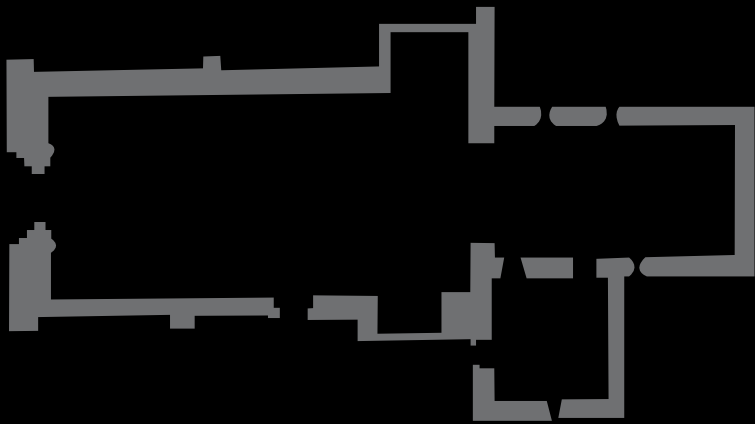


**CHURCH**  
OF SAINT  
MARTIN  
OF MOUROS  
RESENDE

CHURCH  
OF SAINT  
MARTIN  
OF MOUROS  
RESENDE



Plan.

## THE MONUMENT IN THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

The parish Church of Saint Martin of Mouros stands on a mountain top that elevates itself over the final stretch of the Bestança brook (or São Martinho brook), on its way to the Douro river. Built on an easily defensible area, featuring steep slopes and remarkable granite massifs, this Church, with a silhouette that imposes itself from the different points of the valley, stands out from the landscape of the Meadas mountain range in a very peculiar way due to its unique physiognomy. This Romanesque building is set up on a high-sloped ground, a feature which is more visible in its north façade and that the existence of a base, comprising rows of ashlar with different heights, tries to compensate. We should note the granite outcrop that is also visible on the north side, close to the chevet.



General view.

Although the first news on any kind of occupation of this territory date back to the “castreja” [fortified camps] age (Costa, 1979: 341), and to the subsequent Romanisation period<sup>1</sup>, from which this territory features quite remarkable traces, we should highlight that, in the Middle Ages, there were already news on the taking of the castle by the army of Ferdinand, the Great – King of Castile (k. 1035-1065) and Leon (k. 1037-1065) –, thus integrating Saint Martin’s into an important defensive line along the Douro river that also included the castles of Lamego and Castro de Rei (Tarouca). We should remember that it was after the taking of Lamego, on November 29<sup>th</sup>, 1057, that the Christian armies of Ferdinand the Great took the

<sup>1</sup> Regarding this matter, please read, among others, Jalhay (1951) and Mantas (1985).



View over the valley of the brook Bestança.

castles of Cárquere (Resende) and Saint Martin of Mouros (Barroca, 2003: 32). The latter defensive structure, of which some traces still survive, is located to the west of the existing village, being certainly a heiress of the “castro” [hill fort]; the primitive Christian temple, which was built close to its fence, was dedicated to the Saviour like so many others at the time<sup>2</sup>. The invocation is simultaneously a sign of the taking and a war cry, which takes shape in the iconography of Christ, as King and Justicer. Once the castle had been taken and the space had been made consecrated, the walled town was able to resume its life, along the fertile Bestança brook.

Such an early occupation is easily explainable if we consider the agro-pastoral potential of the lands that still surround this Romanesque Church, built upon the slope. In Medieval times, the parish Church already featured the following trilogy: “ager” (farming area), “saltus” or “thicker” (with oaks and chestnut trees, i.e. hardwood trees) and the “hill” (Rosas, 1987: 4). According to Carlos Alberto Ferreira de Almeida (1978: 49), such division, asserted as a micro-agro-silvo-system, provided balance between the production of cereals in the winter and, in the summer, the existence of grass and pastures for the livestock, together with wood and bundles of twigs for the house, acorns and chestnuts to fatten the pigs and feed for the stables, wood for the fire and the oven; this system settles around the late 11<sup>th</sup> century and reaches its peak before the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century (Almeida, 1978: 32). A description of “The Brook of Saint Martin”, dated from 1531, tells us about this “cool valley”, which is still “very dense and [that] looks a lot like Sintra, but with thicker woods: and the entire valley is full of chestnut trees, and walnut trees, and hazel trees, and orange trees, and other very excellent pine trees, and many good orchards and quagmires; it provides the finest wheat we find in all its surroundings (...) and great amounts of nuts and chestnuts; and many and very beautiful chestnut logs and wood boards are carried out from there to be shipped at the Douro” (Fernandes, 1926: 569). In fact, later, Modern and Contemporary descriptions reproduce similar ideas of abundance, fertility and variety of crops.

<sup>2</sup> About this castle, its location and a short description within the context of the Reconquest fortresses, please read Teixeira (2001: 463-476). The author cartographically identifies and marks the plausible location of the chapel of the Holy Saviour, which was ruined in the meantime (2001: 471).



West façade and churchyard before the intervention carried out by the DGEMN. Source: Nuno Resende's private collection.

As, indeed, we are still able to verify nowadays, hardwood trees take on a significant role in the landscape surrounding the current parish Church of Saint Martin of Mouros. In 1342, in the context of the confirmation of customs and traditions decreed by Countess Teresa for the village of São Martinho de Mouros, there is a reference to the “church’s oak trees” upon establishing that, from that date onwards, the meetings of the council’s important men should be held in that place (Serra, 1816: 586).

