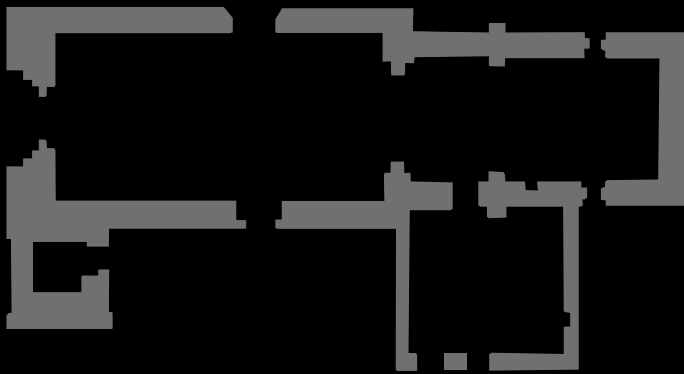


**CHURCH**  
**OF SAINT**  
**MARY**  
**OF BARRÔ**  
RESENDE

CHURCH  
OF SAINT  
MARY  
OF BARRÔ  
RESENDE



Plan.

## THE MONUMENT DURING THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD



Monastery of Paço de Sousa (Penafiel).  
Church. Nave. Sarcophagus of Egas Moniz.

Generally speaking, historical information regarding Romanesque architecture in Portugal is very scarce. On the sidelines of major international Romanesque buildings of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries, one of the major problems faced by the researcher upon beginning its study of a Romanesque church within a rural area is the lack of documentation about its construction (Huerta Huerta, 2004: 29). Regarding the Portuguese case, with the exception of the much quoted report of the so-called *Livro Preto* [Black Book] of the old Coimbra cathedral, related to the works undertaken in this cathedral in the period of Miguel Salomão (1162-1176), there are little or no documents that may provide information about the construction of any Portuguese Romanesque building.

Although we know that the foundation of the Church of Barrô dates back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century as a private church of Egas Moniz, the governor and schoolmaster of the first king of Portugal (c. 1080-1146), that came to his hands by royal donation, we still do not know when it was built/changed or if it was a result of a continuous worship practised in an pre-existing temple. As it is commonly known, Egas Moniz was the “lieutenant” of São Martinho de Mouros (Resende), at least, between 1106 and 1111, and the governor of the Lamego region between 1113-1117 and maybe even until a later date (Serrão, 1984: 334-335). Having managed to assert himself politically in a kingdom under construction, Egas Moniz from Ribadouro offered plentiful donations to religious institutions, from which we highlight the Monastery of Paço de Sousa, in Penafiel, where he had himself buried.

Therefore, it is within this context that we should understand the donation of the patronage of the Church of Barrô made by Sancha Vermudes – Egas Moniz’s daughter-in-law – to the Order of Hospitallers in 1208, according to the general inquiries of king Afonso III (k. 1248-1279), which were carried out in the municipality and “julgado” [a type of Portuguese administrative division] of São Martinho de Mouros in 1258: when he was questioned, Egas Moniz explained to the inquirers that the Church of Saint Mary of Barriolo belonged to the Hospitaller Friars who were using the Church. And when he was asked about the origin of such patronage, he answered that it had been a donation from Sancha Vermudes. And many other people said similar things (Herculano, 1936: 1000).

On the other hand, according to a different testimony by Pedro Gonçalves, the “villa of Barriolo” belonged entirely to the Monastery of Paço de Sousa. Therefore, in other words, there were many conflicting interests within this area (Church and territorial), although they all had a common link to the heritage of the Gascois lineage, to which Egas Moniz – also known as the schoolmaster and governor – belonged.

The inquiries (from the Latin *inquisitiones*) were large-scale surveys about the status of royal property rights, which were ordered by the central government and carried out in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. Being part of a series of actions aimed at strengthening royal power and promoting an administrative centralization that characterized the last few centuries of the Middle Ages, they also ended up being a registry – though a very rough one – of the Kingdom’s demo-



Monastery of Paço de Sousa (Penafiel).  
West façade.

graphic data and general revenues. While the inquiries of 1220, commissioned by king Afonso II (1211-1223), focused on the diocese of Braga, the ones commissioned by king Afonso III encompassed a broader territory (Entre-Douro-e-Minho, Trás-os-Montes and Beira Alta), and were followed throughout the entire Kingdom by several private inquiries to royal properties, terms, municipalities and “*juílgados*” (Herculano, 1936: 329). Therefore, given the lack of documentation regarding the Portuguese Middle Ages and, more specifically, related to the history of the buildings that remained from that period, these inquiries are one of the most significant sources that allow us to study them and obtain knowledge about their condition. Thus, based on this source – the oldest one we are found concerning the Church of Barrô –, we know that, in the first place, the Church was a patronage of the lineage of Egas Moniz and, therefore, linked to Paço de Sousa. It was then passed on to the Hospitaller Order, which represented it and turned it into one of its richest commendations (Costa, 1979: 339)<sup>1</sup>.

