

TOWER

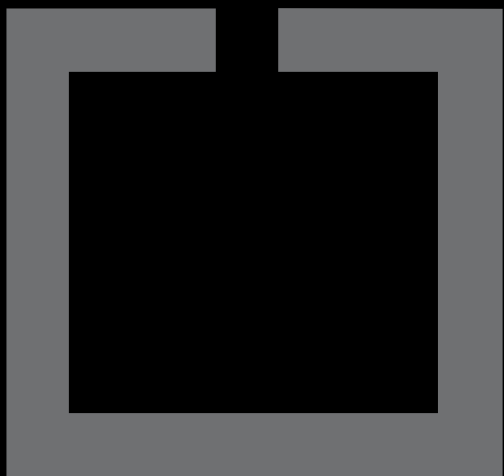
OF THE ALCOFORADOS

PAREDES

TOWER

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PAREDES



Plan.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY

Although both Felgueiras Gaio and Alão de Morais are quite assertive in stating that the mother-house of the Alcoforados was located on a tower in the parish of Lordelo, bishopric of Porto, there are many inconsistencies, gaps and hiatus that do not allow defining a continuous line in the historical approach to the path of this monument. Alão de Morais also mentions the archives of the monastery of Lordelo, where it is stated that certain Brandões were lords of at least five estates in Lordelo (Morais, 1673: 214). However, unable to see beyond the genealogical tradition, which is eager to find in the typology of the tower-house a symbol of power and prestige, he states:

“The manor of the Alcoforados is located in the parish of Lordelo which stands opposite Valongo in a village currently called Ferregenta that took on the name of the farm which was “forra-izenta” [exempt from taxes] and where, nowadays, an ancient tower and the ruins of the manor house where they lived still remain” (Morais, 1673: 158).

We believe that the issue of the Tower’s name, which is associated with the identification of its founders, has already been addressed by A. de Almeida Fernandes, in the article relating to the word “Tower”, in the *Grande enciclopédia portuguesa e brasileira* (Correia et al., 1936-1960). In this short essay, the author discards the idea of the place as the manor house or the origin of the Alcoforados, introducing the “milites” Brandão clan, which had assets in the area in a period between the 12th and the 13th centuries. Based on the text of the inquiries of 1258, the author mentions a man called Martim Brandão who was married to Teresa Fernandes, the daughter of Fernão Gonçalves de Sousa and Ximena Dias de Urrô (Correia et al., 1942: 175). Probably, Martim was the grandson of the first Brandão, who was called Fernando and possibly lived in the first half of the 12th century. It seems that these were knights of little wealth, something which is in line with the reasons underlying the construction of other towers, i.e., that the members of the lower ranks of nobility or secondary lineages intended to assert themselves within the local and regional political social circle through this type of construction¹.

However, it is difficult to establish family connections at a time when documentary sources were scarce and those that existed were mainly focused on the higher ranks of nobility. After the few references found in the inquiries of 1258, we are only able to assess the importance of the Brandões lineage again after the second half of the 15th century, when they emerge within the noble families of Porto in the 16th century. However, are these descendants of the Brandões from Lordelo or merely their relatives? The fact is that, by this time, their connections to that parish are practically non-existent, since they’re moving within a sphere that is immediately concentric to the urban area of Porto².

¹ In this regard, please read Barroca (1989: 9-62).

² Indeed, Felgueiras Gaio distinguishes between old and new Brandões. The former correspond to the ones mentioned in the documents related to “Lordelo” (Gaio, 1938-1941). Regarding the latter, please refer to “Brandões” in Brito (1997).



While regarding the Brandões, the involvement they might have had in the foundation of the Tower is practically unknown, regarding the Alcoforados, the scenario is even bleaker. Assuming the possibility that the Tower did not exist in 1258, it seems that the area of influence of the Alcoforados moved from the Aguiar region to the Sousa region around the same time. Indeed, their origin is a territory in the surroundings of Chaves, as José Augusto de Sottomayor-Pizarro explains: “being a branch of the Guedões from Aguiar da Pena, the Alcoforados settled in the valley of the Sousa at an early stage, and from there they spread to the neighbouring areas” (Sottomayor-Pizarro, 1997: 1159) – and early stage means that by the end of the 13th century they no longer had assets in Aguiar. Alcoforado seems to come from a nickname and does not reflect their toponymic origin. Rootless, they seek fortune and prestige to the southwest. If this displacement, through the marriage with someone from the Sousa region, led to the creation of a manor house, there are no guarantees that it happened in Lordelo. And we may even consider the idea that they got hold of it through a marriage or an inheritance on a date that, unfortunately, remains unknown.

