

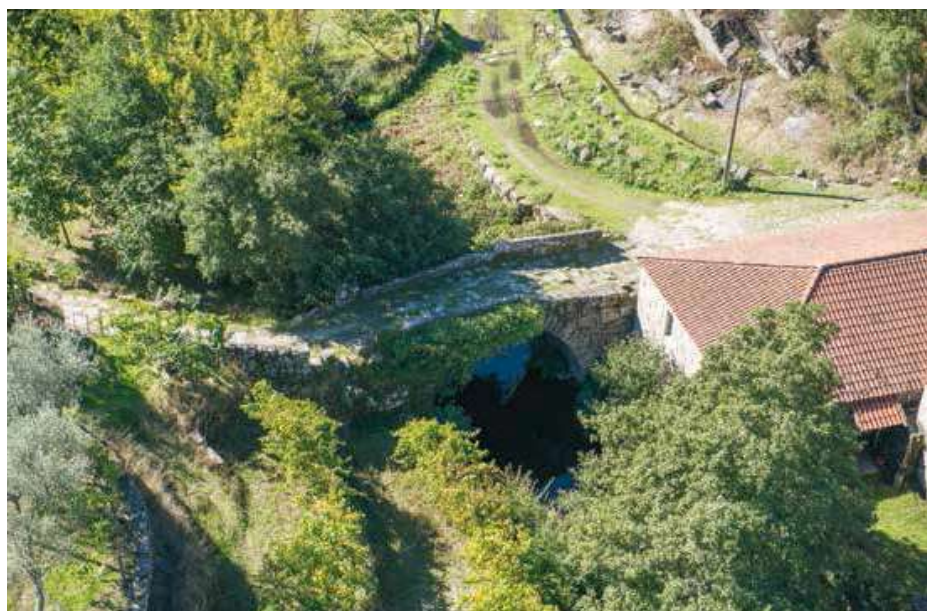


BRIDGE
OF ESMORIZ
BAIÃO

BRIDGE
OF ESMORIZ
BAIÃO

In 1758, in the memoir of Ancede (Baião), the priest João Pinto de Almeida, or someone on his behalf (since he merely signs a short laconic text attesting the veracity of the information contained in it) (Almeida, 1758), lists six bridges in his parish. Three wooden bridges and three stone ones. Regarding the stone bridges, he states the existence of one between the places of Esmoriz and Penalva, another on the road from the Monastery of Ancede to Pala (Ribadouro, Baião) and a third one close to a series of mills called “of Machoças”.

This reference and the factuality of the Bridge of Esmoriz, featuring a single round arch, show signs of the existence of a crossing that was probably important; otherwise, it wouldn't have inspired the investment that was made, since it could have been perfectly achieved by a



Aerial view.

simple wooden walkway, as in the other three cases referred by the priest of Ancede. However, while it's a fact that there was a stone bridge in 1758, we cannot guarantee, without any documents or archaeological elements to prove it, that the bridge mentioned in that year is the passage we see today. This circumstance may be related, as in the case of the Bridge of Panchorra (Resende), to the late use of chronologically remote construction models.

So, we should relativise the importance of crossings when it is based on “stone bridge” typologies. In this case, the priest João de Almeida Pinto does not distinguish (like many of his peers) between “stone” and “masonry”, which could suggest, in the second case, the hiring of skilled workers, and hence a more expensive project. A project like this could require a construction deed and would leave a valuable record of its execution, repair or reconstruction.

In order to study these crossings, as well as the paving of paths and roads, focusing on their material nature is not enough. The lack of knowledge about building techniques and materials outside the Roman period raises countless doubts. Furthermore, the confusion related to the names given



Downstream view.

to communication links according to their ability to endure the movement of vehicles (roads) or to be mere passage tracks (routes, footpaths, etc.) for people or animals make it impossible for us to look at this issue with the attention it deserves. This situation gives rise to the frequency with which 17th, 18th century and even later bridges are considered as being Roman or Romanesque, due to the timeless reproduction of old models, as we believe is the case of the Bridge of Esmoriz¹.