The Hospitaller Order of Saint John, founded in Jerusalem (Israel), in 1048, by Italian merchants as a hospital to shelter pilgrims, added military functions to its charitable actions in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century (Fonseca, 2000: 334-338). Established in the Portuguese territory between 1122 and 1128, the Hospitaller Order had its first headquarters in the castle of Belver (Gavião). Owning a vast heritage located to the north of the Douro, in areas close to river Tagus and along the banks of the Guadiana, the Hospitallers, like any other military order, were divided into small units – “the commendations” –, ahead of which there were commanders appointed by the master, the dignitary who heads the hierarchy of these *miles Christi*.

Parishes, as well as simple chapels and monasteries, could be founded and equipped by private patrons. These patrons or protectors – from the Latin *patronariū*, from *patrōnu* – were then entitled to a series of privileges, which were associated with certain obligations, granted by the Church. One of their rights was to present the clergymen who would be in charge of the religious services to the bishop (although there was a tendency to turn this right of presentation into a right of appointment, hence the natural occurrence of abuses of power). They also enjoyed certain honorary privileges, besides keeping part of the benefit’s rents for their own use. Patronages were passed on by inheritance as any other property, from one individual to another, both ecclesiastical and lay, but also among other entities.

From the Medieval Period, apart from its change in status from a private Church to a patronage of the commendation of the Hospitaller Order (that after 1530 became known as Order “of Malta”), we weren’t able to find much documentary information, since the Hospitallers’ general archive, which was located in the convent of Flor da Rosa (Crato), was totally destroyed by the Spanish in 1662 (Serrão, 1984: 225-226). In the district archive of Viseu, although under the name of convent of Barrô, there is a significant collection of documents containing details on lease payments, which only allow us to look into the economic context of this commendation during a relatively late period<sup>2</sup>.



West façade.

<sup>1</sup> It still persists in the local memory of the institution that once oversaw this place: the toponym “Quinta da Comenda”, a place where commanders, officers responsible for receiving the tithes of the parish and the income of the commendation rested; they also acted as inspectors on behalf of the Hospitallers.

<sup>2</sup> ADV – Monásticos. *Convento* [sic] *de Barrô*. The limiting dates of the documentation are 1555 and 1825.



Aerial view.