The reference to its owner that is provided by Father António Carvalho da Costa in the 18th century allows us to confirm part of our idea. In 1706, the lord of the Tower of the Alcoforados was Pedro Vaz Cirne de Sousa (Costa, 1706-1712: 375). This military man, Porto city councillor and writer, was the son of Manuel Cirne Soares and Antónia de Sousa Alcoforado³.

Despite being a descendant of two paternal lines of Brandões and Brandões Sanches that were associated with Porto’s oligarchy, we don’t believe that this was the way in which Pedro Vaz got to inherit part of the Tower of the Alcoforados⁴. In fact, he inherited it from his mother, the granddaughter of the couple Gonçalo Vaz Alcoforado and Margarida de Sousa, who lived in the 15th century (Gaio, 1938-1941). Margarida de Sousa was a descendant of a family from Urrô (a place that currently belongs to the municipality of Penafiel), since her great-grandmother was Inês Vasques (said “of Urrô”) who probably lived in the second half of the 13th century. As we’ve already seen, this family was linked to the Brandões through the marriage of Teresa Fernandes, the daughter of Ximena Dias “of Urrô”, to Martim Brandão. We should also add that Ximena Dias was the sister of an ancestor of the aforementioned Margarida de Sousa, through whom the representation of the Alcoforados and the Tower’s lordship persisted; maybe the Tower wasn’t a work of the Brandões, but rather of individuals belonging to the Urrô family circle, which later diluted in the Brandões, who then diluted in the Alcoforados.

The Tower was probably abandoned early on, due to the dispersion of its lords among families from Porto and Entre-Douro-e-Minho region, but it still remained as a nominal symbol of prestige. The accumulation of references to lordships of houses and towers was rather frequent and fostered by the nobility as a way to address the lack of nobiliary titles and balance its status. Living within the laws of nobility involved managing a condition that survived on domanial asset management (albeit mostly based on lease payments) and on the maintenance of a series of positions and (or) privileges that were inherited through links of affinity or consanguinity.

³ He is mentioned in the seventh volume of the *Diccionario bibliographico portuguez* (Silva & Aranha, 1862: 10). After becoming a widower, he followed the ecclesiastical career, becoming a Maltese. He was one of those who acclaimed King João IV in Guimarães.

⁴ As we have mentioned, there aren’t enough data to assess the direct connection between the Brandões mentioned in Lordelo, in 1258, and the Brandões and Brandões Sanches connected to the most important families from the city of Porto.

ANALYSIS OF THE STRUCTURE OF ITS ARCHITECTURAL AND SOCIAL DIMENSION

The so-called Tower “of the Alcoforados”, which was surely built after 1258, stands on a hill and is currently engulfed by the houses of the hamlet that, due to its existence, adopted the toponym “da Torre” [from the Tower]. The buildings that surround it were built in recent periods and there were deep excavations carried out in the plots of land that are located in its immediate surroundings (Oliveira, 2008: 154). The Tower was built on a granite outcrop that stands out from the centre of the agricultural valley wedged between the Agrela mountain and the São Tiago mountain, which is irrigated by the Ferreira river (to the southeast) and by the Feteira brook (to the northeast) and is also punctuated by several wells and specific devices related to intensive farming activities⁵. This manorial structure, with a strong presence within its immediate surroundings as a symbol of domination, ended up losing its pristine function over time. When the idea of territorial control (of a specific manorial domain) was lost – as an immediate effect of the feebleness of the bond to a given lineage – the truth is that, at some point, the Tower of Lordelo eventually became, more than a ruin, a vacant building since its remaining elements, when analysed in comparison with other coeval specimens, allow us to have a clear notion of what this *domus fortis* was during the Medieval Period. It was due to their strong symbolic meaning that manorial towers were preserved, even when they had been emptied of their usefulness (Almeida, 2002: 106).

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Surrounding area.

⁵ Currently more urbanized and deforested, the landscape surrounding the Tower of the Alcoforados consists of cultivated plots separated by vineyards and small watercourses. The small patches of forest, known as saltus, provide material for the sawmills. Toponyms such as “Vínhal”, “Bouça”, “Agra”, “Campónio”, “Lameiro”, “Cavada”, “Devesa”, “Bouço”, “Agrelo”, “Campos” or “Nabeiros” confirm the presence of this agricultural activity, while others like “Soutelo”, “Outeiro”, “Tapadinha” and “Gandara”, refer us to the practice of herding (Oliveira, 2008: 154-155).