Indeed, returning to the issue of the importance of this crossing, it cannot be analysed from a contemporary point of view. We should always find out the usefulness of the passage within the historic path of communities that use it, since all Medieval and Modern communication links (unlike the Roman ones) always had a local and regional character, which was only surpassed in the contemporary period. So, the bridge should be framed within a broader scope of humanization and circulation. In this specific case, we should take a close look at the valley of the Ovil river or brook, which springs close to Loivos do Monte (Baião) and flows into the river Douro, near Pala. Its northeast-southeast direction forced the construction of several crossings linking the coast to the interior. Knowing that on the south side of the Douro there was a path (or, at least, an overlay of several paths) along the river bank, we may assume – given the connection between Ancede and Porto, the episcopal seat and an economic centre – that there could also exist a route on the opposite bank, built by combining multiple branches, and which might lead to that city through Alpendorada (Marco de Canaveses) and Entre-os-Rios (Penafiel). However, the old maps do not indicate any significant route that followed this path.



Stone path leading to the Bridge.

138



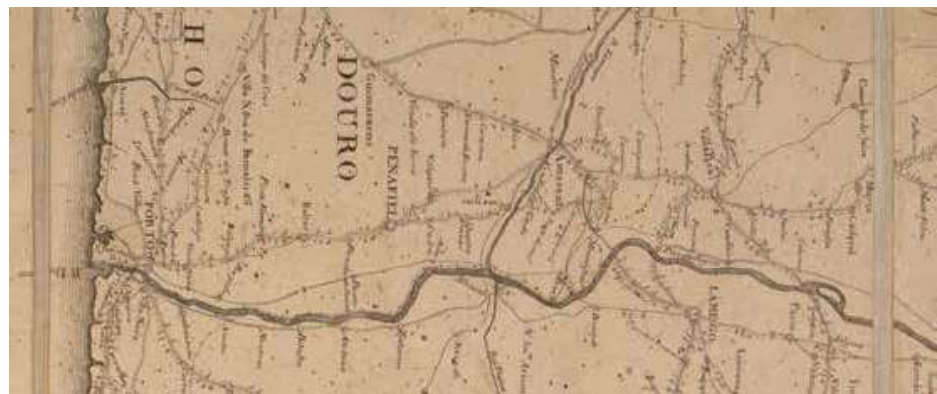
Upstream view.

¹ Or the case of the bridge of Covelas, in the neighbouring municipality of Cinfães, between the parishes of Ferreiros and Tendais, considered for several years as both Roman and Romanesque. It did not even exist in 1758, as there was a single wooden crossing over the Bestança in that same place. The Baroque medallion that surmounts the parapet, halfway across the bridge, stands as a homage to the work's mentor, a noble priest from a close village, who paid for it; it was completed in 1762.

