

**CHURCH**  
OF SAINT  
ANDREW OF VILA  
BOA DE QUIRES  
MARCO DE CANAVESES

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Plan.

## HISTORICAL SUMMARY

**T**he epicentre of the influence of the Portocarreiros – a lineage that was particularly important within the context of the manorial assertion of the 13<sup>th</sup> century –, in the Middle Ages, the “couto” [a type of Portuguese administrative division] of Vila Boa de Quires stood out as a centre from which family and ecclesiastical interests emanated (Sottomayor-Pizarro, 1997: 909). In the shadow of a “11<sup>th</sup>-century” monastic institute, according to José Mattoso’s (2002: 105) suggestion, various interests were hatched after the monastery’s rights were divided between several heirs. However, there are several doubts concerning its founders and the rule that it initially followed. José Mattoso roots it in the Gascos’ descent and wonders if it might have adopted the Cluniac rule (although the connection to Paço de Sousa, in Penafiel, almost surely confirms the adoption of the Benedictine rule).

The author of the article on “Vila Boa de Quires” summarises the situation of the territory in the 13<sup>th</sup> century: ““couto” of the monastery; “honra” [a type of Portuguese administrative division] of Portocarreiro, which is similar to “couto”; and “honra” of Buriz” (Correia et al., 1963: 361-363). Until very recently there were still extremely expressive legacies of the local long-lasting land-owning nobility, which produced unique works such as the Portocarreiros’ tower (of which only the memory remains) and the exuberant façade of the palatial house whose mentor was, supposedly, António José de Vasconcelos de Carvalho e Meneses (1714-1799). The low income collected by the monastic institute, despite the legacies left by the nobility, must have contributed to its secularization. In 1320, it contributed with a tax of 30 “libras”

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Façade of the (unfinished) noble house of the Portocarreiros (also known as the unfinished palace of Vila Boa de Quires or the fidalgo's works) (Marco de Canaveses).

[former Portuguese currency unit] for the crusades of King Dinis; at the time it would already be a parish church and in 1536 it became a commandment of the Order of Christ, held by the House of Bragança (Sousa, 1745: 212).

The author of *Corografia portuguesa...* gives us more information on this aspect: “and because this is the first time we talk of a Commendation of the House of Bragança, what many do not know, because these news are not public to everyone, is that this Royal House has over forty Commendations in this kingdom, which it gives to whomever it sees fit, and makes a few noblemen, and ones and the others enjoy the rights made and granted by the Kings” (Costa, 1706-1712: 396). In fact, given that the House of Bragança was a state within the State, it managed its material and immaterial assets with the autonomy and the prerogatives that no other Portuguese noble house held. Within the sphere of this state there were several commanders who enjoyed close relationships with the dukes: Pedro de Castro (1536), Vasco Fernandes Caminha (around 1539), João de Tovar Caminha (around 1550-1614) and Rui de Sousa Pereira (around 1631), among others (Cunha, 2004). The connection between this commendation and the titled nobility is explained by its profitability: in 1706 the commander was earning 600 thousand “réis” [former Portuguese currency unit], adding up to the income from the parish of Rande, Penafiel (Costa, 1706-1712: 396). So, it was a tempting commendation.

In 1758, the graduate Tomás António de Noronha e Meneses, who signed the memoir of Vila Boa de Quires, already clarified the temporal jurisdictions of his parish:

“It belongs to the land and county of Porto Carreiro that comprises only half of this Parish, and the Parish of Abragam, and the Parish of Maureles, and the other half of the aforementioned parish is a “Couto”, which comprises part of the Parish of Reçezinhos and part of the Parish of Constança, and all of them are subject to the the said county, as far as criminal cases are concerned” (Meneses, 1758).

In 1853, Vila Boa Quires belonged to the municipality and judicial district of Penafiel, had 393 dwellings, was held by the House of Bragança and its rector received a rate of 250 “réis” from his parishioners (Marques, 1853: 275)<sup>1</sup>.

As a consequence of Law no. 11-A/2013, of January 28<sup>th</sup> 2013, regarding the administrative reorganization of the territory of the Portuguese parishes, Vila Boa de Quires was integrated into the parish of Maureles, being currently one of the 16 parishes that compose the municipality of Marco de Canaveses.