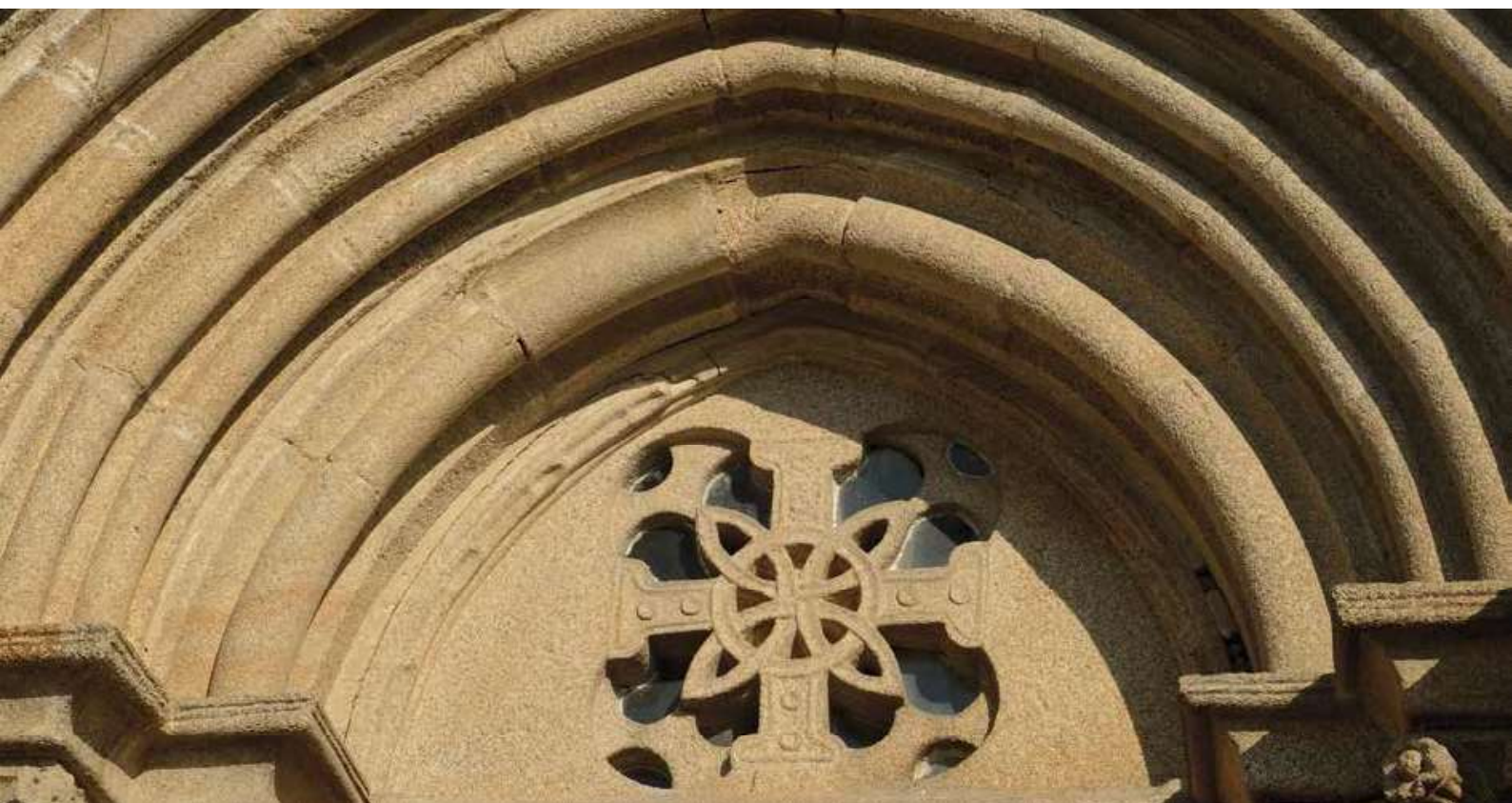


West façade. Large window. Rosette.

Although these sparse historical data inform us about the existence of a church in Barrô still during the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the fact is that the remaining Medieval traces suggest a much later chronology, which we may probably place in the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. This fact leads us to assume the existence of an earlier temple. We should not forget the long chronology that is associated with the Portuguese Romanesque. Although the first traces date back to the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the truth is that this style, or *modus aedificandi*, lasted for a long time within our territory, particularly in the North and in Beira Alta regions.

The Church, comprising a single nave and a rectangular chancel, is located on a plot of land facing the Douro river, on a steep slope; therefore, the main façade is located at a lower ground level than the one of the chancel; this issue is internally compensated by the two steps that allow accessing the apse through the nave. It is on the outside that we are able to identify, in a more assertive way, the elements that allow us to state that this Church was built during a late Portuguese Romanesque Period; it already features some components that would later characterise what has come to be called as the “first rural Gothic style”. Thus, we believe that we are standing before an eloquent example of the “transition” between a high Romanesque style and an erudite Gothic style, despite the problems that this merely operative designation may entail. We should not forget that this Church was, first of all, associated with the lineage of the governor and schoolmaster of the first king of Portugal and then with the Hospitallers, which fully justifies the construction of a somewhat pompous building featuring significant influences both in terms of proportions and in terms of the composition of its decorative elements.

The main façade stands out immediately; it is organised according to four registers delimited by three frames placed in the continuity of the imposts found on the main portal, on the large



West façade. Portal. Tympanum.

upper window, and one that is part of the window's base. Adopting a very uncommon structure in the region, the façade is composed also by two overlapping openings – the portal and the already proto-Gothic rosette, formed by circles – in a composition that immediately refers us to a formal proximity with the old Coimbra cathedral. Several authors have drawn attention to this familiarity that, so far, we can only explain considering the fact that there were artists circulating across Portugal during the Romanesque Period, of whom master Soeiro (Anes) is a great example<sup>3</sup>. However, we believe that the explanation behind such proximity is related to Porto, considering the formal connection that existed between the Romanesque façade of its cathedral and its counterpart from Coimbra. We should not forget the rather geographically close example of Cabeça Santa (Penafiel), which has come to be regarded by history as a reproduction of the church of Saint Martin of Cedofeita, located in Porto<sup>4</sup>.