The construction of a Romanesque building (or of any building) has, in its design, a series of constraints that explain its location. The existence of a river nearby, the territory’s orography, the access to transportation infrastructures, the population density (and the dynamism of the populations settled in the area), the preponderance of a given lineage (whose power is widely spread, both at local and regional levels), the agricultural potential of the territory or its strategic location, are factors that influenced the construction of any building in the Romanesque Period. So, these agents will regulate its physical dimension and the simplicity or complexity of its building and iconographic solutions, since the construction is located in a specific place and meets the needs of a specific community.

Although there is very few historical information on this building during the Middle Ages, the same does not apply to the territory where it is located. São Martinho de Mouros was honoured with a foral charter drawn up by the Countess of Portucale, Teresa de Leão (1080-1130), on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1111, in which she confirmed the previous charters given “to you, good men of São Martinho de Mouros, which you have had since the times of my grandfather, the King Fernando and my father, the King Afonso: who gave this castle with this charter to the bailiff Sesnando” (Serra, 1816: 580), the latter between 1057 and 1065 (Duarte, 1994: 996).

Since then, several documentary sources, throughout the Middle Ages, mention the territory of Saint Martin of Mouros. We believe that such historic importance of the territory might have justified the construction of a monument as peculiar as this Church during the Romanesque Period. In fact, we must not forget that the General Inquiries in 1258, carried out following a request by King Afonso III (k. 1248-1279), inform us that the king is its patron and presenter: “(...) de patronatu ecclesiae Sancti Martini de Mauris dixit, quod Dominus Rex est patronus, et presentat dicte ecclesie” (Herculano, 1936: 990).

This reference to the patronage matches the stylistic chronology of the construction of Saint Martin of Mouros, as well as an inscription mentioning the year of 1217, which Mário Barroca (2000: 688-690) considers as a commemorative inscription related to a specific construction stage of the Church: Era : M<sup>a</sup> : CC<sup>a</sup> : 2<sup>a</sup> : V<sup>a</sup>.

That inscription, which refers us to the “Era of 1255”<sup>3</sup>, is engraved in an ashlar embedded in the outer façade of the chancel, on the north side, placed on the first row above the footing and in the fifth stone from the right. However, its poor state of conservation allows it to go unnoticed under less watchful eyes.

<sup>3</sup> We cannot forget that the use of Arabic numerals in Portuguese epigraphs would only become common practice from the first quarter of the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards. As it is known, during the Middle Ages, carvers engraved the Arabic number “5” as an inverted “2”, a fact that has been giving rise to debates in terms of epigraphical reading. Regarding this subject, please read Barroca (2000: 688-690).



North façade. Chancel. Commemorative inscription marking the Church's construction.

We believe that the positioning of this commemorative inscription in Saint Martin of Mouros is of the utmost importance as a basic chronological reference. As a rule, the Romanesque construction would begin by the chevet so, right after it was completed and even before the beginning of the construction of the nave, it would be possible to hold liturgical ceremonies, after the celebration of its dedication and consecration. Then, when the chevet was already being used for divine worshipping, and if the available funding allowed so, the construction of the nave would then follow.

In this context, the date 1217 is either related to the beginning of the construction of this Church or, alternatively, it could be a reference to the completion of the first stage of construction, i.e., of the chevet (Barroca, 2000: 690), should the procedures more commonly used at the time be followed. Besides, this date also meets the hypothesis raised by several authors that place the date of the completion of the nave during the second quarter or mid-13<sup>th</sup> century (Almeida, 1986: 108; Rosas, 2009).

On the other hand, in this Romanesque Church dedicated to Saint Martin, we identify something curious which shows that, in the Romanesque Period, the sequence for the construction of a building didn't always follow one single rule. In the period under study, the exception was, many times, the rule. Let us, therefore, observe the tower-shaped volume that shapes the main façade.

Here, the first quarter of the nave is dominated by a bulky western volume that, as a sort of façade-tower, provides this Church with a somewhat militarised and defensive look. We must not forget that, generally speaking, the atmosphere of the Christian Reconquest was reflected in the Portuguese Romanesque architecture; this was the context in which this new architectural style found an atmosphere and its very own expression space for development, asserting itself as the reorganisation of the territory promoted by the Christian kings progressed.





There is no doubt that the solidity of a church – one of the best buildings in any city and, undoubtedly, the largest and most robust building in any given village – provided shelter for the entire community – or, at least, for specific religious or secular groups – in moments of peril (Nuño González, 2002: 127). So, this feature is sometimes emphasised in the architectural structure itself, through its sturdy and robust appearance. We could mention, by way of example, the old Coimbra cathedral.

Based on the reconstitution suggested by António Nogueira Gonçalves (1934; 1940; 1942; 1958; 1969; 1984), we now know that the façade of Santa Cruz of Coimbra included a strong defensive tower in front of the church, showing a similar typology to the one we still see today in the old Coimbra cathedral, composed of a central protruding volume, with a large window opened above the raised portal; both feature decorated archivolts and are separated by a small drip-course resting on little arches. Working much like a foyer, this pre-nave opened its interior onto the nave.