<sup>1</sup> On this date the rector of Vila Boa de Quires presented the parish priest of Canas de Duas Igrejas, in the municipality of Penafiel, according to the information found in the same dictionary (Marques, 1853: 59).

## THE CHURCH IN THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

**A**lthough the foundation of the monastery of Vila Boa de Quires surely occurred before 1118, year in which there is already a reference to the “monastery [known as] Vila Boa de Quires” (Mattoso, 2002: 53), the Romanesque elements that still remain actually point out to a later chronology. Supposedly, an inscription with the date 1180 was discovered during the works that were carried out in 1881, which we shall mention further on; however, Mário Barroca emphasises that there is no information on this possible epigraph, of which there are no traces and whose existence and chronology should be seen with the necessary caution (Barroca, 2000: 430). However, besides the stylistic elements, there are several initials, some of them alphabetic, with a Gothic appearance that confirm that this construction may date back to the second quarter of the 13<sup>th</sup> century or already to the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century.



South façade. Nave. Arcosolia. Voussoirs. Initials.

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, and they are also reliable indicators of the chronology of its construction. 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). 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 stonema-

sons identified the ashlar they carved and assembled with marks that could range from graphic signs to letters of the alphabet. Despite the fact that there are a few more elaborate symbols, which adopt figurative shapes, usually we find carved signs easy to engrave (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. However, we should highlight the fact that these initials should not be understood as a sort of emblem identifying a specific group; its use – unless they are very special signs or signs found in buildings that are closely related – should be analysed separately in each building, considering that their arrangement can be completely random (Nuño González, 2005: 95).

Furthermore, and despite the fact that we exceptionally find stonemasons' initials in a few Classical monuments, these are essentially a phenomenon from the late Middle Ages (Almeida, 1978: 44). Except for two Cistercian abbeys from the Beira region (Tarouca and Salzedas, both in the municipality of Tarouca), the use of initials prior to the 13<sup>th</sup> century seems to have been very rare. Its use became rather common in the second quarter of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, thus being quite regularly found in works that date back to the third quarter. According to Carlos Alberto Ferreira de Almeida, we should agree that, after the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century, the habit of carving initials was common to all stonemasons who would do it out of pleasure or tradition; however, we should highlight that whenever the stonemasons were paid on a daily basis or worked for free, the initials were not required (Almeida, 1978: 45-46). We should not forget that the workers' wages only began timidly regulated in the late Middle Ages and the existing information on that subject is not enough to allow establishing general rules (Huerta Huerta, 2004: 126).

To this aspects we should add the ones associated with the graphic evolution that the initials underwent over the last three centuries of the Middle Ages (Almeida, 1978: 46). Despite the fact that we always find simple signs side by side with very elaborate ones, the general trend was for their drawings to become more complex and, ever more often, take the alphabetic or ideographic shape. So, in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, these initials were predominantly simple, many of them alphabetic, and some of them with an ideographic appearance at the end, i.e., there were stonemasons who presented, as their initials, a representation of the object associated with their surnames.

So, we stand before a Church that was surely built from the second quarter of the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Although the Church's only nave was moved about 10 meters to the west in 1881, as we shall see further on, the truth is that in this large extension of the nave "there was great concern in respecting its architectural style, meaning that the existing façade, despite small differences, is quite similar to the one it had before the extension. It was moved just a few meters forward, preserving its elegant frontispiece which is currently more eye-catching and free" (Leal, 1873-1890: 674).

In terms of composition, this is one of the most elaborate façades in the Baixo Tâmega region. The frontispiece is surmounted by a large window, which reminds us of some of the features of the façade of Paço de Sousa, despite the fact that here we have a building with a single nave, meaning that the façade's elevated central area, which creates an illusive difference in heights, is entirely due to the somewhat excessive size (Graf, 1986: 101) of the window; the window features a polygonal mullion, a clear sign of its late chronology, way into the Gothic period. The



West façade.

tympanum is decorated with a hollowed cross<sup>2</sup>. It is surrounded by a series of three elongated archivolt, whose columns feature capitals with similar botanic motifs on the left side. On the other side the capitals are all different; the inner one depicts affronted animals on the edge, the central one features a small mask on the upper corner (perhaps a monk? (Basto, 2006)) and the outer one shows what seems to be a stylized human figure (a scowl? (Basto, 2006)).