In fact, the similarities between Coimbra and Porto are related to the type of carving works and vegetal decorations of the capitals of the Porto cathedral's nave and to the general composition of the façade, since both show two large openings framed by a protruding volume. However, while in the old Coimbra cathedral the main portal is surmounted by a very large window whose structure is very similar to a portal, in the Porto cathedral this same large window frames a rosette that is already proto-Gothic, reflecting the lengthiness of its construction<sup>5</sup>. In Barrô, rather than the existence of a protruding volume in the middle of the façade, we have a gable that, by being placed at the centre, not only emphasizes the verticality created by the portal and by the rosette framed by a large window, but it also creates the false impression that we are standing before a Church with three naves. While the archivolt in the upper level are perfectly

<sup>3</sup> Mentioned in the *Livro Preto* [Black Book] of the Coimbra cathedral as one of the architects who had worked in its construction at the time of Bishop Miguel Salomão, we see his name reappearing years later, for having received a reward through the will of the Bishop of Porto, Fernando Martens (1174-1185), in 1184. Please read what we wrote about the subject in Botelho (2010: 405-431).

<sup>4</sup> About the subject, please read Botelho (2010: 457).

<sup>5</sup> On the issues surrounding the arrangement of the primitive façade of the Porto cathedral, please read Botelho (2006: 90-95).

round, in the lower level they are already broken. Both in the large window and in the portal, the archivolt is composed of a modénature with alternating tori and scotias.

The sculpture on the portal's capitals, with vegetal and floral themes, already announces a new aesthetics – the Gothic one – because its motifs, being already quite naturalistic, are closely bound to the basket. The slender columns that support them also bring us closer to this new moment in the history of art in the Middle Ages. Although the layout of the façade tells us about the persistence of the Romanesque formulas, some of its compositional elements are clear testimonies of the introduction of new aesthetic models.

The main portal's tympanum, considered by Vergílio Correia as “the best specimen of its kind among coeval northern churches” (Correia, 1924: 68), shows an elaborate multi-shaped hollow cross, richly decorated and remarkably carved. We should also notice the three curious corbels that frame the portal, in which there are carved human faces that are rather hard to date.

The north and south lateral portals confirm the presence of the first rural Gothic style aesthetics. Both portals are carved into the thickness of the walls in which they were opened and feature a flat tympanum resting on corbels. The north portal, which is more elaborate, comprises two archivolts surrounded by an external chequered arch, which also justifies the fact that it was sheltered by a porch-like structure, as suggested by the corbels that still currently exist in the middle of the façade. On both elevations there are narrow crevices that, for being wider on their internal side, are characteristic of this type of constructions.

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North façade. Nave. Portal.



South façade. Nave. Portal.





North façade. Chancel. Corbels.



South façade. Nave. Corbel.



North façade. Nave. Corbel.



General interior view from the nave.

on a shapeless thing, and several drawings” (Correia, 1924: 70). On the opposite side, besides corbels that are essentially plain or ornamented with simple geometric frames, we see an owl. In Lúcia Rosas’s opinion (2008: 361), the way in which the sculptures are placed in the corbels and their geometric shape are important elements to date Romanesque churches. According to this author, the oldest specimens are usually rectangular, showing sculptures that are very well adapted to this shape. However, as the Romanesque construction evolves over time, the constant repetition of models shows a tendency to move away from this initial scheme, which is more erudite and more compliant with the original and widespread Romanesque style. Therefore, in later Romanesque churches and in the specimens from the Gothic period where solutions from the Romanesque Period are still used, the corbels are usually square showing a much more limited variety of themes and a sculptural adaptation that is not so well done.

Granite prevails inside the Church and the dimensions of the nave and chancel, particularly in terms of height, already announce the Gothic style. That fact is confirmed by the wide opening of the triumphal arch that, despite the aesthetic of its capitals, which is still very Romanesque, is already telling us about a different kind of liturgy. The intimate Romanesque chevets – lower and narrower than the nave, creating suitable spaces for retreat – are succeeded by the large and bright Gothic chevets – open to the devotees.

Being slightly broken, the triumphal arch comprises two archivolt and is externally surrounded by an arch which combines three motifs carved in relief. Outside there is a torus, the intertwined motifs identified by Joaquim de Vasconcelos in his catalogue of the most common decorative motifs in the Portuguese Romanesque style<sup>6</sup> with the no. 5 – placed in the middle – and, finally, on the inner register, a scotia punctuated by pearls.

<sup>6</sup> The author defends this motif as “Reciprocal ellipses in double, centrist movement; rope” (Vasconcelos & Abreu, 1918: 70).