More recently, Manuel Real (1982: 118-132) has been paying a special attention to the spatial organization of Augustinian churches, whose order was an important support for the expansionist and autonomy-related policies of King Afonso Henriques (1143-1185). Consequently, these churches stand out for their fortified profile (Real, 1982: 126). Embodying the art of the Portuguese Reconquest (Real, 1982: 123), the churches of the Canon Regulars stand out precisely by the existence of a narthex-tower; the churches of Santa Cruz of Coimbra, built from June 28<sup>th</sup>, 1131, onwards, and São Vicente de Fora, in Lisbon, were the most flagrant examples. The atmosphere of insecurity felt during the Reconquest led people to build bastions and collect real arsenals for their own defense, especially in borderline areas, and, mainly, in churches located outside the village walls (Real, 1995: 18). Remember that these two Augustinian monasteries were precisely located outside the wall line of their respective cities.

The expression “fortress-church” is too often used in the bibliography regarding the Romanesque Period, especially the one that was produced in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>4</sup>. The fact that many churches feature merlons and that there are a few towers of military traits associated with monuments with a religious nature (although these are mainly from the Gothic period), such as the one of the Saviour of Travanca (Amarante), are enough, for many authors, to defend the existence of a typically Portuguese typology that shows an obvious military trend, despite this trend being more rhetorical than actually military. This subject also seeks to point out the constant connotation of the Portuguese Romanesque style with the Christian Reconquest that here, in Saint Martin of Mouros, was emphasised during the restorations carried out in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, as we shall see further ahead. Note that this Church dedicated to Saint Martin of Tours was given an equal importance in the list of “Castles from the 1<sup>st</sup> Medieval Period” from the monumental work by Damiano Peres entitled *A gloriosa história dos mais belos castelos de Portugal* [The glorious history of the most beautiful castles in Portugal] (Peres, 1969: 75-76).

In the Middle Ages the tower was seen as a symbol of safety and, in the absence of castles, the church represented the best fortress (Almeida, 1971: 69). The religious and the military are, therefore, inseparable (Nuño González: 2002: 130). The cathedrals from Braga, Porto,



Reconstitution of the monastery of Saint Vincent of Fora (Lisbon) from an engraving by Braunius. Source: Castilho, 1936, *apud* Fernandes, 2010: 89.

<sup>4</sup> About the subject, please read Botelho (2010: 379-385).



Monastery of Travanca (Amarante). General view.

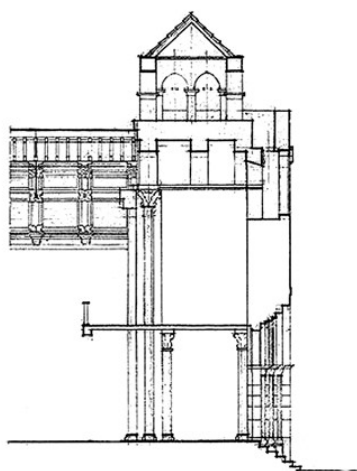
Coimbra and Lisbon, standing on dominant locations, look like fortresses and stress the determination and “firmness of the Portuguese commitment” (Almeida, 1971: 69). So, for Aarão de Lacerda, these buildings are evocative symbols “of those times when the faith and the sword were joined in the same efforts of proselytism and conquest, thus influencing the construction of fortress-temples, ready to be transformed into warrior bastions” (Lacerda, 1942: 213-214).

In the case of the narthex-tower of Coimbra, the existence of a tribune on the church’s upper floor certainly responded to specific liturgical goals associated with the “regular mass” and the “solemn mass” of the canonical practice (Real, 1982: 125). The galilee surely accumulates a “martyrdom-related” function; it quickly began receiving pious burials, which caused its use to be spread across other regions (Real, 1995: 18).

Although we should understand the Church of Saint Martin of Mouros within a different, more ruralised, context and not as part of the same family of churches as Santa Cruz of Coimbra, the fact is that, in the valley of the Bestança brook, we have a significant specimen of one of the most innovative and international shapes of the Portuguese Romanesque style of that period.

In fact, the tower-shaped volume of Saint Martin of Mouros is one of its kind within the panorama of the Portuguese Romanesque style. This volume takes up the entire width of the Church and, fulfilling the role of a west façade, it shapes a vertical structure that rises just above the nave’s level.

But it is in terms of its internal space that this volume shows an extremely original composition given the fact that it creates, in this part of the temple, a solution comprising three narrow naves, with parallel stonework vaults, one for each bay. Three round arches rest on two high and robust square pillars, which have half-columns adorsed to three of their sides. These



Church longitudinal section.  
Source: IHRU archive.



View of the nave (first third).

pillars, with the help of the external buttresses that end just below the cornice, are the ones that support the entire structure. The central arch is much higher than the other ones, rising right up to the nave's panelled ceiling. Accompanying the level of the arches, the small central nave's vault is higher than the lateral ones; it is also supported by a small transverse arch resting on corbels. Two longitudinal arches rest on columns whose carved capitals complete this ensemble. In these capitals we can find vegetal and anthropomorphic themes, from which we highlight the representation of the seated man or of the man being swallowed by animals, a common theme on the Braga-Rates axis. Here, the sculptural treatment given to the granite is asserted by its turgid appearance.



Nave. Capital from the first bay.



Nave. Capital from the first bay.