The upper end of the main portal is only separated from the base of the window by a row of ashlar. The portal, which is stylistically close to the one of the Monastery of Paço de Sousa, has four slightly broken archivolt defined by a surrounding arch ornamented with the typically Romanesque decorative motif “no. 3”, defined by Joaquim de Vasconcelos as “secant circles with a double movement, centred; ribbon” (Vasconcelos & Abreu, 1918: 69). On the impost, which stretch along the façade much like a sort of plain frieze, we see motif “no. 10” of the same inventory, which is described as follows: “five-leaved stylized ivy; vertical, loose motifs” (Vasconcelos & Abreu, 1918: 69). On the flat tympanum, there is an inscription related to the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century expansion, which reads: AMPLIADA EM 1881 [EXTENDED IN 1881].

However, the greatest similarities with the portal of Paço de Sousa are identified in the carving style of the capitals and in the motifs of the corbels, shaped like bovine heads. Here, in Vila Boa de Quires, the typical bevelled cut of the so-called “nationalized Romanesque” style – which evolved within the sphere of influence of the Monastery where Egas Moniz, the Schoolmaster and Governor, is buried – shows one of its most eloquent examples. We should also notice the late chronology of the monuments that were built within this Monastery’s



West façade. Mullioned window.

<sup>2</sup> Gerhard N. Graf (1986: 101) believes that these were the elements introduced by the “embellishment” of 1881, considering the fact that the mullion was carved in a different material.





Church of São Pedro de Rates (Póvoa de Varzim), West façade. Portal.



South façade. Nave. Portal.

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sphere of influence, most of which are the result of the reconstruction of pre-existing buildings carried out during the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century, as in the case of Vila Boa de Quires, a fact that also contributes to corroborate what we have said before.

Reinaldo dos Santos identified an element to justify the unitary nature of the Romanesque group that sprung out from Paço de Sousa: the sculptural treatment given to the plane bas-relief decoration with a bevelled cut. This plasticity is the exact opposite of the plastic treatment given to Romanesque sculptures in the Braga-Rates axis, which is thicker and more turgid, providing the sculptural motifs with an enhanced volumetry and creating a real chiaroscuro effect. In the Sousa river basin, the sculptural treatment reminds Reinaldo dos Santos of the technique used in bas-reliefs on wood, which are more engraved than modelled, sometimes suggesting Visigoth or Byzantine art (Vasconcelos & Abreu, 1918: 69).

In the main portal of Vila Boa de Quires, the capitals show symmetrical motifs, with a botanic and stylized flavour, well attached to the frustum. The alternately prismatic and cylindrical columns that shape this portal are another sign of the chronological and stylistic integration, if we may say so, of this Church of Vila Boa de Quires in the so-called “nationalized Romanesque” movement<sup>3</sup>.

The south portal is also richly ornamented and is considered as being particularly interesting (Graf, 1986: 101). This very well-preserved portal presents, just like the main one, two sculpted corbels supporting a flat tympanum: a bovine head and a terrifying animal, with an open mouth, is biting a fruit. When Armando de Mattos (1949: 59) suggests that the capitals found in this portal are older than the ones on the main portal, being perhaps reused materials

<sup>3</sup> For further development on this matter, please read Botelho (2010: 453).



from an older building, we believe that the author still had not understood the strength that the local pre-existences and the autochthonous essence had in terms of Romanesque sculpture and, especially, in the formation of a language that was so specific of the Portuguese Romanesque context that deserved the epithet of “nationalized Romanesque”.

With capitals that show clear similarities with the ones found in the portal of Saint Genesis of Boelhe (Penafiel) (Rosas & Sottomayor-Pizarro, 2009: 110), the south portal of Vila Boa de Quires is extremely well preserved. Carved with bevels, they show elaborate vegetal motifs combined with phytomorphic compositions and, in the left inner capital, affronted animals remind us of the strength that oriental influences had among us. We cannot fail to mention the contribution of the Muslim and North-African art that, by entering the Iberian Peninsula in the 8<sup>th</sup> century, introduced a new element (Correia, 1949: 1). Although the idea that “Romanesque decoration received abundant Oriental influences has been a consolidated doctrine in the History of Art for a long time”, Vergílio Correia was still very reluctant to accept that “part of that decoration with an Oriental nature met the Romanesque via the Muslim Spain and its cultural splendour” (Correia, 1949: 42).