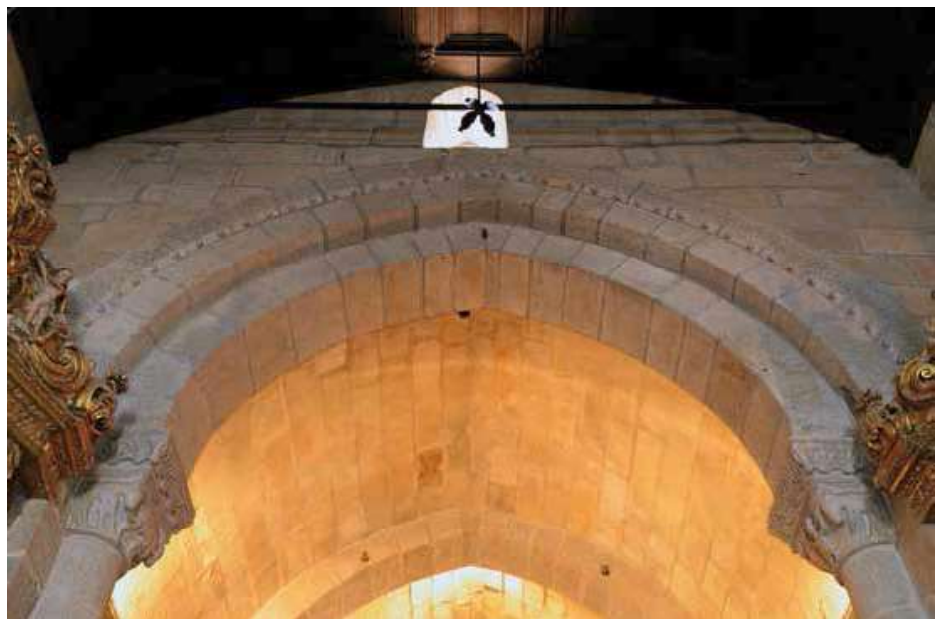
182 Triumphal arch. Capital of the Gospel side.



Triumphal arch. Capital of the Epistle side.

With a narrative nature, the capital found on the Epistle side shows us a hunting scene; its central figure is a man who, in addition to playing a hunting horn, is holding a spear in his right hand. The hunting horn was commonly used to communicate messages in times of danger (Sousa, 2005). On the right side there is a quadruped (perhaps bovine) and on the opposite side there is a character who seems to be armed with a sort of shield in the right hand and a club in the left hand. The topic of hunting, as an allegory of the struggle against evil, is also depicted on the opposite capital, where a boar is being grabbed by its paw and ear by two quadrupeds, perhaps two dogs.

The chancel is composed of three vaulted bays, defined by two transversal arches resting on columns adorsed to the wall. However, only the capitals on the central arch are ornamented, while the ones on the last arch are plain, something which may certainly be explained due to the fact that this final bay is the result of an expansion of the apse to accommodate the ostentatious and spacious Baroque main altarpiece in a more balanced way. We should notice the different size and colour of the ashlar from this final bay. So, it is in these two capitals from the chevet – decorated with bevelled vegetal motifs – that we find a great closeness to the Romanesque sculptural aesthetics of the ensemble that began developing itself in the Monastery of Paço de Sousa. Quoting Reinaldo dos Santos, the capitals of Barrô “seem to be gouge-carved, much to the style of Paço de Sousa, as if its decorative spirit, overcoming the Douro’s current, managed to reach the opposite bank...” (1970: 70). Being also linked to Coimbra, this is a traditional sculpting technique, typical of decorative wood works, which creates refined and flattish bas-reliefs. We should recall the connections between this Monastery and Church of Barrô that we’ve already mentioned above.



Triumphal arch.

Finally, we should not forget to mention the presence of numerous initials along the ash-lars that embody the Church of Barrô. A watchful eye will find a good number and variety of initials inside the chancel's vault. In a Romanesque building, the stonemason's initials or marks, as they are more commonly known, are crucial elements to the archaeological study of its architecture. These are small and usually geometric carved signs that appear on the ashlar's outer face and have been interpreted as marks related to temporary workers, that is, as a key to distinguish a job by a specific mason or group of masons (Nuño González, 2005: 95). Here we are able to identify simple crosses, as well as more complex crosses and initials. Besides indicating the progress of the building works, they may also be useful elements to identify, for example, the (quite imprecise) number of stonemasons that may have worked in a given building. Since they were paid on a daily basis, the stonemasons identified the ash-lars they had carved and assembled with marks that could range from graphic signs to letters of the alphabet. Despite the fact, that are a few more elaborate signs, which adopt figurative forms, usually we find carved signs that are easy to make (Huerta Huerta, 2004: 121-149). However, in most cases, these marks are facing the wall's intrados, although occasionally we have the chance of finding them on the outside.



Chancel. Capital.



Chancel. Initials.