The chronology of this Tower should be placed in the first half of the 14th century because, in addition to the fact that it didn't exist in the mid-14th century, its structure features a series of elements that contribute to this conclusion: windows of a Gothic flavour, with a mullion that delimits narrow broken arches. However, the structure of this Tower undoubtedly finds its origin in the Romanesque keeps. Both Mário Jorge Barroca (1989: 9-62; 1997: 39-103) and José Custódio Vieira da Silva (1999: 99-115) agree with this thesis.

The fortified manorial residence is a clear reflection of the gradual sedentarisation of the peninsular society in its various aspects – “Towers”, “Tower-Manors” or “Fortified Manors” (Barroca, 1997: 16). So, the *domus fortis* is a result of an adjustment of the structure of the Romanesque keeps by combining civilian elements component with military ones (Barroca, 1997: 66). It is to the Templars, and more specifically, to Gualdim Pais (1118-1195) that we owe the import of the keep, a crucial element of the Romanesque castle in Portugal. It was in the mid-12th century that the construction of the castle of Pombal began, the first major work of master Gualdim Pais within the Portuguese territory. Being an unusual structure within its period and the Portuguese panorama, it is a remarkable building, whose keep stands close to the castle's entrance, completing its defence⁶ system and clearly showing how, at the time, this order was the institution that held the most advanced technical knowledge in terms of attacking and defending fortresses across the territory (Barroca, 2000: 391). An epigraph dated back to 1174 reports the construction of a keep in the castle of Longroiva (Meda) by Gualdim Pais (Barroca, 2000: 389-391).

In addition to its inherent defensive functions, the keep was associated with an image of power and a demonstration of strength early on, and so the housing function soon got attached to it. Together with the numerous remaining testimonies, the presence of the toponym “Torre” [Tower] across the Entre-Douro-e-Minho region is a good example of the popularity that these structures achieved, when they were already detached from an exclusively military context of territorial defence and reorganization, once associated with a manorial society in full assertion and ascension. It was mainly second-line lineages, “milites” aspiring to become “ricos-homens” [rich men], who adopted this architectural solution of the *domus fortis* in the first place, as a way to lead their domains (Barroca, 1997: 53). To Mário Jorge Barroca, this architectural typology from the Romanesque Period “is one of the most extraordinary examples of harmony between architectural model [derived from the keep], function [residential] and symbolic power [nobility and antiquity]” (Barroca, 1997: 99).

Like most of the keeps in castles, tower-manors are high-rise constructions. Currently, the Tower of the Alcoforados measures about 8.60 meters, although there are a few rows of ashlars missing on the top (Oliveira, 2008: 158), as it surely had merlons once. The battlements or merlons, which are crucial elements to define the military nature of a given structure and have a highly symbolic significance, were the main responsables for providing the manor house with a fortified profile (Barroca, 1997: 66). We may recall the case of the Tower of Vilar (Vilar do Torno e Alentém, Lousada) (Rosas, 2008: 349-355) that, with a height of nearly 14 meters, dominates a fertile and well-irrigated valley, is a symbol of the dominial power over the territory and saw its merlons disappear over time.

⁶ About the subject, please read Botelho (2010: 125-138).



Northeast façade.

Standing directly on a granite outcrop, which accentuates its verticality and gives strength to its foundations, the Tower of the Alcoforados has good-quality masonry walls, despite the different dimensions of the ashlar that create rows with various heights. The narrow crevices, with a more militarized nature than the ones opened on the Tower of Vilar, are behind the origin of the twin windows of Lordelo, which we've already mentioned. While the former most certainly belongs to the late 13th century/early 14th century, the latter, is surely a legacy from a later chronology. As we've already mentioned, the mullion is a characteristic element of the Gothic aesthetics. Here, the central mullion has bevelled edges on the outside and a horizontal stone with a locking system on the inside. Opened within the thickness of a deep wall, which is about 1.10m thick (Oliveira, 2008: 158-159), these windows are internally framed by a subtle three-centred arch which also shelters the masonry benches that are located just below the windowsill, siding the openings on the wall.

Fitting within the "model" that was common to most manorial residences, the Tower of the Alcoforados has an access door that is already located on the ground floor and not on the first floor; unlike the rule that was applied in the keeps and as the one we can see in Castle of Arnoia (Celorico de Basto). Therefore, first of all, this two wooden-floor Tower takes on a residential function – i.e., a manor house – and its role as an element of military nature is a secondary one. The pavements of the upper floors, like the stairs that allowed accessing them, were made of wood, as evidenced by the fittings of the beams that supported the wooden floor. Limited by a round arch, the door opened on the ground floor level features a flattened arch lintel, composed of four voussoirs. Its locking system was quite simple (Oliveira, 2008): consisting of two rails with a central stop, evidenced by the two upper fitting slots which ran the axes, the door was protected by a lock of which the negatives are still preserved on the opening's wall, despite the signs that suggest subsequent changes. Above this door there was probably a structure that



Tower of Vilar (Lousada). Aerial view.