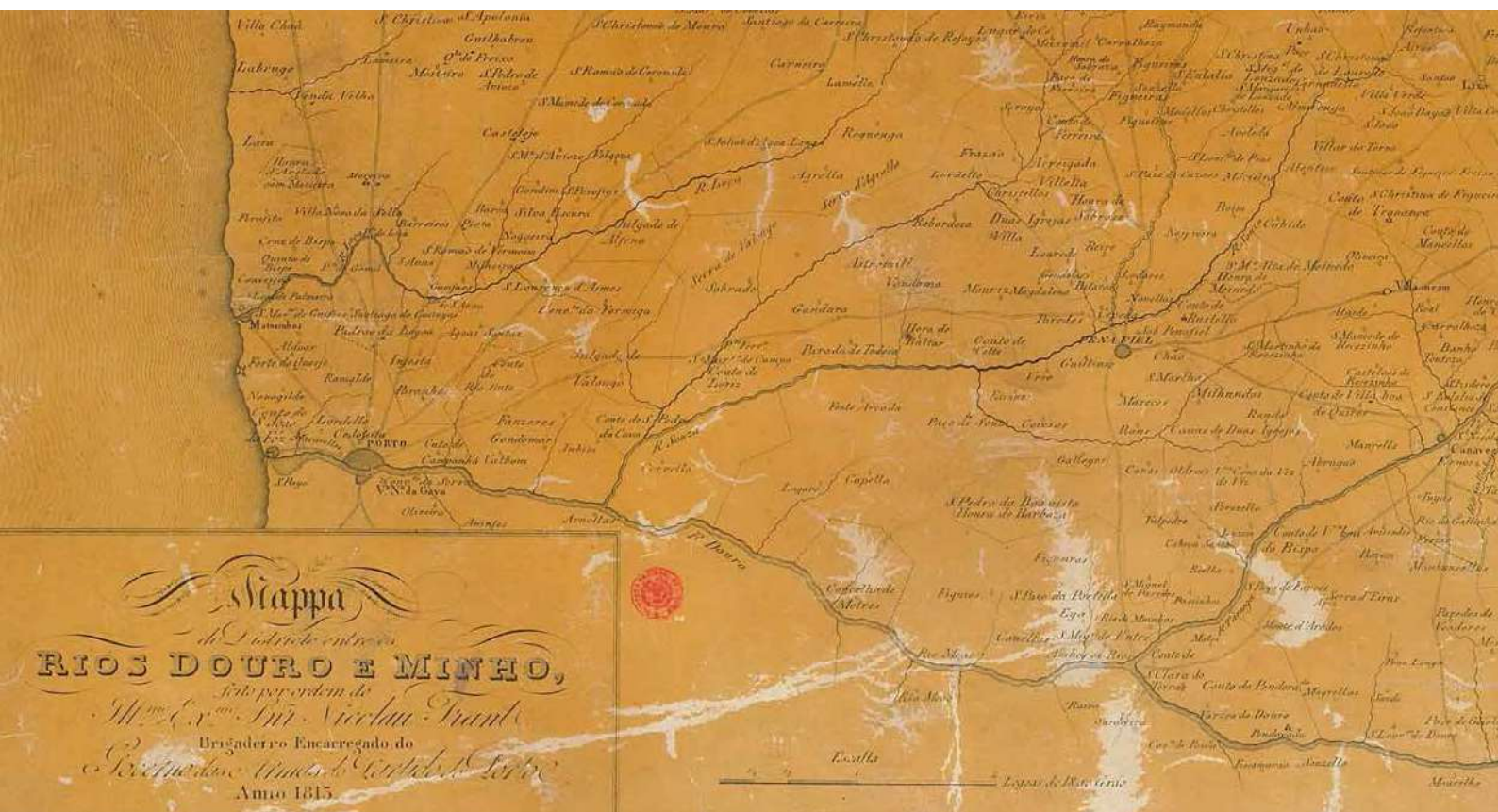
The circulation route that, since the Middle Ages, was the main axis between the coastal and inner Douro regions connected Porto to Baltar (Paredes), Penafiel, Canaveses (Marco de Canaveses), Padrão da Teixeira (Baíão) and Mesão Frio. This road, used since the 18th century to the present day as the shortest path between Régua and Porto, was the starting point for several other routes.



Provincial map of Minho (adapted from Norton, 1807). Source: National Digital Library.



Military map showing Portugal's main roads (adapted from Eça, 1808). Source: National Digital Library.



Map showing the main roads to and from Porto (adapted from Depósito dos Trabalhos Geodésicos, 1861). Source: National Digital Library.

One of them started in Canaveses, just after the grand old Medieval bridge, following an almost straight line towards the Mourilhe pier (located in Cinfães, which disappeared during the construction of the Carrapatelo dam). It passed through the villages of Rio de Galinhas, Paredes de Viadores and Paços de Gaiolo, all from Marco de Canaveses. From a set of old maps of the Portuguese territory, only two – one from 1720² and another from 1797³ – mark a road that ran parallel to the Douro river (on the north bank) connecting Mesão Frio to Entre-os-Rios. Probably, it would go through Ancede, across the “couto” [a type of Portuguese administrative division] or close to it, but given the map’s scale it is impossible to be sure that the road actually crossed the Ovil river, in Esmoriz. Besides, the tributaries of the Douro were circulation channels that were already used during the Romanization period. This makes it easier to accept the existence of structuring roads in the Baião region with a north-south direction, instead of roads that ran along Douro’s banks, an idea already shared by Mário Barroca⁴, in 1985, and

² [Regnum Hispaniae et Portugalliae] [Material cartográfico/Cartographic collection]. [Escala/Scale 1:2470000]. [ca.1720]. Nürnberg.