## THE MONUMENT DURING THE MODERN PERIOD

**W**e may say that, after the Romanesque construction, it was during the Baroque Period that the Church of Barrô underwent the most significant transformations. After its mainly stony decoration, there was a long period in which the *horror vacui* turned the whitewashed or plain walls into scenarios made of gilded and painted wood, according to the taste of a period when men sought to choreograph divinity.

The altarpiece of Barrô's largest chapel, which fits into the Johannine Baroque [style which develops during the reign of King João V (k. 1706-1750)] taste, occupied the entire wall of the chevet and modelled its scenic grammar according to the chevet's broken arch in order to combine two styles that were four centuries apart. It is an interesting symbiosis that is not always understood, as we know.

The Medieval Saint Mary was succeeded – already during the Modern Period – by the Virgin of the Assumption, which takes central stage on the main altarpiece and exudes the same style as the woodwork's language (Azevedo, 1758). The same applies to the representation of the Virgin and Child placed on secondary corbel, on the side of the Epistle. Both the dimensions and the plastic and ornamental features of the two images lead us to consider that they were

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Chancel. Wall on the Gospel side. Plinths. Sculptural ensemble. Calvary.



manufactured during the construction of this altarpiece and were specifically designed for the places where they are still currently worshipped.

Also in the largest chapel, the eccentrically large sculptural ensemble of the Calvary stands out, comprising a crucified Christ, the Virgin and Saint John the Evangelist<sup>7</sup>. Although it was transferred here from an unknown location, this ensemble is in line with the Baroque spirit and with the decorative language shown by the main altarpiece, meaning that it was probably commissioned in the same period.

In the nave, despite its considerable size, there are only two lateral altarpieces: one is dedicated to the Virgin of Piety, while the opposite one is currently dedicated to the Virgin and Child; in 1758, the Infant Jesus and the Martyr Saint Sebastian were worshipped in this altarpiece<sup>8</sup>. From the memoir written by the vicar José Azevedo Mendes (1758) we are only able to collect schematic information about the Church's interior: three altars and a single nave, a heritage that hasn't suffered any damages caused by the Great Earthquake, except for the cross of the Church belfry that was "somewhat tilted to the West". By then, the patron was Fernando Luís de Azevedo, surely the commander from the Order of Malta who was responsible for presenting the vicar.



Nave. Collateral altarpiece on the Gospel side.



Nave. Collateral altarpiece on the Epistle side.

<sup>7</sup> Part of this ensemble (images of the Virgin and Saint John the Evangelist) integrated the *Exhibition of sacred art of the archpriestship of Resende*, held in 1976 following the Centenary Celebrations of the Diocese of Lamego. The images of the Virgin of Mercy and a gilded silver monstrance dated back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century were taken from Barrô to the same exhibition (*Exposição de arte sacra do arcepresbiterado de Resende*. Lamego: [Gráfica de Lamego], 1976. Pieces no. 9, 28, 29 e 47).

<sup>8</sup> In the photograph published in the monograph of Resende, in 1982, the altar on the Gospel side still seems to include the image of Saint Anne and the one, on the Epistle side, seems to include other minor sculptures and the Sacred Heart of Jesus (Pinto, 1982: 341).



Although nothing remains from the commendation's parish registry, it was through its central archives, in Malta, that we were able to find out more about the Church's interior during the third quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In November 1771, Friar Manuel Guedes de Magalhães, a "visitador" [inspector], went to Barrô together with a few other officers, in order to assess the spiritual and temporal conditions of the commendation of Barrô. He began with the usual survey to the residents, who soon reported several cases of promiscuity, solicitation and concubinage. Once the involved had been admonished, the inspector moved on to some more earthly matters, including the Church, which the clerk described extensively.

Heading from east to west, the Church of Barrô, "which is completely made of stone", had a volume with a length of thirteen "varas" [old unit for measuring length. 1 "vara" is equivalent to 1.1 meters] and a width of six. According to the descriptor, the main door was "Gothic" and, above it, there was an oculus showing the same style. The frontispiece was surmounted by a belfry with two bells. Inside this dim temple, "due to the thickness of the walls", there was at the entrance, and on the left side, the font and, on the right side, the wooden bowl of holy water, with its lathed bars. It was "lined with chestnut wood and poorly tiled", mistakes which the visitors pointed out in their warnings to the parish priest and other officers of the people.

