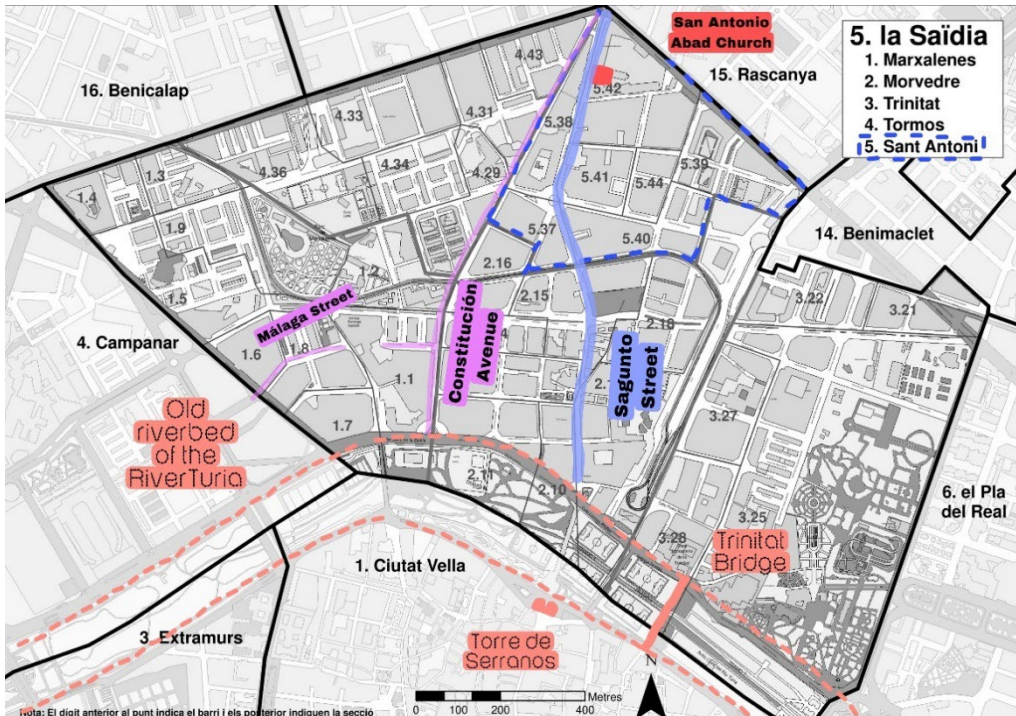


Fig. 1 – Valencia, districts and neighbourhoods. Location of the monument (Ayuntamiento de Valencia, 2025).

The other neighborhoods that make up the district are: Marxalenes, Morvedre, Trinitat, Tormos, and San Antoni. The analysis focuses on the neighborhood of “San Antoni” or San Antonio and the reason for its name. What relevance did it have to be given and maintained the name? It must be taken into account that this neighborhood is part of present-day Valencia but, in the past, it was considered part of the periphery, the outskirts or rather, extramural Valencia. The objective of this article is to study the evolution of the urban environment of the San Antonio neighborhood from the 14th century to the 18th century, analyzing how the construction of the General Hospital of Valencia in 1512 impacted the functions of the San Antonio Abad hospital and how the Antonian Order transformed and adapted to the circumstances of each era to avoid disappearing. Archival documents and historical cartography help to uncover this unknown part of extramural Valencia extramuros.

2. Methodology

To carry out this research on the evolution of the urban environment of the San Antonio neighborhood and the transformation of the Antonian Order, the following methods have been used:

1. Analysis of Archival Document: Historical documents and archival records have been reviewed and analyzed, providing detailed information on the foundation, evolution, and transformation of the San Antonio Abad hospital and the Antonian Order. These documents include land purchase records, construction permits, and other official documents of the time.
2. Study of Historical Cartography: An exhaustive study of the historical cartography of Valencia has been conducted, focusing on maps and plans that show the evolution of the

San Antonio neighborhood and its surroundings from the 14th century to the 18th century. The cartography has allowed identifying changes in the urban structure and the buildings of the hospital and the church.

3. Review of Bibliographic Sources: Various bibliographic sources have been consulted, including books, academic articles, and specialized publications that address the history of Valencia, the Antonian Order, and medieval hospital architecture. These sources have provided historical context and helped interpret the data obtained from archival documents and cartography.
4. Direct Observation: Direct observation of the architectural remains and current buildings of the San Antonio neighborhood and the San Antonio Abad church has been carried out. This observation has allowed corroborating the information obtained from documentary and cartographic sources and has provided a more detailed view of the architectural transformation over the centuries.

