



THE CLOISTER

The Cloister has three artistic phases: In the ground floor we have this part, near the Church in Romanesque style and the other parts that were built in the 16th century, in Renaissance style. The first floor was built in the 18th century in the neoclassical style.

A very important fact that we have to underline on this visit is that in the month of June of 2013 UNESCO declared Leon "Memory of the World" it is considered the first example of modern parliamentarism in the history of Europe.

In 1188 the king of León Alfonso IX, decided to summon the Curia regis. This was a mediæval organisation composed of aristocrats and bishops, but took the decision to also call the representatives of the urban middle class from the most important cities of the kingdom to the assembly.

León's Cortes are considered the first European courts and for the first time the King took into account the opinion of the citizens and dealt with matters like the right to private property, the inviolability of domicile, the right to appeal to justice opposite the King and the obligation of the King to consult the Cortes before entering a war.

This first European courts were held here, in the cloister of Sant Isidoro de León.

THE QUIÑONES' CHAPEL

This chapel was the Chapter House of the monastery in the 12th century, where the community of monks hold their meetings and this is one of the entrances to the church with Romanesque capitals. In the 15th century the chapel became a burial place for the Quiñones family, a novelty family of Leon.

ROOSTER: This is the original wind vane of the Tower of San Isidoro. It was put down in 2000 to restore. In the research they found pollen and was analyzed, as a result we know that his factory is oriental, held in Persia, dating is surprisingly old, in the 7th century. The material is an alloy of copper and gold coated lead. We do not know how he came to León, possibly by our king Alfonso VI after the conquer of Toledo. The rooster has a lot of symbolism, for Muslims means the victory and for Christians means the resurrection of Christ and at when is put at the top is the protector against the devil.



THE IVORY CASKET: Dated in 1059. It was made here and it is considered one of the best workshops of ivory in Europe. You can notice how ivory is carved with great detail, and mark the folds of drapery falling. To detail is all feet, hair ... There are also two types of arc-shaped Romanesque semicircular arcs, and Islamic horseshoe arcs. The eyes have inlays of jet black. The lower part represents the 12 apostles and in the center of the lid is the Mystic Lamb surrounded by the heavenly court. This casket was coated with gold also taken by the Napoleonic troops.



ST ISIDORO´S RELIQUARY CHEST: King Ferdinand the First sent for the relics of St. Isidore of Seville to consecrate the Church under his patronage and to transport the relic he commanded to do this casket in 1063 in which the relics were brought. The relics are now in the high altar of the church. It has a wood core completely covered in sheet silver and gilder silver with reliefs on some sheets, we can see the history of Adam and Eve. The lining of the lid is an Arabic embroidery with figures of iberian fauna, while the body of the box is lined with Andalusian cloth.



THE CASKET OF LIMOGES: It was made in Limoges (France), in the 13 th Century, with the art of enamels. It resembles a cruciform church showing Christ on the Cross and his Majesty, Mary and John, The Tetramorph, angels and Apostles. The blue is made of cobalt oxide, then they add glass powder and all of them gets into an oven at high temperature.



ARAB BOXES: Most of them are tribute muslims gave to our kings. In this case boxes are metal ones and in the other there are made of wood and ivory.



VIKING IDOL: It was made in the 10th century in Scandinavia and is carved from reindeer antler. Openwork decoration is a feature of the Vikings, it could have been a present to the Kings and represents a dragon. According to specialists, it is the only example of Viking art we see in Spain. We do not know how it got here.



THE ROYAL PANTHEON

We are at the foot of the Church, in the wellknown as **The Sixtine Chapell of the Romanesque Art** because of the amazing paintings.

It was built in the 11th Century by the King of León Ferdinand "the Great" and Queen Sancha. It is a Royal pantheon because here 33 kings, queens and infants of the Kingdom of León were buried. During the War of Independence, in 1808 Napoleon's troops occupied the pantheon using it as stable and plundering the graves.