³ FADEN, William – [Chorographical map of the kingdom of Portugal divided into its grand provinces] [Material cartográfico/Cartographic collection]. [Escala/Scale 1:900000]. 1797. London.

⁴ The author reports the discovery of a milestone between Mesquinhata and Gove (Baião), related to the “passage of the Roman road that connected Braga to Viseu, and that Antoninus ignores in his itinerary” (Barroca, 1985: 3). This route would follow along the extensive geological fracture that crosses the Douro between Porto Manso (Baião) and Porto Antigo (Cinfães), following through the slopes of Montemuro. We are not admitting that a Roman road crossed the Douro in this area, in order to ease the mountain’s substantial altitudinal differences, but we accept the possibility of it being a connection to the path that ran parallel to the Douro or to the river itself, which is actually in line with the Antonian itinerary. Besides, in his analysis of the Medieval road system in Baião, Mário Barroca (1985: 10-11) is peremptory in tracing routes that do not include the crossing of the Bridge of Esmoriz. We transcribe the words of Luís Miguel Duarte and Amândio Barros (1997: 77-118), when they describe the Douro as a catalyst for regional economy: “countless paths and roads, ending or starting in different riverside points, were used by merchants, muleteers or carters, who were the main suppliers of the inland areas”.

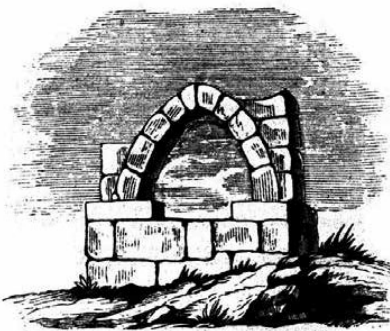
by Arlindo de Magalhães and Maria Manuela Alves, in 1991, who tried to trace the Jacobean pilgrimage paths within the municipality of Baião (Magalhães & Alves, 1991: 53-61).

We should now focus us on the main interested party in the existence and maintenance of short and long distance roads, given their simultaneously religious⁵ and economic nature (they were used in processions, inspections, etc.): the Monastery of Saint Andrew of Ancede. In 1758, priest João Pinto de Almeida mentions it while referring one of the stone bridges, which he located specifically on the path of the road that connected the Monastery to Pala; this was surely an ancient and important route, because on the side of the road stood one of the six memorials ever known in Portugal: the one of Lordelo (Baião)⁶.

The hamlet of Pala, located on the right bank of the Douro and currently almost entirely submerged as a result of the filling of the Carrapatelo dam, built downstream, was one of the most active berths along the Douro in the period before the construction of the dam. It was so important that it often appears indicated in maps from the 16th-17th centuries: “A Pala” or “A Pelo”⁷. So, what would be most convenient to the monks of Ancede: walking along miles of slopes, through ruined and unsafe paths to get to Porto? Or using the fastest means of transport along the shortest route, which was the Douro river? Despite the risk of the river journey, we believe that the Douro would seem the best choice. Hence the reference to the “road to Pala”, through which a significant part of the Monastery businesses surely circulated – both spiritual and economic businesses, obviously. This interest in navigation is not merely a conjecture, since the Monastery had special rights related to the Douro, of which it took advantage in order to distribute its wine (Barros, 1998:49-87).