3. Development

3.1. History of the San Antonio neighborhood and the mononymic church

3.1.1. Foundation and evolution of the San Antonio Abad Hospital

The San Antonio neighborhood, located in the Zaidía district in Valencia, owes its name to the San Antonio Abad church. This monument, unremarkable on the outside but beautiful on the inside, was founded in 1409 by the Hospitaller Brothers of San Antonio Abad, who built a house and hospital to treat erysipelas or St. Anthony's fire.

The land was purchased in 1333, and the church is located on the current Calle Sagunto, formerly Murviedro, caserío “dels Orriols”, just 1400 meters from the Torres de Serranos (Eslava Castillo, 1976; Molina i Figueres, 1997).

3.1.2. Description of medieval hospitals in Valencia

During the Middle Ages, the hospital network in Valencia was fundamental. In the 13th century, six hospitals were founded, of which only one was initiated by civilians. In the first half of the 14th century, more hospitals were created such as “En Clapers”, San Antón, and “Dels Beguins”, and three more in the last quarter of the century, including the Poor Priests' hospital, “En Conill” and “En Bou”. Of these last four, only the Antonian and Santa María hospitals were ecclesiastical in nature (Rubio Vela, 1984).

The operation of these hospitals was supervised by the municipality, which inspected all centers, resorting to the bishopric for a mixed commission to carry out inspections. Inspections are documented in 1346 and 1370. This vigilance and municipal interest led to four hospitals depending on the city government by the end of the 14th century, marking the beginning of the municipalization of hospitals in Valencia (Consorcio Hospital General Universitari Valencia, n.d.; Rubio Vela, 1984).

3.1.3. The Hospital Network of the “Cami de Morvedre”

The Morvedre road, now Calle Sagunto, in northern Valencia, housed three extramural hospitals: “En Clapers”, the San Lázaro leprosarium, and the San Antonio Abad hospital. In 1333, the Antonians acquired land on this road, allowing the construction of settlements with good hygiene and economy. In 1340, they built their first hermitage and established the brotherhood (Faus Gabandé, 2011; Faus Prieto, 2009).

Although there is no clear description of the hospital complex of the Regular Canons of San Antonio, it is known that the extramural centers shared similar distribution characteristics, except for San Lázaro, which had separate pavilions due to its nature as a leprosarium (Gallent Marco, 2009; Rodrigo Pertegás, 1927).

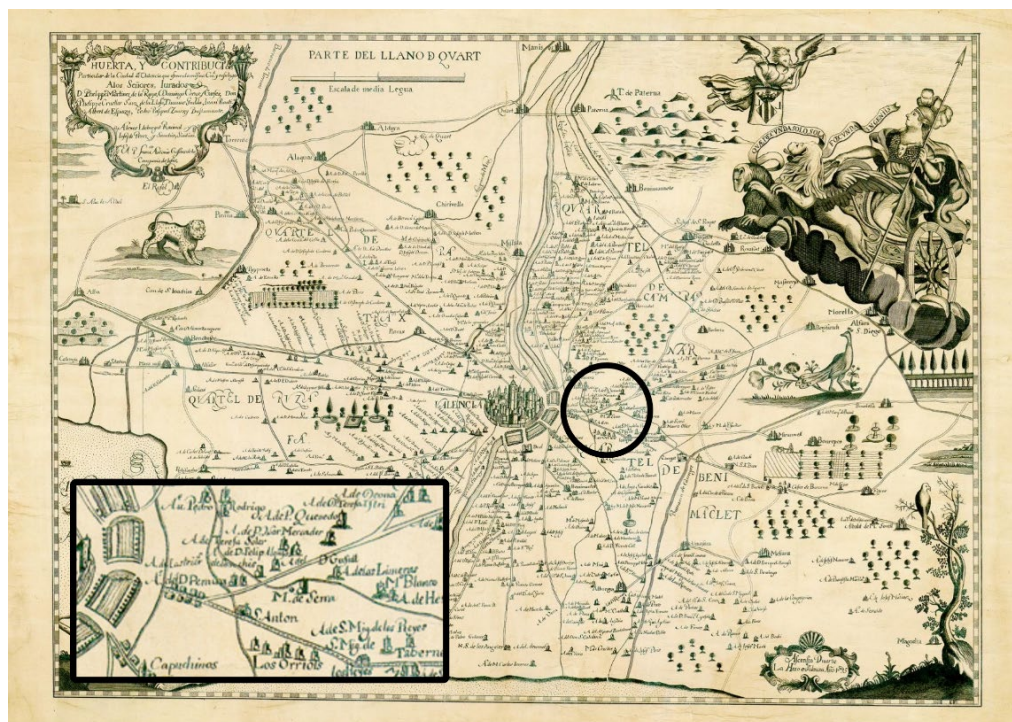


Fig. 2 – The only map showing the location of the property between the 14th and 18th centuries. Map of 1695 (Cassaus Antonio Francisco, 1965).