Along the nave there were three altars with their corresponding altarpieces: the first altar, located on the south wall, sheltered the monumental crucifix which is currently placed in the chancel. It had been commissioned by the confraternity of the Souls. The second and third altars were leaning against the chancel arch, with "their gilded wood and painted altarpieces". The one on the Gospel side, dedicated to Saint Anne, featured two images of this matron, an iconic one and a dressed one; on the opposite side, the Epistle side, the altar was dedicated to Saint Sebastian and, besides this image, it also featured a God Child; both images were iconic. Each of the altars was looked after by its corresponding confraternity, which would maintain the brass lamps always supplied. The role of the confraternities was essential for maintaining the Church's space. In 1771 there are references to five confraternities; in addition to the aforementioned ones, there were also the confraternities of the Lord, of Our Lady of the Rosary and of the God Child.

The extension of the "vaulted" chancel, for which the Commendation had also contributed, had been commissioned by the People. It was poorly paved with stone and featured only two glazed crevices. However, regarding the altarpiece, its size did not go unnoticed nor, as we've already mentioned, its use of the back wall: "its altarpiece fills the entire back wall of the Chapel with a tribune, throne and tabernacle, all gilded and painted with its wooden front also in gold". Two images of the Virgin were worshipped in the altarpiece: an iconic image of the patron saint and a dressed one.

The sacristy, adjoining the chancel's south wall, was large and featured a sink, an access door to the churchyard and a house that the brotherhood of Souls commissioned and could be used, according to the visitor, as a Building Commission house.

The list of ornaments is extensive and divided into objects that were commonly in the Church and objects used in the altars, which were under the responsibility of the corresponding confraternities.

The inspection could not end without a careful analysis of other aspects of the current management of the commendation's assets, such as the prelate's house, the residence and commendation's houses, barns and cellars, precepts or rights relating to water, income, and, finally, chapels or



Panoramic view of the Douro valley in Barrô.

hermitages scattered across the parish<sup>9</sup>. The inspector put special emphasis on the state of registry about which he wrote a few pages describing books from previous inspections, as well as property, rights and demands record archives. Indeed, much like any other institution from the Ancien Régime, the commendation of Barrô managed several claims associated with the many assets it owned. In general, the books found in the archive were in a poor state of repair, so the parish priest was admonished to renovate the space where this collection of documents was stored and to do everything in his power to preserve such delicate and valuable heritage.

Joaquim de Azevedo, in his work *Historia ecclesiastica da cidade e bispado de Lamego*, written in the first years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and enlarged in 1877, refers that in this Church there was the worshipping of “relics, to which miracles are ascribed, without knowledge of the saint(s) they may belong to; these would mainly protect against mad dog bites” (Azevedo, 1877: 330). He adds that there were six brotherhoods based in this Church: the brotherhoods of the Holy Rosary, of the God Child, of Saint Sebastian, of Saint Anne, of the Souls and of the Poor Clerics, although there are many associations that do not have a specific altar or chapel dedicated to the worship of the invocations that named them.

Being a parish with a smaller area – if compared with the neighbouring parish of São Martinho de Mouros (where the seat of the municipality to which it belonged was located) –, it had a population of 1327 inhabitants in 1758, distributed by 429 dwellings scattered among places and farms, in a mountainous area with brooks. Here, on the banks of the Douro river, people believed that there were traces of a bridge commissioned by one of the royal Mafaldas. This tradition (duly grounded, as we know) is echoed by the vicar José Mendes de Azevedo, when he refers traces of pillars on both banks, namely on the opposite parish of Barqueiros (Mesão Frio)<sup>10</sup>.

9 BIBLIOTECA NACIONAL DE MALTA – *Arquivos da ordem de São João, secção XVI, parte 18, Priorado de Portugal, vizita geral da comenda de Sernacelhe e comenda de Barro*, 1771, fls. 230 v.º – 232. The descriptions of other assets and rights of commendation extend to folio 269 v.º.

10 And, even before him, at the turn of 1512 to 1513, the chronicler Rui Fernandes from Lamego had provided extensive information about the planned bridge (Fernandes, 1926: 546-613). On this crossing, please refer to what we have written in *Bridge of Veiga*, Lousada.

The parish Church was not the only religious centre in Barrô because, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (in 1693) a group of nuns who took the Franciscan habit settled in the area; after this group had been extinct (in 1780) and the resisting nuns had been incorporated in the convent of Wounds, in Lamego, this became an important teaching centre during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. It was the convent of Jesus Mary Joseph, referred to as “Claras urbanas” in 1758<sup>11</sup>.

## CONTEMPORARY INTERVENTIONS

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, more precisely in 1890, the bell tower adjoining the main façade’s south side was rebuilt at the expense of a person connected to the family of the “Casa do Torgal” [House of Torgal] who had been born in the parish and then emigrated to Brazil, thus replacing an older belfry whose top cross, as mentioned in 1758, had been shaken due to the Great Earthquake (Duarte, 1994: 113-114). With a square plan, it is divided into three registers. It is surmounted by pinnacles on the angles and by a spherical spire that supports the vane placed in the middle of the roof; the upper register shows round-arched windows that shelter bronze bells on all its sides.