Alexandre Alves Costa questioned if such an original body could actually correspond to the beginning of a Church that was intended to feature three naves and from which only the first flight was built, thus simplifying the remaining elements and reducing the body to a single nave (Costa, 2007: 107). If this theory were to be confirmed, would it be possible to consider that this body was earlier than the chancel or, even, that both elements were built simultaneously? Why was there a decision to build a Church with this program and size in the Douro region? And if that was the case, why did such a sudden change occur in terms of its construction programme?

Beyond these arches, and leaving these small naves behind, the wide spatiality of the single nave appears in a contrasting way. So, its amplitude shows, in addition to its great height, that this was an exceptional place in terms of the Romanesque scale that was being used within our territory at the time.

Further ahead, the triumphal arch, which is pointed and surmounted by a framed oculus, comprises three archivolt resting on colonettes embedded on the wall, with capitals that are also decorated; these were carved using granite with a finer grain than the one that was used in the rest of the Church, which also allowed giving a more refined and defined treatment to the sculpted shapes. Here, there are monsters swallowing naked figures that are hanging from their mouths by the legs, a subject with clear origins in Braga and that is also repeated in the main portal and in one of the high capitals from the nave's first bay, as we have seen.

In the archivolt we see denticulate motifs. However, given the great extension of the triumphal arch's span, when compared to the arches from the Church's first bay, we could take the risk of suggesting it belongs to a later chronology. Besides, the chancel's great amplitude and the fact that it shows flat corbels on the outside are signs of an extension of the Romanesque *modus aedificandi* over time; perhaps, in this case, it already takes on a resistance-style nature. This space of the Church has wide rectangular large windows that create a clear contrast with the crevices of Medieval origin that still illuminate the nave's interior in a diffuse way.

On the outside of the Church of Saint Martin of Mouros, the spirit of the Romanesque aesthetics is very much present. The presence of stones carved with initials along its wall faces, which were also reused in the bordering walls, remind us of the organisation of building sites in this period. On the main façade, a narrow crevice surmounts a portal formed by three sharp-edged pointed archivolt. With three fluted shafts and capitals featuring botanic and animal



Triumphal arch and chancel ceiling.

themes, this portal finds parallel in the axial portal of Saint Mary of Almacave, in Lamego (Correia, 1924: 64). The vegetal and anthropomorphic-themed sculpture, well attached to the frustum, suggests a later chronology than the one of the nave's high capitals, which are more swollen, or even of the ones from the triumphal arch. The ensemble is surrounded by a chequered frieze and its impost extends itself along the entire façade. Although currently we find a flat tympanum here, there is information that, in 1924, a large and thick granite stone was leaning against the façade (Correia, 1924: 64). With an engraved cross in the centre, this stone worked as a tympanum that was surely part of this portal (Correia, 1924: 64). Just above the portal, we also see four corbels that prove the prior existence of a porch-like structure.

In the first row of ashlar above the base, on the left side facing the portal, we see engravings showing the standard measuring units used in the municipality (Barroca, 1992: 53-85), namely the "ell" (105,5 cm) and the "cubit" (66 cm). That fact is a clear sign that the local fair was held in front of the Church of Saint Martin of Mouros at some point during the Middle Ages.

On the upper part, a cornice rests on a Lombard band – a recurrent motif in several buildings from the Sousa river basin<sup>5</sup> – whose little arches are supported by corbels with zoomorphic decorations shaped as bovine heads; some of them have a more finished look, others look more sketchy or worn away. It is also above this western volume that we find the bell tower; it too is a compact building, in which two round arches were opened, on each side, to shelter the bells. Finally, the western façade is propped by two buttresses, which are located on the corners and

<sup>5</sup> Note, by way of example, the cases of the Monastery of Paço de Sousa (Penafiel) and the Churches of Sousa or Airões (Felgueiras).





West façade. Portal.

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help to provide this entire heavy and massive structure with a better support. Despite the fact that the Church's body is not vaulted, the walls are also reinforced with buttresses that, finished with wedges, end below the cornice level. This cornice, on the side elevations, is supported by flat modillions.



West façade. Corbels.

## THE MONUMENT IN THE MODERN PERIOD

When, in 1527, the inquirers that were drawing up the Numeramento on the “comarca” [a type of Portuguese administrative and judicial division] of Beira, they passed through São Martinho de Mouros and found a vast municipality divided into 73 hamlets with 459 inhabitants. The municipal boundary, which was one mile and a half wide and one mile long, spread across the Douro river and the plateaus of the Montemuro mountain range, bordering the municipality of Lamego to the east and Resende to the west (Collaço, 1931: 142-143).

A few years later, in the turn of 1531 to 1532, the treaty by Rui Fernandes, a merchant of canvases and embroideries, records a number higher than the one in the Numeramento, accounting for the population of São Martinho in 570 neighbours. Despite the discrepancy and, certainly, the different methods used to count housing units, in the second quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the urban capital of this municipality was estimated at around half a thousand housing units, which would result in a population close to 2200 inhabitants<sup>6</sup>.