The “En Clapers” hospital, contemporary to San Antonio and located 900 meters on the same Calle Sagunto, presents the most similar building physiognomy. Built on November 23, 1392, its building typology consists of two buildings joined by three diaphragm arches, a testero wall, and a facade wall. Its ruins were discovered in 1995 (Teixidor i Trilles, 1767; Unidad Técnica del Ayuntamiento de Valencia, 1995).

3.2. Architectural and urban transformation

3.2.1. Foundation and evolution of the San Antonio Abad Hospital

In 1333, the Antonianos purchased the land, and in 1340, they invoked the papal privilege to establish the brotherhood of the saint. By that time, a first hospital and its monastic dependencies must have already been completed (Blanco Gómez, 2015). In 1353, the Canons Regular of Saint Anthony received authorization to solicit alms in their

diocese. At the end of the 14th century, in 1392, King John I authorized the creation of the Brotherhood of Young Farmers or Zagales with Saint Anthony as their patron. Various guilds adopted Saint Anthony as their patron, and the guild shields of the donors as well as the coat of arms of María de Castilla could be seen years later on the polychrome wooden ceiling of the medieval Gothic hospital (Blanco Gómez, 2015).

According to the remains and existing documentation, it is determined that the Gothic hospital consisted of three diaphragm arches, a chancel, and a façade, enclosed with side walls with circular windows. Surrounding it were the various conventual dependencies (dormitories, kitchen) and a chapel. Attached to the façade were the porter's lodge and the infirmary. The roof was formed between the pointed arches by a late Gothic polychrome wooden ceiling (Blanco Estévez, 2022; Blanco Gómez, 2015, 2023).



Fig. 3 – Wooden ceiling test “Crujía” (Blanco, 2013).

3.2.2. Transformation and end of the Antonianos

During the 15th century, the municipality considered it essential to create its own hospital network to rationalize healthcare services. This unification process began around 1482 and culminated in 1512 with the creation of the General Hospital (Blanco Gómez, 2015; Faus Gabandé, 2011). The Antonianos began fundraising in 1469 after the ratification by King John II on July 15, 1467, indicating that they were becoming aware that their situation was about to change, ending their hospital functions with the construction of the General Hospital of Valencia in 1512. Therefore, the Antonianos had to reinvent themselves to avoid disappearing (Blanco Gómez, 2023; Herrera García et al., 1985).

The transformation into the church we know today took place over two and a half centuries. They modified and expanded their buildings, constructing a communion chapel, adapting to the Tridentine style that brought a new way of keeping and displaying the Body of Christ, leading to a new liturgy (Barragán de la Rosa, 2018). A neoclassical church was built within the hospital, with a wide barrel vault with two rows of lowered lunettes. The enclosure was expanded to give it the shape of a Latin cross and become a

single nave with side chapels. A large dome was built at the crossing, and the Corinthian order was used for the interior cladding. A new façade and an atrium were built before the entrance to the church (Barragán de la Rosa, 2018; Bérchez, 1987; Llopis Alonso & Perdigón Fernández, 2010).

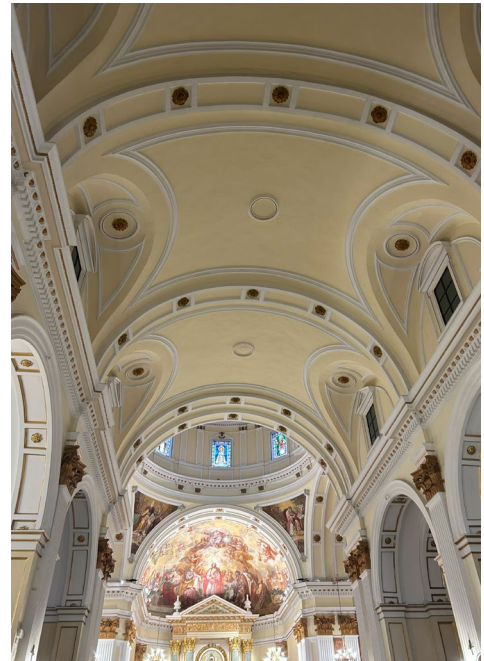


Fig 4 – Church interior after masking (Blanco, 2025).