It was built in the Romanesque stile and if you focus on the capitals, they have a lot of symbolism, for example the healing of the leper and the resurrection of Lazarus, two miracles related with death and resurrection appropriate to the place.

Paintings are unique mainly by two reasons: Because the frescoes have never been restored, and because we can enjoy here the full set, in the original place. They represent the birth of Jesus, the Passion and Glorification.

Let's start with the cycle of Birth: The Annunciation, the Visitation, Nativity, and the announcement of the angel to the shepherds, one of the greatest scenes that represent the mountains of León in the Middle Ages.



We continue with the Holy Innocents, the Sacred Family fleeing to Egypt and the Presentation of Jesus at the Temple. The painting is damaged by the sun.

The central vault have the Last Supper, with Marcial the Cupbearer, is the character who poured the wine in the Holy Supper according the Apocrypha. We can see him with an onix cup in his hand, as the one that compose the Urraca's Chalice.

We continue with the Arrest in the Garden, Pilate washes his hands, St. Peter denies Christ, and Simon of Cyrene helps carry the cross.

Simon leads the Crucifixion depicted on the wall of the Church, there include the two donors, the King and Queen who pray at the foot of the Cross.



We arrive at the apocalyptic Christ according to the first chapter of Revelation and the first Christian communities, the 7 Churches of Asia.

In the central dome Christ in Majesty sited over the rainbow and surrounded by the four evangelists tetramorfos.



Here on the inside of the arch have the twelve months a year, the agricultural calendar: January with the Roman God Janus February is a cold month. In March pruning the vines. April sowing the seed. In May the reconquest. June, July and August with the cereal. September the vintage. In October and November the animals. In December celebrating Christmas.



PENDÓN DE BAEZA'S CHAPEL

It was the refectory in the 12th Century. Communal meals are the times when all monks of an institution are together. Meals were eaten in silence while a single monk might read aloud from the Scriptures or writings of the saints during the meals.

The decoration of the vaults was made in the 18th Century in the baroque style. The main scene represents the conquest of Baeza by the Emperor Alfonso VII in 1147. The troops of the King Alfonso VII moved towards Almería, but they were stopped by the Muslim resistance in the city of Baeza. At that moment, St. Isidoro took part supporting Christians, and because of that the Emperor conquered Baeza on the 25th of July, the Santiago's Day. That is why St. Isidoro is represented horseback.

The rest of the paintings have the Fathers of the Church, some important Saints, the miracles of St. Isidoro and plant decoration.

PRIORAL STAIRCASE

It was built by the architect Juan de Ribero Rada between 1570 and 1578, he was a great connoisseur of the Italian Renaissance (Serlio, Palladio, Vitruvius) and disciple of Gil de Hontañón. The iconographic programme is very complex:

The cardinal virtues: Prudence, Courage, Temperance and Justice. All of them regarded as the

basic virtues required for a virtuous life. The most important is Prudence, the ability to discern the appropriate course of action to be taken in a given situation at the appropriate time.

The seven liberal arts: Grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy. We recognize different mythological characters of antiquity, such as Hércules, Ulysses, the Sibyls and from the Bible such as David, Sanson... As examples of virtuous behavior.

The whole means the triumph of virtue thanks to the wisdom.

THE URRACA'S CHALICE

We are in the first level of the defense tower built in the 11th century. The tower used to work as a bell-tower.

This master piece is known as "The Urraca's Chalice". Urraca was the first daughter of the King of León Fernando I "The Great" and the Queen Sancha. She was a really powerful woman, known because her story was romanticized in the Story of the Cid Campeador.

The body of the Chalice is formed by 2 cups of eastern Roman onix, Palestine, one for the drinking vessel and one for the base dated in the first century.