From the three pointed archivolts, the two inner ones feature sharp edges, while the outer one is dotted with pearls in its chamfer. We should note the initials found in their voussoirs. On the impostes we see two motifs that were identified by Joaquim de Vasconcelos in a monumental work published in 1918 called *Arte românica em Portugal*. On the portal's right side we find the “vertical, five-leaved stylized ivy (...)”, identified with no. 22, a similar motif to the one found of the impostes of the main portal, identified with no. 10 (Vasconcelos & Abreu, 1918: 69); the only difference is related to the fact that, in this portal, it is not a “loose” motif, but rather a “connected” one. On the other side, we find motif no.34 that, according to Joaquim de Vasconcelos, represents a “simple, seven-pointed fig-tree leaves, connected motif; half-relief. Sometimes it is mistaken for ivy due to its stylization” (Vasconcelos & Abreu, 1918: 72).

In this south elevation, we should also highlight the corbels that support the cornice which, for being mostly plain and with a square profile, confirm the late chronology of the building under study<sup>4</sup>. The existence of corbels (which are also quadrangular) halfway up the façade tells us about the prior existence of a porch-like structure. Because these structures were built using ephemeral materials (such as wood and tile) they did not reach the present day. Within the context of Portuguese Romanesque buildings, the purposes of these porch-like spaces may have been many: from a meeting place to a simple shelter for devotees. Narrow crevices illuminate the nave's interior.

Three broken arcossolia are carved into this façade's wall face, at the nave's ground level, showing sepulchral lids whose shape does not match the arch's space (Rosas & Sottomayor-Pizarro, 2009: 110). By definition, funerary arcossolia are structures that were attached to or carved into the thickness of the walls and were intended to accommodate funerary monuments; depending on the period, they feature round or pointed arches (Barroca, 1987: 399). These three specimens of Vila Boa de Quires stand out for the complete absence of decorative



Church of Boelhe (Penafiel).  
West façade. Portal.



West and south façades  
and bell tower.

<sup>4</sup> We should not forget that some of these corbels are a result of the expansion works carried out in 1881.



South façade. Nave. Portal. Corbel, capitals and impost.



South façade. Nave. Portal. Corbel, capitals and impost.



South façade. Nave. Arcosolia.

motifs and for not bearing any identifying element regarding who is actually buried in them (epigraph, coat of arms, etc.).

The north façade is extremely simple. Narrow crevices illuminate the nave's interior and the presence of corbels halfway up its elevation also confirms the presence of a now missing porch-like structure. However, its series of corbels is richer. Although they are mostly flat, there are two corbels that stand out for having the shape of a bovine head and a human face. A scar on the wall denounces the existence of a portal in front of the one on the south elevation, defined by a simple broken archivolt. The straight-lintel portal that allows accessing the Church's interior from this elevation most certainly belongs to the Modern Period.

The care put on the ends of the building's back walls shows the quality of the workshop (or workshops) that worked in the Romanesque construction of Vila Boa de Quires. The nave's back gable is punctuated by pearls, a theme that was taken to the extreme in the Church of Veade (Celorico de Basto); the chancel's terminal cross is pattée. The "Monastery Ville Bone de Queeriz" was still active in 1258 (Mattoso, 2002: 53), and the Church was only turned into a parish church in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century, before 1320 (Sousa, 2005: 71). So, this Church was built as a monastic church, which helps to understand the quality and the elaborate nature of its construction.



North façade. Nave.



North façade. Chancel.



General interior view from the nave.

Let us go inside this Romanesque Church of Vila Boa de Quires. The sobriety of the granite from the nave's walls contrasts, in an almost shocking way, with the colourfulness found in the chancel. We should not forget that, in the Romanesque Period, seldom would sacred grounds present a plain atmosphere. The polychromy of the walls was combined with textile elements. The clean look of the stone inside the churches is the result of a recent interpretation that dates back to the restoration interventions carried out in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Despite its somewhat *naïf* appearance, the polychromy found on the Church's Romanesque triumphal arch may allow us to conduct a good mental exercise on the actual appearance of our Romanesque architectural sculpture. The triumphal arch, also broken, is composed of three archivolt; the outer one is punctuated by pearls and surmounted by the same motif no. 3 that surrounds the main portal. The central archivolt is surmounted by a torus and the inner archivolt is punctuated on each of its voussoirs by a "high-relief, four-leaved myosotis, placed on the stone", which corresponds to "motif no. 23" of Joaquim de Vasconcelos's ornamental inventory. The capitals that support them are quite interesting; they feature sculpted palmettes and mermaids with intertwined tails. The sculpture is not very protruding and is not that well adapted to the capital's shape, revealing an author that was not the same that designed the Church's portals. With a similar composition to that of the apse of Abragão (Penafiel) (Rosas & Sottomayor-Pizarro, 2009: 110), the chancel of Vila Boa de Quires is vaulted and features a transverse arch which defines two bays and is supported by pilasters decorated with palmettes carved in relief on the imposts.