Fig. 5 – Neoclassical cloister (Blanco, 2025).

To complete the conventual complex, a two-story cloister of molded bricks and a stone base was built, where the completion date of the work, 1768, can be read in its corner. The existing bell tower was also raised with molded brick attached to the sacristy space. This work was carried out by Fray Francisco de Santa Bárbara (1731-1802), a friar architect who also built the parish church of Burjassot between 1765 and 1763 and the unfinished new cloister of the Monastery of San Miguel de los Reyes (Eslava Castillo, 1976).

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Impact of the construction of the General Hospital of Valencia in 1512 and adaptation of the Antonian Order

The construction of the General Hospital of Valencia in 1512 centralized healthcare services, leading to the loss of functions of the San Antonio Abad Hospital. This change forced the Antonian Order to adapt and transform its buildings and functions to remain relevant. The

adaptability of the Antonian Order is a notable example of institutional and architectural resilience in response to significant changes in the socio-economic and political environment. Architectural modifications, including the construction of new chapels, a neoclassical church, and a two-story cloister, allowed the Antonian Order to continue its activities until the late 18th century, when the order was suppressed by Pope Pius VI in 1787 (Blanco Gómez, 2023; Eslava Castillo, 1976).

4.2. Discoveries in archival documents and historical cartography and graphic quality

The analysis of archival documents and historical cartography has revealed unknown aspects of Valencia outside the city walls, providing detailed information about the foundation and evolution of the San Antonio Abad Hospital and the architectural transformations it underwent over the centuries. However, the research has

identified the need to improve the graphic quality of cartographic documentation and to include well-identified photographic documentation. The low graphic quality of some documents has hindered the visualization and understanding of certain aspects of urban and architectural evolution. The inclusion of well-identified and processed photographs would help make the explanation more comprehensible (Blanco Gómez, 2023; Gallent Marco, 2009; Rodrigo Pertegas, 1927).

4.3. Interpretation of the results

The findings of this research have important implications for the urban and architectural history of Valencia. The evolution of the San Antonio neighborhood and the transformation of the Antonian Order provide a detailed view of how religious and hospital institutions have influenced the urban and architectural development of the city. Additionally, the research highlights the importance of preserving and studying archival documents and historical cartography to better understand the evolution of urban environments.

5. Conclusions

The research on the evolution of the urban environment of the San Antonio neighborhood and the transformation of the Antonian Order has revealed several important findings:

1. Impact of the General Hospital of Valencia in 1512: The construction of the General Hospital of Valencia in 1512 centralized healthcare services, leading to the loss of functions of the San Antonio Abad Hospital. This change forced the Antonian Order to adapt and transform its buildings and functions to remain relevant.
2. Adaptability of the Antonian Order: The Antonian Order demonstrated a remarkable ability to adapt over the centuries. This adaptability was reflected in architectural modifications and the expansion of its

buildings, including the construction of a neoclassical church and a two-story cloister. These transformations allowed the Antonian Order to continue its activities until the late 18th century

3. Discoveries in Archival Documents and Historical Cartography: The analysis of archival documents and historical cartography has uncovered unknown aspects of Valencia outside the city walls. Historical records have provided detailed information about the foundation and evolution of the San Antonio Abad Hospital, as well as the architectural transformations it underwent over the centuries.
4. Importance of Graphic Quality and Photographic Documentation: The research has identified the need to improve the graphic quality of cartographic documentation and to include well-identified photographic documentation. These visual tools are essential for facilitating the understanding of urban and architectural changes and for effectively communicating the findings.
5. Contribution to the Knowledge of Valencia's Historical Heritage: The findings of this research have important implications for the urban and architectural history of Valencia. The evolution of the San Antonio neighborhood and the transformation of the Antonian Order provide a detailed view of how religious and hospital institutions have influenced the urban and architectural development of the city.
6. Future Research: Additional studies are recommended to delve deeper into the history of other religious and hospital institutions in Valencia and their impact on urban development. The inclusion of high-quality visual tools, such as photographs and detailed maps, is essential for improving the understanding and communication of the findings.

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