The *Censual da sé de Lamego* (Fernandes, 1999) is contemporary to both sources and adds information on the parish. The patronage of the abbey of Saint Martin that, during the Middle Ages, had been in royal hands, was transferred in 1455 to the second Count of Marialva, together with the municipality’s boundary and its rents (Oliveira, 1999: 180). In fact, it is King Fernando (k. 1507-1534), Prince of Portugal – the son of King Manuel I (k. 1495-1521) and Maria of Aragon (1482-1517), married to the third Countess Guiomar Coutinho (1450-1534) – who is mentioned by Rui Fernandes in his treaty. When this treaty was written, Saint Martin was part of the assets of the Coutinhos, who were its donees and patrons; their house dominated vast areas of territory to the south of the Douro. Those assets were reintegrated in the royal domains when, after the death of Guiomar Gusmão, there were no descendants left from her marriage to the Prince. However, despite the dispute that followed the death of the countess, brought by abbot Lopo de Almeida (promoted to this position by the fourth count, Francisco Coutinho (1480-1532), the Church and its rents were transferred to the management of the University of Coimbra in 1542.

Once established as a rectory or a vicarage, and solved the dispute in 1566, the University was definitely responsible for presenting the parish priest of Saint Martin of Mouros who, in turn, was responsible for the appointment of the priests of the associated churches of Paus, Fontoura and Gosende, which were handed to beneficiaries of the collegiate church. In fact, this structure demonstrates the prestige and importance of the Church of Saint Martin of Mouros and the role it played on the evangelisation and social/economic control of the region. Throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the temporal and spiritual influence of the mountain range and the valley was based on the driving force of the Church of Saint Martin. Although, in municipal terms, the county included the parishes of Barrô, Fontoura and Paus (in the Bestança valley), in ecclesiastical terms, the might of the abbots reached Gosende, high up in the mountain of Montemuro, where, in

<sup>6</sup> We used the statistical coefficients proposed by João José Alves Dias (1996) for Portuguese housing units in the turn of the Middle Ages to the Modern Period, corresponding to 4.3 to 4.8 individuals per housing unit (addresses), which would result, in the case of São Martinho de Mouros, in a population whose numbers would vary between 1974 and 2736 residents.



1531/32, Rui Fernandes already refers the existence of offerings given by its inhabitants, as a present for “having given its patronage to the church of saint Martin” (Fernandes, 1926).

On this period, rich in sources and marked by the instability among its lords, we do not know much in terms of the artistic and spatial evolution of the temple of Saint Martin. Although these are not the patrons’ responsibility, since they are located on the nave’s collateral walls (therefore, under the parishioners’ responsibility), the paintings (currently concealed by the altarpieces) from which the depictions of *Saint Blaise* and of a certain female figure wearing a Benedictine habit are the only remains, may belong to the last few years of the 15<sup>th</sup> century<sup>7</sup>. And the paintings, erroneously ascribed to the school of Grão Vasco, which currently decorate the lateral wall of the larger chapel, and were, possibly, once part of the main altarpiece, may have been a gift from the Coutinhos<sup>8</sup>. These are two oil paintings on chestnut boards depicting scenes from the life of a charitable and mystical Saint Martin, an iconography that is distant from the one that, in a sculpture, dominates the main altarpiece, i.e., of a hieratic and vigilant bishop. The dating and ascription of their authorship has already been explored by Joaquim Oliveira Caetano in 2000, who corroborated previous opinions that considered these as works from the Masters of Ferrerim. In fact, as the author highlights, the great undertaking of the Franciscan convent built out of the Coutinhos’ devotion included other altarpieces that were intended to be placed in churches under the domain of the house of Marialva, among which we may include the boards of Saint Martin of Mouros, a work which, therefore, was carried out after 1534 (Caetano, 2000a e 2000b).

Is it mainly with the input of the University of Coimbra and, especially, during the Jesuit period of the Rectory’s management that we find a larger number of sources, a sign of a better organisation and of a considerable investment in maintenance and improvement works, both in the main parish Church and in its associated churches.

In fact, throughout the 17<sup>th</sup> century, there are records of several payments related to occasional improvements and interventions, not just in the Church, but also in the prelate’s house, where the University invested 5000 “réis” [former Portuguese currency unit] in construction works in 1638 (Almeida, 1972: 90). In the following year, a few repairs carried out in the ecclesiastical building cost an equal sum of money. And, although they are not documented, a few openings – including the chancel’s<sup>9</sup> fenestrations, the Manueline [style also known as Portuguese late Gothic, which develops during the reign of King Manuel I (k. 1495-1521)] arch (would it be anticipating a collegiate choir?) and the already Mannerist portal, which is framed by pilasters and facing south – probably belong to the last few years of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and to the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

In November 1649, there was the need to spend 2000 “réis” in the alterpiece’s painting – surely the largest one, since the works related to the chancel’s assets were under the patron’s responsibility – and, in the following month, the glazier Francisco Jorge was paid to make a few glass panes for the Church (Almeida, 1972: 194, 196).

7 The figures were identified in 1919 by Vergílio Correia (1924: 67-68). The photographic reproduction of the frescoes can be seen in Pinto (1982). *Saint Blaise* is on the Gospel side and the female figure is on the Epistle side. Nowadays it is still possible to see traces of polychrome plaster, both along the nave’s walls and in the chancel.

8 As João Soalheiro (2006: 154-159) suggests, while mentioning the building works of Ferreirim, a convent under the protection of the Coutinhos.

9 We admit the possibility, though not grounded in any documents, that the larger chapel underwent major changes still during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. That is noticeable on the outside, in terms of the ashlar and the volume itself.



Triumphal arch. Wall on the Gospel side (behind the collateral altarpiece). Mural painting. *Saint Blaise*.