Northeast façade. Upper floor. Detail of the mullioned window. External view.



Northeast façade. Upper floor. Detail of the mullioned window. Interior view.



Northeast façade. Intermediate floor. Detail of the mullioned window (interior view) (1951). Source: IHRU archive.



Northeast façade. Intermediate floor. Detail of the mullioned window (interior view) (1951). Source: IHRU archive.



Northeast façade. Door (1951). Source: IHRU archive.



Northeast façade. View from the door during the intervention carried out by the Route of the Romanesque (2014).

fulfilled the same sheltering purposes, as suggested by a scar that exists on the wall, which is possibly the negative of a porch with a shed roof.

It is worth mentioning the fact that there was a balcony on the first floor, which probably had machicolations, as evidenced by the cantilevers located just outside the door that, facing north-east, opens the central floor to the outside. The corbels suggest that this balcony was equipped with a porch that would form a small roof. We believe that this would be the main floor of the building, the so-called *piano nobile*, taking into account the presence of this element that opens the manorial Tower to its surrounding agricultural property.

However, we believe that this Tower would include a series of supporting outbuildings such as the kitchen, the barns or the stables, etc., of which there are currently no traces as they were built with perishable materials, such as wood. Furthermore, in the 13th century, the dimensions of the Tower were already showing signs of being too scanty for the needs of everyday life, giving rise to the emergence of residential annexes (Almeida & Barroca, 2002: 106). Besides the lack of any symbolic value, we believe that we will hardly be able to retrieve any archaeological information, taking into account the relationship between the houses that were built in recent periods and the Tower of the Alcoforados.

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General view of the interior walls before the intervention carried out by the Route of the Romanesque (2014).



General view of the interior walls before the intervention carried out by the Route of the Romanesque (2014).



Northeast façade during the intervention carried out by the Route of the Romanesque (2014).

THE TOWER OF THE ALCOFORADOS TODAY

In late 1987, the Paredes Town Council aware of the historical and artistic value of the Tower that existed in the parish of Lordelo, “popularly known as the “Tower of the Moors” or the “High Tower””, in addition to the more common designation of “Tower of the Alcoforados”, proposed the classification of this building⁷. However, we should note that the Paredes Town Council, as well as the Parish Council of Lordelo, had already “taken precautionary measures” for the conservation and protection of this building⁸.

The Instituto Português do Património Cultural [Portuguese Institute of Cultural Heritage], the entity responsible for the classification of built heritage, approved the proposal for the classification of the Tower of the Alcoforados. Since this is a long and complex administrative process, the classification of this Tower as a Public Interest Building was finally recognized by Decree no. 45/93 of November 30th 1993. [MLB / NR]

Since it currently belongs to the Route of the Romanesque, the Tower of the Alcoforados was subject, in 2014, of an intervention “of protection and improvement of the monument as a physical structure of cultural interest, but also as a generator of a specific atmosphere that is still legible on site, which includes its existing agricultural property, and is worth preserving” (Costa & Monte, 2011a: 1). The intention was to intervene in the Tower “through the conservation and restoration of its monumental structure”, creating conditions for its use and interpretation, building the roof, closing its corresponding openings and recreating the floors at their primitive levels (Costa & Monte, 2011a: 2). In a future stage, for which a project has already been developed, the works shall focus on the construction of accesses for vehicles and pedestrians, the rehabilitation of the surrounding green areas, the creation of recreation areas and the completion of the visitors’ support centre (Costa & Monte, 2011b: 2). [RR]



General view before the intervention carried out by the Route of the Romanesque (2014).

⁷ *Documentação vária*. In PT DGEMN: DSARH-010/187-0015, SIPA.TXT.01572449 to SIPA.TXT.01572455 [Online]. Available at [www: <URL: http://www.monumentos.pt>](http://www.monumentos.pt). [N° IPA N° PT011310130008].

⁸ *Idem*.

CHRONOLOGY

14th century (first half): suggested chronology for the construction of the Tower of the Alcoforados;

1987: the Paredes Town Council proposed the classification of the Tower of the Alcoforados;

1993: the Tower of the Alcoforados was classified as a Public Interest Building;

2010: integration of the Tower of the Alcoforados in the Route of the Romanesque;

2014: preservation and protection works conducted under the scope of the Route of the Romanesque.

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