In fact, it is in an important document produced in the Monastery of Ancede that we get the first clue for dating the Bridge of Esmoriz. It is an inventory that began being drawn up in 1400 and was intended to record and manage a “set of properties that was built over the 14th century, as a result of donations, purchases and barter” (Barros, 2003: 217-308). In this document there are very few references to the local road structure, but none of them suggests that the Bridge of Esmoriz had already been built at the time. There is information about a farmhouse close to the Bridge, across the parish of São Tomé de Covelas and to the bridge of Teixeira. On the left bank of the Douro, opposite to the “couto”, where the monks of Ancede had several assets, there are constant references to paths, roads and routes heading to Anrede, Miomães (Resende) or Cinfães. However, when the source describes or mentions the properties within the sphere of Esmoriz and Penalva, it doesn’t refer any crossing. However, we should highlight an interesting note: when it comes to the limits and boundaries of the windrow with vineyards and trellis from Fernão Gomes’s house, it is said that they began, on one side, “with the cattle route that starts in Esmoriz” (Barros, 2003: 293). This is a relevant information that seems to indicate the existence of a circulation channel for cattle, which headed from the stables to the pasturelands. We have no idea if this “cattle route” determined the construction of a

141



Reproduction of an engraving of the Memorial of Lordelo (Baião) (adapted from Sotto Mayor, 1857). Source: *Arquivo pittoresco*.

⁵ About the relationship between the inquiries and the roads, please read Osswald (1999: 157-173).

⁶ The Memorials of Alpendorada (Marco de Canaveses), Sobrado (Castelo de Paiva), Santo António (Arouca), Ermida (Penafiel), Mondim da Beira (Tarouca) and Odivelas are fully or partially intact. The one of Lordelo, despite its classification (DECREE no. 163. O.G. [Official Gazette] 136 (1910-06-23)), was destroyed and its status was recently annulled (STATEMENT no. 100. O.G. [Official Gazette] *Series II*. 105 (2012-05-30) 19436).

⁷ Designation given in a map by Albermaz (1662).



View of the river Douro close to Pala and Porto Manso (Baião), which belonged to the old "coto" of Ancede.

bridge after 1400. However, we speculate that on the threshold of the 15th century the Bridge of Esmoriz still hadn't been built.

142

On the other hand, we may consider the possibility that this crossing, set up between two manor houses (Esmoriz and Penalva) was built within the vicinity and influence sphere of the local nobility. Given its location, we may even admit the intervention of one of their lords in the construction and maintenance of the Bridge and its access path, for a convenient and quick access to his possessions.

In fact, the first documentary reference we found dates back to 1666 and establishes a connection between the crossing and the Penalva domains. On September 15th of that year, the Monastery of Ancede reported to António de Azeredo on the site, which includes the "properties under the orchard, beginning on the eastern side of the same orchard and with the olive grove of Manuel



Hamlet of "A Pelo" in a 17th-century map (adapted from Teixeira, 1662). Source: Digital Library of the Real Academia de la Historia, Spain.



Fernandes and Gonçalo Rodrigues, from the same place, and along the back with the road that goes from Minhozo and stone bridge to the monastery (...)”, which we believe is the Bridge of Esmoriz⁸. So, for now, we have the definition of a chronological arc that allows us to delimit a construction period for the Bridge of Esmoriz: around 1400 – around 1666.

143

There are several known examples in the neighbouring region of Montemuro, to the south of the Douro, of the construction or reconstruction of bridges funded by individuals from the local nobility, sometimes connected to municipal governances or religious institutions. After the Romanization and the Middle Ages, combining its pious nature with personal and family conveniences, the Bridge regained the political and economic significance it once had, but on a smaller scale, working as a parish or municipal space. [NR]

Being now part of the Route of the Romanesque, an intervention for the conservation, protection and enhancement of the Bridge of Esmoriz began in September 2014. The works include the structural reinforcement, improvements in the vestments, floors and guards, and the enhancement of the accesses to the Bridge and the cleaning of the banks of the river Ovil (Monte, 2012). [RR]



House of Penalva (Baião).



House of Esmoriz (Baião).

⁸ ADP, Notariais, Baião, 1.º Ofício, Livro 1, fl. 129, 129 v.º.