Chancel. Wall on the Gospel side. Painting.  
*Saint Martin shares his cape with a poor man.*



Chancel. Wall on the Gospel side. Painting.  
*Apparition of Christ to Saint Martin.*

The increase in pious legacies and in the number of brotherhoods and fraternities from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century onwards led to substantial changes in the spatial organisation of the nave, for which popular piety requested the construction of more altars, related to customary devotional expressions. In this context, we highlight the establishment of the Brotherhoods of the Blessed Sacrament, of the Souls and of Saint Nicholas<sup>10</sup>, which were already active in 1625 and 1654. In 1758 there is also reference to the Brotherhood of the Stations (of the Cross) and the rector mentions four altars, all in the nave, in addition to the largest one: the one of Our Lady of the Rosary, the one of the Lord of the Wounds, the one of Saint Sebastian (non-existent) and

<sup>10</sup> The image is still kept in the sacristy.



General interior view from the nave.

72 the one of Our Lady of the Exile. The construction of these altarpieces may have justified the emergence of the small projecting volumes that exist on each side of the nave's end.

The catechetical programme related to the Counter Reformation that still marks the chancel's space nowadays probably dates back to the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, standing out by its coffered woodwork with hagiographic and allegorical themes. On the altarpiece, the image of the patron saint chairs the place of honour and, opposite, we find Saint Francis Xavier, whose devotional notability was probably introduced by the Society of Jesus.

In fact, the coffered ceiling reveals the Counter Reformation's spiritual and catechetical nature which was most certainly influenced by the Jesuits' intervention. "Old" devotions shaped by popular piety, such as Saint Michael, Saint Lucia and Saint Barbara stand side by side with "new" invocations, such as Saint Francis or Saint Ignatius, which convey a very clear evangelising and propagandistic message. In fact, here, the written and spoken word takes up a significant place because, from the righteous hand of Michael (*qui ut deus*), to the open book of Saint Ignatius, all the graphical composition appeals to redemption, conversion or confirmation, either associated with the acceptance of the mystical body through the virginal milk (the lactation miracle of Saint Bernard), or through baptism or the word received directly from God, as listened by John, in Patmos. Amidst all of this, allegories such as the one of the *sapientia* remind us that the patronage was in the hands of academics. On the lateral "coffers", scenes from Saint Martin's death encourage ecclesiastical and lay people to look more closely into other moral and hagiographic examples from the patron saint's life.

The woodwork from the same period shows, both in the larger altarpiece and in the lateral and collateral ones, the dominance of the National Style [1690-1725]. However, we should highlight that the interventions carried out in the chapel, which clearly show a superior ornamental quality, show a greater investment from the patron, unlike the nave, which was under



the parishioners' responsibility and, therefore, required a less propagandistic, more functional and less expensive speech. The main altarpiece stands out by its Eucharistic throne that, despite small in size, is surmounted by a representation of the Ascension of Christ, the closing moment of the cycle of the Passion of Christ, which begins with the Saviour's martyrdom when he is tied to the column, a scene reconstructed below, in the tabernacle's door.

In terms of good plastic quality sculpture, we should highlight Our Lady of Conception – with a Mannerist touch and currently placed above the tabernacle –, the images of Saint Martin of Tours (the patron saint), Saint Francis Xavier and Saint Francis of Assisi (placed on the lateral chapel) – which are already from the early years of the century – and the one of Our Lady of the Rosary, pertaining to the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. With an inferior quality, but not less important within the parish's devotional context, we have the worships and corresponding images of the Blessed Gonçalo of Amarante (popularly considered as a saint), Saint Anthony of Lisbon and the Holy Family (called “of the Exile”, in 1758), invocations and sculptures that were venerated in the nave's collateral and lateral altars. The sculptures of the *Ecce Homo* (represented in full-size), Saint Roman and Saint Nicholas of Bari (previously associated with an altar and a brotherhood) are also from the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

During the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the legend of the “Mouros” [Moors] as lords of the land and builders of the Church was still referred to, although the rector João da Cruz, yielding to some prejudice, considered the nickname as a sign of his parishioners' pride and arrogance (Cruz, 1758). Despite the fact that any old building or remarkable ruins were frequently ascribed to the Moors, in Saint Martin the nickname sounded like a misfortune, the utmost symbol of a remote people – although we cannot find a plausible reason to justify how the land from which they were expelled after remaining for such a short period of time – and which was Christianised, repopulated and managed by the settlers right away – would wish to include them as part of its name. The most likely circumstance is that, since the name was defined as a sort of trophy (Saint Martin, a land taken from the Moors), that epithet remained as a symbol of antiquity and, over the centuries, fostered the local collective imagination that even managed to justify the rather abstruse shape and legendary function of its main parish Church.

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Nave. South wall. Altarpiece. Sculptural ensemble. Holy Family.



Nave. North wall. Plinth. Sculpture. Saint Francis of Assisi

Chancel. Main altarpiece.



## CONTEMPORARY INTERVENTIONS

Only in the 1940s can we find records of interventions carried out in the Church of Saint Martin (Antunes, 2006), by this time part of the interventionist policy developed since 1929 by the DGEMN – Direção-Geral dos Edifícios e Monumentos Nacionais [General Directorate for Buildings and National Monuments]<sup>11</sup>. Taking on the responsibility for the ideological enterprise of the “material” restoration of the Motherland, according to a materialisation of the “cult of monuments”<sup>12</sup> and at the service of a triumphalist vision of history, which was highly cherished by the “Estado Novo” [authoritarian regime installed in Portugal between 1926 and 1974], the DGEMN eventually became the instrument that materialised a political ideology that sought, and found, its legitimacy through the praise of the National past.