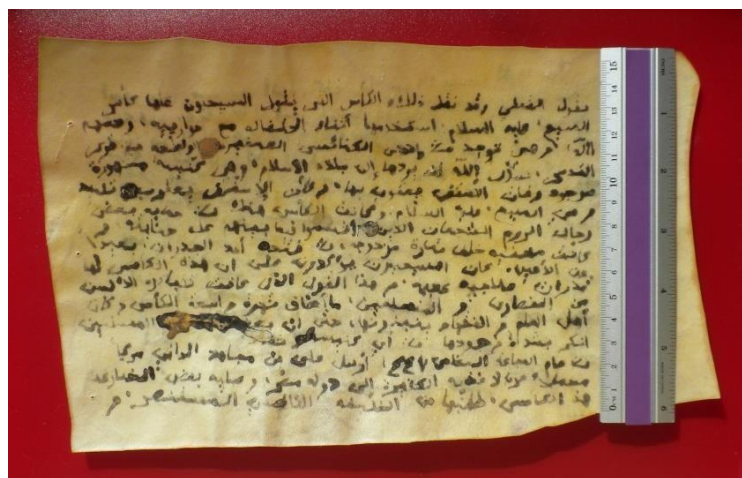


These Roman pieces were decorated by Doña Urraca with her finest jewels and high quality gold in the 11th Century. The decoration is made of gold, precious stones like amethysts, sapphires and emeralds, seed pearls and a Roman cameo. In the bottom of the knot, there is an inscription on golden strand saying: "IN NOMINE DOMINI VRRACCA FREDINANDI" On behalf of the Lord, Urraca from Fernando.



A recent research conducted by Professor of medieval history and chronicler of Leon Margarita Torres and art historian Jose Miguel Ortega believes that the Roman bowl that was decorated to form the chalice, was venerated since the fourth century AC in the Christianity as the cup that Jesus used at the Last Supper. In the year 1009 Caliph of Egypt sacked Jerusalem dismantling the Holy Sepulchre and brought the relic to The Cairo.

According to two patchworks found in the Library of Al-Azhar in The Cairo, in the 11th Century there was a great famine in Egypt, the Emir of Denia sent as food aid and to thank this gesture the Emir received the agate cup, among other presents. In turn, the Emir of Denia gave this cup to Ferdinand I who at that time, was the most powerful king of the Christianity with a great army. That is how the two cups of onix arrived here.



In the other patchwork Caliph Saladine, on the 12th Century, asked for a small piece of the ónix cup in order to cure his daughter because they thought the piece have healing powers and, the daughter lived.

BIBLE OF THE 10TH CENTURY

The library houses about 2000 books dated between the 10th Century and the 18th Century. There are 155 Codices, about 300 incunabula (a lot of them taking into account that they are the first books made with the imprint) and about 1050 rare books impressed between the 16th Century and the 18th Century.

The jewel of the library is this codex one of the rarest codices in the world. It is a Visigothic-Mozarabic Bible. The colophon tells us that was the work of Florencius and Sancho in 960. It is composed by 514 parchment leaves. The preservation is perfect, no missing leaf, and inside, the colors of the thumbnails still retain vivid. It has more than a hundred thumbnails that represent scenes of the Old Testament. These pictures show us the living of Cristian Iberian kingdoms in the 10th Century: the architecture, the way they dressed, the arms, the plants and the animals.

It is called Mozarabic Bible because the monks who made it were mozarabic, they were Christian but their habits and traditions were Arabians, because they came from the south of Spain, Al- Andalus. That is why the Bible is written in latin language, but the marginal notes are written in arabic.

DOÑA SANCHA'S CHAPEL

This room is the Royal Tribune of the 11th Century. It was from here that the kings and queens attended religious services. This part was altered in the 12th century, first it was the private apartment of Doña Sancha (the princess-queen) and later on was part of the scriptorium of the monastery.

From the 16th century was a chapter house and from this time we keep these Renaissance walls decorated with tempera. The paintings were taken out with strappo technique to recuperate the medieval appearance.

The paintings were kept in a chapel of the cloister and were relocated in the original place last year thanks to the Junta de Castilla y León and Fondos Feder.

The iconography represents a calvary scene, the conversion of St Augustine and different scenes of Saint Isidoro's living according to a book called " The Miracles of Saint Isidoro".