Chancel.



Church of Abragão (Penafiel). Chancel.



## THE MODERN PERIOD IN VILA BOA DE QUIRES

**A**fter mentioning the secular and temporal jurisdictions associated with Vila Boa do Bispo in 1758, the graduate Tomás António de Noronha e Meneses adds the following information on the parish:

“(...) it is located in the middle of the parish, out of place (...) § Its patron saint is Saint Andrew, placed on the main altar of the parish Church, on which we also find the Sacramentum, and, on the altar, there is also the image of Saint Peter, and it features three more Altars, one of Our Lady of the Rosary, the other of the Infant Jesus, the other of the Souls, with a single nave (...)” (Meneses, 1758)<sup>5</sup>.

Currently it counts the same number of altars, although these were modified according to new tastes and new intervention techniques (which were not always designed to ensure the conservation of the existing heritage). On the other hand, the ecclesiastical space was filled with new devotions from 1758 onwards. Their presence is a new record of local spirituality and religiosity for which several factors contributed, from the preaching itself to the waves of devotions that characterized specific periods (such as, for example, and since 1917, the Virgin of the Rosary of Fátima).

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The replacement of the Baroque altarpiece that existed in the chancel probably took place during the building works campaign of the second quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The one we can currently see shows a language with Neoclassical origins that incorporates ornamental elements from different styles, namely the Romanesque and the Baroque. It displays the images of Saint Andrew (17<sup>th</sup> century), the patron saint, on the Gospel side, and Saint Peter (18<sup>th</sup> century), on the Epistle side. In the middle, concealing the throne, there is a large-sized canvas showing the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and the Mystic Lamb by two angels who, bending one of the knees over the altar's pedestal, are solemnly praying. The scene is surmounted by the Eye of Providence and six angel heads hovering over an ostensory. This work dates back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

From the Baroque programme that used to decorate the chancel, only the tiles and the vault's paintings remain. These tiles, which were identified by Santos Simões (1971: 28), cover the wall up to the cove, with a height of 20 pieces. This tiled ensemble, in shades of blue and yellow on a white background, creates an effect of deep contrast with the granite from the Church's interior. Finding this cladding inside the chancel of Vila Boa de Quires is quite remarkable and shows that there was a will to ennoble this space; however, there was the need to use a more cost-effective technique that, even so, is still as monumental in terms of the noble character it provides the space with. We are before a typical example of the “carpet-type” tile, so characteristic of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The patterning technique took on a significant relevance,



Chancel. Main altarpiece.

<sup>5</sup> To answer question number 16, he states: “Half of this Parish belongs to the “couto” [a type of Portuguese administrative division], has an ordinary judge and a weights and measurements inspector, and the other part, which belongs to the municipality of Porto Carreiro, also has an ordinary judge, and the Council, and both are subject to the Chief Magistrate of the “Comarca” [a type of Portuguese administrative and judicial division]” (Meneses, 1758).





Chancel Tiles.