Among the “national monuments” cherished by the “Estado Novo” we will find that there was special affection for those that had been built during the Medieval Period and to which Saint Martin of Mouros belongs, in a very special way. In fact, according to a noticeable preference for monuments associated with the period of the Formation of the Portuguese Nationality, certain Romanesque buildings underwent interventions that were entirely guided by the same principles, since they were intended for the same purposes, as well as performed and implemented by the same DGEMN<sup>13</sup>.

Since the monument’s primitive state was considered as the purest one, because it was related to its origin and to the period meant to be emphasised, DGEMN constantly sought to retrieve that exact state through the elimination of the elements that were seen as being involved in the transformation of its legibility over time. Therefore, the stylistic reintegration was established as the most important restoration trend, legitimised by the stylistic restoration principle (Tomé, 1998: 18, 20).

In the specific case of the intervention carried out in Saint Martin of Mouros we should highlight a few aspects. First of all, the somewhat late nature of this restoration, which was only carried out after the centenary celebrations of 1940, a circumstance that can only be justified by the fact that it was considered that this building retained its Medieval appearance in a satisfactory way. However, comparing the existing documentary data with the iconography related to the intervention that was carried out here between 1941 and 1951, we immediately realize that the main concern was the rhetorical emphasis of its Medieval nature. This emphasis was materialised in two specific directions.

11 The DGEMN was established by Decree no. 16 791, dated April 30<sup>th</sup>; at the time it was under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Trade and Communications and gathered the services whose responsibilities focused on national buildings and monuments, namely in terms of the conduction of construction works.

12 On the DGEMN, its organisational composition, functions, directors and technicians, please read Neto (2001: 203).

13 On the ideology behind the DGEMN’s intervention in Medieval monuments and its materialization please read Rodrigues (1999: 69-82).



West façade and churchyard before the intervention carried out by the DGEMN. Source: IHRU archive.



South façade before the intervention carried out by the DGEMN. Source: IHRU archive.

First of all, there was an extreme concern in stressing the façade's tower-shaped nature. So, the building was lowered to the cornice level, which led to the reconstruction of the belfry which gave it a somewhat elevated appearance. That campaign required an extensive intervention on the wall faces of the north façade, which explains the fact that the buttresses are currently finished with wedges, which were uncommon shapes in the Romanesque Period. Note, once again, that the militarised tone of the Church of Saint Martin of Mouros is more rhetorical than actually real; it was a feature that this intervention sought to enhance by releasing the belfry from visual constraints, while asserting it formally, as if it was some kind of watchtower.

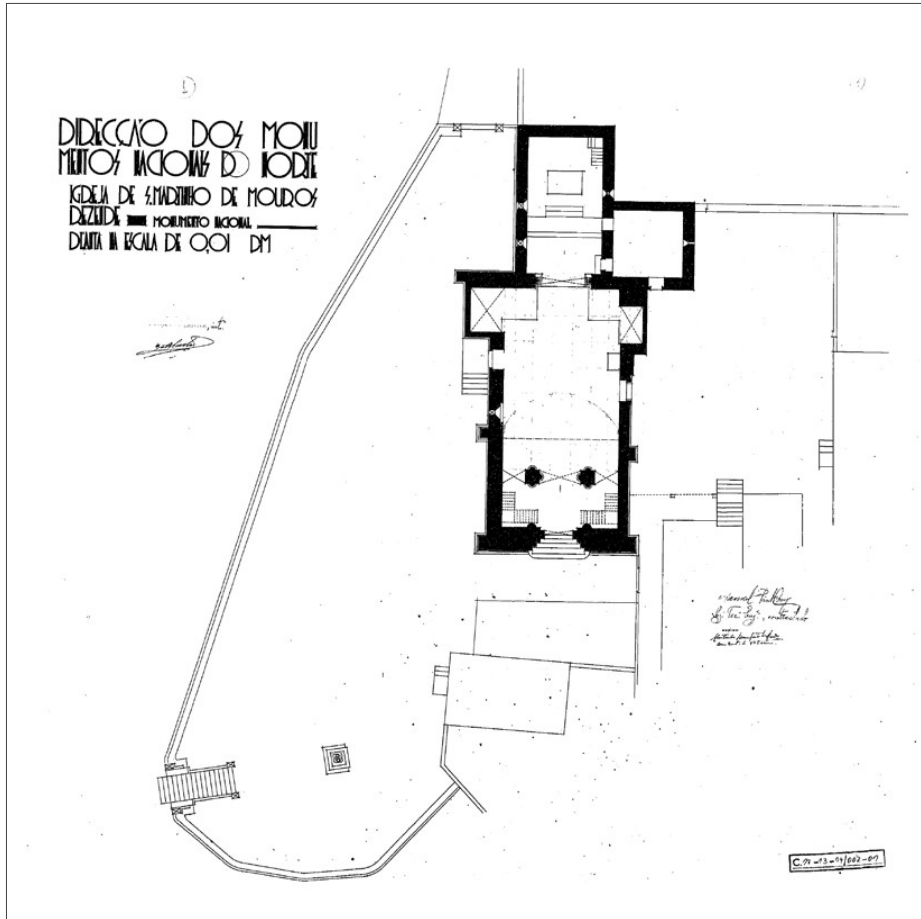
Then, this formal improvement was emphasised by the need to widen the area from which the monument could be admired, i.e., through the clearance of its most immediate surroundings. Both the plans and the photographs prior to this intervention, which we can observe in the archive of the extinct DGEMN, show the existence of a series of buildings adjacent to the south façade that created a much narrower space in front of the main façade than the one that currently exists. The demolition of these vernacular dwellings, dominated by the use of rammed earth, led to the construction of a terrace that opens this Romanesque building towards the landscape and, in turn, allows it to have the building on its horizon. The creation of that terrace was made according to the practice that was followed at the time in terms of the treatment given to the monuments' surroundings, which was focused on the hygienisation of degraded urban areas and on freeing area around historical and monumental buildings through the opening of wide spaces – the so-called "sventramenti"<sup>14</sup>. By way of example, note the cases of the Porto cathedral and of the Funchal cathedral<sup>15</sup>.