In 1922, the Church of Barrô was classified as a National Monument<sup>12</sup>. Although there is information stating that part of the belfry was rebuilt due to its state of disrepair (Antunes, 2006) in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the most significant conservation interventions occurred from mid-20<sup>th</sup> century onwards. In fact, the appeal of Father António Pinto Cardoso Júnior to have repair works in Barrô dates back to the end of 1949<sup>13</sup>. The roof was in a “ruinous” state, and it rained “heavily” inside the Church, “causing serious damages to its richly carved altars, to the conservation of several implements and even to the celebration of religious acts”. A sum was then spent on the completion of the most urgent repairs<sup>14</sup>.

From the 1960s onwards, we notice a greater awareness amongst the competent authorities towards this building. In a memoir from March 16<sup>th</sup> 1965<sup>15</sup>, regarding the “Reconstruction of the roofs and the consolidation of the nave’s coffered ceiling” it is explained that “for being far from the urban centres, the Church of Barrô has not been feeling the beneficial whiff of any repair works”.

In one of the memoirs associated with these interventions it is explained that this building is quite exposed to the weather “given the fact that it is located on the left bank of the river Douro, leading the Church’s roof to suffer its consequences, which cause the shifting of roof tiles”<sup>16</sup>.

Thus, besides the regular repairs of ceilings and roofs, repeatedly identified throughout the



South façade. Bell tower.

11 Here died, with a reputation for holiness, Mariana da Madre de Deus. In this regard, please see Nossa Senhora (1930).

12 DECREE no. 8175. O.G. [Official Gazette] *Series I*. 110 (22-06-02).

13 PAZ, Henrique – Cópia da missiva do pároco de Barrô [dirigida ao Governo Civil do Distrito de Viseu], 26 de novembro de 1949. SIPA.TXT.01667358. PT DGEMN:DSARH-010/220-0001 [Online]. Available at [www: <URL: http://www.monumentos.pt>](http://www.monumentos.pt) [N.º IPA PT011813020003].

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15 Memória de 16 de março de 1965 [SIPA.TXT.01667408 e SIPA.TXT.01667407]. Idem.

16 Memória de 1 de maio de 1959 [SIPA.TXT.01667376]. Idem.

second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and various repair works associated with the woodworks and eaves, it is worth highlighting - due to the impact it had on the building's legibility - the demolition of the Church's body, consisting of two floors, which was adjoined to the south façade, on the angle created between it and the sacristy. The documentation identifies it as the "Sala das Almas" [Hall of Souls]<sup>17</sup>. Its demolition was already deemed urgent in 1955: "the rain enters from there into the whole Church in such abundance that it becomes completely flooded, causing huge damages to the altars, the vestments and even to a few images", as explained by Father António Cardoso Pinto Júnior. Since this was a construction from a "relatively recent period" that "was damaging" the ensemble and was partly obstructing the façade's lateral door it was decided to proceed with its demolition<sup>18</sup>. However, as far as we could ascertain, this intervention was only carried out in 1966, surely with the deliberate intention of freeing the Medieval Church's volume from an element that was obstructing its legibility.

Within the context of the preservation of the image of Saint Mary of Barrô we should also highlight the intervention carried out in 1993 in the building's immediate surroundings, which allowed connecting the Church to the cemetery in a more coherent and unified way. At that time, and at the parish priest's own initiative, the bandstand was built. In 2010 the Church of Barrô became part of the Route of the Romanesque. [MLB / NR]



South façade. "Sala das Almas" [Hall of Souls] in 1955. Source: IHRU archive.



South façade. "Sala das Almas" [Hall of Souls] in 1955. Source: IHRU archive.

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## CHRONOLOGY

- 1208: Sancha Vermudes donates the patronage of the Church of Barrô to the Hospitallers;
- 1258: Pedro Gonçalves mentions that the "villa" of Barrô had been donated by Egas Moniz to the Monastery of Paço de Sousa;
- 13<sup>th</sup> century (1<sup>st</sup> half): construction of the Church of Barrô;
- 1771, November: inspection to the Commendation of Barrô carried out by inspector Friar Manuel Guedes de Magalhães;
- 1890: construction of Barrô's bell tower;
- 1922: listing of the Church of Barrô as a National Monument;
- 20<sup>th</sup> century (2<sup>nd</sup> half): main restoration interventions in the Church and its surroundings;
- 2010: integration of the Church of Barrô in the Route of the Romanesque.

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