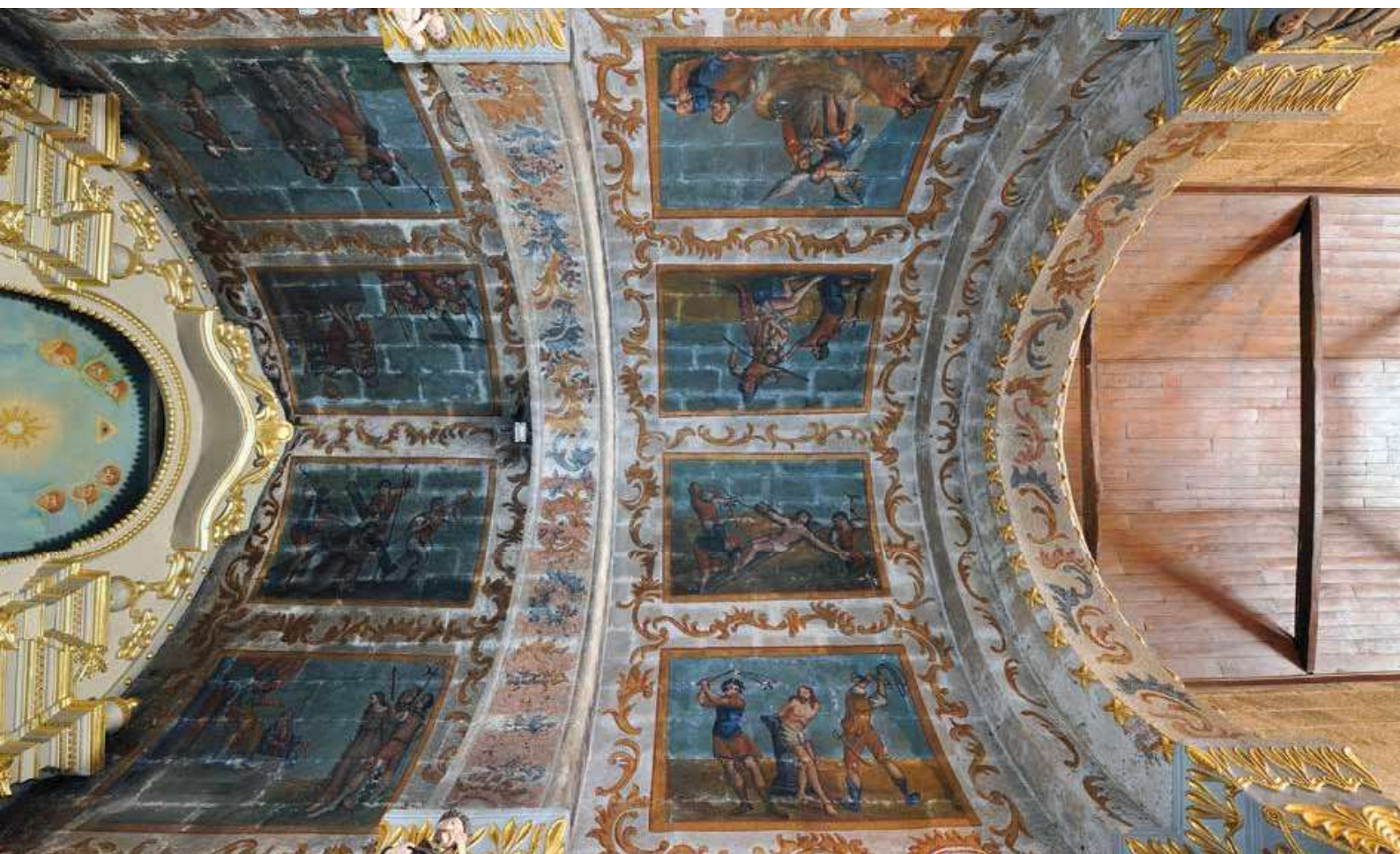
Church of Airães (Felgueiras). Chancel Tiles.

especially during the first half of the century (Meco, 1989: 134); it was the most abundant and characterizing technique of this period in terms of wall cladding. Through the development of geometric compositions and the combination of tiles to form surfaces, we see repeated motifs that lead to the emergence of patterns or serial compositions of surface repetition. The module is repeated and a (diagonal) interconnection appears between the decorative motifs. Seldom do the patterns take up a single tile. In the Church of Saint Mary of Airães (Felgueiras) the chancel's tile motif takes up 2x2 tiles and its design only gains figurative meaning in a group of four tiles. In Vila Boa de Quires we see a 6x6 pattern instead. According to Santos Simões, the 6x6 modular patterns are intended for large surfaces, however, their repertoire is limited to a few variants (Simões, 1971: 111). The most common one, which he identifies as "P-604"<sup>6</sup>, is precisely the one we find in the chancel of Vila Boa de Quires.