Inside we also find, although in a more discreet way, a will to glorify Saint Martin of Mouro's Medieval traits. More discreet because, although several artistic elements of the Modern Period

<sup>14</sup> Simultaneously to those careful "archaeological restorations", there are proposals for grandiloquent sceneries that emphasise the monumentality of the rediscovered Imperial Rome (González-Varas, 2000: 239). The "sventramenti" are an "operation of radical transformation of the architectural and social-economic structure of historic centres, which was being developed in Italian cities" under Mussolini's regime (González-Varas, 2000: 359).

<sup>15</sup> About the subject, please read Botelho (2006: 125-129).

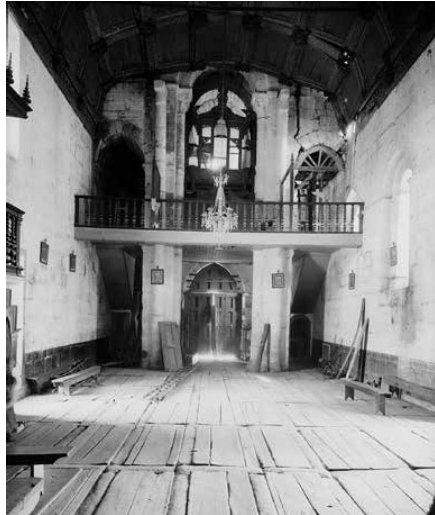




Church and churchyard plan before the works carried out by the DGEMN. Source: IHRU archive.

were kept – such as the main altarpiece, the collateral altarpieces and one of the nave’s altarpieces, besides some statuary pieces and the pulpit –, during the interventions carried out in the 1940s the high choir that existed in the nave’s first bay was demolished. Resorting to the robust pillars that exist in this area of the Church as support elements, the access to this wooden structure was made through two staircases with various flights, located on each of the angles of this religious space. Furthermore, the inner plaster was removed with the clear intention to emphasise the ancestry of the granite that shapes this Church’s structure.

However, one of the most extensive interventions related to the chancel’s interior was carried out in the 1960’s. So, in 1962, the lateral wall on the Epistle side, i.e., on the observer’s right, was demolished and rebuilt; since then, the interesting three-centred arch decorated with pearls that is opened above the level of the access door to the sacristy has been kept visible. We do not know the true reason behind the existence of this arch, whose position takes on somewhat unusual features, and we also have no knowledge on the causes that led it to be walled up. Only the emergence of documents related to this could lead us to a more conclusive idea.



Nave before the intervention carried out by the DGEMN. Source: IHRU archive.



Intervention in the chancel (1959). Source: IHRU archive.

In addition to the more visible interventions, the Church of Saint Martin of Mouros has been subject to several preservation actions related both to its architecture and to its artistic elements and liturgical furnishings since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

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In 2010, Saint Martin of Mouros became part of the Route of the Romanesque. [MLB / NR]



Intervention in the nave (1946). Source: IHRU archive.

## CHRONOLOGY

1057: taking of the castle of Saint Martin to the "Moors" by Ferdinand the Great;

1111: the Countess Teresa grants the foral charter to São Martinho de Mouros;

1217: the year that marks the beginning of the construction of the Church of Saint Martin;

1258: the General Inquiries allude to the royal patronage of the Church of Saint Martin of Mouros;

1342: the charters of São Martinho de Mouros are drawn up, documenting aspects of its proto-municipalist and communitarian organisation;

1455: the patronage of the Church is transferred from the Crown to the House of Marialva;

1513: King Manuel I grants a new foral charter to São Martinho de Mouros;

1531/1532: Rui Fernandes, a chronicler and merchant, mentions São Martinho and the valley of the Bestança brook;

1534 (c.): painting of the boards depicting Saint Martin's life;

1543: the patronage of the Church is transferred to the University of Coimbra;

1638-1649: news about multiple payments for one-off works in the Church and in the parish residence;

1758: the rector João da Cruz, parish priest of São Martinho, signs the memoir that draws a social, economic and artistic portrait of the parish;

1941-1951: conduction of restoration works on the main façade and on the Church's protection area, under the DGEMN's responsibility.

1962-1968: the chancel and sacristy of the Church of Saint Martin of Mouros are subject to a major restoration intervention, under the DGEMN's responsibility.

From the 1970's until the present day: the Church of Saint Martin of Mouros has been subject to several preservation interventions;

2010: integration of the Church of Saint Martin of Mouros in the Route of the Romanesque.

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