CHRONOLOGY

1258: reference to Lourenço Ermiges of Esmoriz who is a witness in the inquiry involving the "couto" of Ancede;

Around 1400: in the inventory of the Monastery of Ancede there is no reference to the Bridge of Esmoriz;

1666: there is a reference to the stone bridge over the Ovil river on the road to Minhoso and to the Monastery;

1758: three stone bridges are located in Ancede, among them the one of Esmoriz;

2010: integration of the Bridge of Esmoriz in the Route of the Romanesque;

2014-2015: intervention for the conservation and protection of the Bridge of Esmoriz, under the scope of the Route of the Romanesque.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES

[*Regnorum Hispaniae et Portugalliae*] [Material cartográfico/Cartographic collection]. [Escala/Scale 1:2470000]. [ca.1720]. Nürnberg.

ALMEIDA, João Pinto de – [Memória paroquial de] Ancede [Manuscript]. 1758. Available at the ANTT, Lisboa. Vol. 4, n.º 22.

ARQUIVO DISTRITAL DO PORTO (ADP) – Notariais, Baião, 1.º ofício, livro 1, fl. 129, 129 v.º.

BARROCA, Mário – Notas sobre a ocupação medieval em Baião. *Arqueologia*. N.º 10 (1985).

BARROS, Amândio Jorge Morais – Por ser de sua lavra e cutelo: questões entre o Porto e o mosteiro de Ancede relativas à venda de vinhos na Idade Média. *Douro - Estudos & Documentos*. Vol. 3, n.º 5 (1998) 49-87.

_____ – Tombo do mosteiro de Ancede [séc. XIV]. *Douro - Estudos & Documentos*. N.º 16 (2003) 217-308.

DECREE no. 163. O.G. [Official Gazette] 136 (1910-06-23).

DUARTE, Luís Miguel; BARROS, Amândio Jorge Morais – Corações aflitos: navegação e travessia do Douro na Idade Média e no início da Idade Moderna. *Douro - Estudos & Documentos*. Vol. 2, n.º 4 (1997) 77-118.

ÊÇA, Lourenço Homem da Cunha de – [*Carta militar das principaes estradas de Portugal*] [Material cartográfico/Cartographic collection]. [Escala/Scale 1:470000]. 1808. Lisboa. Available at [www: <URL: http://purl.pt/6302/3/>](http://purl.pt/6302/3/).

FADEN, William – [*Chorographical map of the kingdom of Portugal divided into its grand provinces*] [Material cartográfico/Cartographic collection]. [Escala/Scale 1:900000]. 1797. London.

MAGALHÃES, Arlindo de; ALVES, Maria Manuela Neves – De peregrinação a Compostela por terras de Baião. *Bayam*. N.º 2 (1991) 53-61.

MONTE, Hugo – *Ponte de Esmoriz, Porto, Baião, Ancede: projecto de arquitetura*. Vila do Conde: Hugo Monte, 2012. Photocopied text.

NORTON, Thomas – [*Carta da provincia do Minho para intelligencia das operações da defeza projectadas em 1807*] [Material cartográfico/Cartographic collection]. 1807. Available at [www: <URL: http://purl.pt/13950/3/>](http://purl.pt/13950/3/).

OSSWALD, Helena – Os caminhos das visitas pastorais na comarca da Maia na Época Moderna. In BARROCA, Mário – *Carlos Alberto Ferreira de Almeida: in memoriam*. Porto: Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto, 1999. Vol. 2.

PORTUGAL. Depósito dos Trabalhos Geodésicos. *Mappa do distrito entre os rios Douro e Minho* [Material cartográfico/Cartographic collection]. [Escala/Scale ca 1:193000]. Lisboa: Depósito dos Trabalhos Geodésicos, 1861. Available at [www: <URL: http://purl.pt/22844/2/>](http://purl.pt/22844/2/).

SOTTO MAYOR, Miguel – [*Memorial de Lordelo*] [Material fotográfico/Photographic collection]. In *Archivo pittoresco: semanario ilustrado*. Vol. I., p. 168. Lisboa: Typographia de Castro & Irmão, 1857-1868.

STATEMENT no. 100. O.G. [Official Gazette] *Series II*. 105 (2012-05-30) 19436.