The decoration that surrounds this 17<sup>th</sup>-century "carpet-type" tile of Vila Boa de Quires is known as F-10 (Simões, 1971: 28, 131) and, by far, it is the type of frieze more commonly used in Portugal (Simões, 1971: 127). As the author explains, the tile carpets were always limited by surrounding decorations that define their space, thus framing the patterns (Simões, 1971: 127). Furthermore, like true "carpets", they have their borders that separate the central part from the architectural accidents (mouldings, openings, cornices, etc.).

In the chancel, two pictorial sets of the "brutesque" type still remain, narrating the painful mysteries of the religious and civil proceedings of the Passion and Death of Christ in eight

<sup>6</sup> The author documented the presence of this motif – presented in eight elements generated by six matrices – in almost 80 different places, from the church of Saint Christopher of Caminha to the remotest ends of Brasil (old convent of Our Lady of the Angels, in Cabo Frio) (Simões, 1971: 111).



Chancel Vault. Paintings.

pictures. The author of *Portugal antigo e moderno...*, while describing the Church in 1886, mentions them using the following words: “vaulted chancel with panels and good oil paintings depicting the Passion of the Saviour”. On the first ensemble, from the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, from the Gospel to the Epistle side we see: the kiss of Judas and the imprisonment of Christ (Mt 26, 49); the *Ecce Homo* (Mt 27, 28), the way to the Golgotha (Mt 27: 31-32) and the presentation before Pilate (Mt 27, 1-2). On the second ensemble or line of panels, according to the same direction of observation, we see: the Prayer and Agony in the Garden (Mt 26, 36-46; Mk 14, 34-42; Lk 22, 39-46; Jo 18, 1); the Mocking or Humiliation of Jesus Christ (commonly known as the “Lord of the Green Cane”) (Mt 27, 27-30; Mk 15, 16-19; Jo 19, 1-3); the Crucifixion (Mt 27, 34; Lk 23-33; Jo 19, 18; Mk 15, 23-25, 27-28); and the Flagellation (popularly known as the “Lord Tied to the Column”) (Mt 27, 26).

The reading of this visual narrative should be made according to a spiral and counter-spiral movement, beginning on the Gospel side and moving from the chancel arch towards the chevet, from there to the opposite point and, conversely, by returning to the second panel and going from this one to the panel below and returning up close to the altarpiece and from there to the panel below; in this way, the image of the Crucifixion is connected to the monumental depiction of the *Calvary* whose painting occupies the entire surface above the chancel arch, on the face that opens towards the nave<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> The crucifix that should be placed at the crevice's level is missing from this composition. We do not know if it ever existed, either hanging from or attached to the wall. However, it was not possible to identify, among the Church's sculptural assets, a sculptural ensemble that could fit into that space.

Despite being chromatically attractive, these panels reveal the stroke of a painter or painters who were not very erudite, as proven by the lack of expression on the faces and the defective treatment of the volumes – which was aggravated due to the fact that the pigment was applied over a thin preparatory layer (the joints between the voussoirs damage the integrity of the paintings). However, it is a curious and eccentric example of a finishing painting (the expression mural painting is poorly applied in this case) that provides the stone vault with a type of work that is usually associated with carpentry and woodwork, like in coffered ceilings.

The composition, which repainted in a recent period, included the Romanesque decoration of the chancel arch, the archivolts and the intrados, up to the capitals' level, recalling, as we've mentioned before – despite the time gap, the techniques and the underlying function –, the custom of applying polychrome paintings over the decoration and the structure of Medieval churches.

In terms of the nave, we should highlight the collateral altars and their corresponding altarpieces, which were reconstructed at a date we ignore, reusing the Mannerist and Baroque structural and ornamental elements – despite being deeply damaged by the existing repaintings. The collateral altar located on the north wall is currently dedicated to Our Lady of Sorrows and the one on the south wall is dedicated to the Virgin of the Rosary of Fátima. Both are painted at the attic's level: the former depicts God the Father with a blessing gesture and the latter has a depiction of the Holy Spirit as a dove.

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Nave. Collateral altarpiece on the Gospel side.



Nave. Collateral altarpiece on the Epistle side.



Nave. North wall Altarpiece.

There is another altar embedded on the north wall that, in 1758, was named the altar of the Souls. In fact, behind the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus that currently gives it its name, there is a hidden picture from the transition between the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> century in which the Archangel Michael, judge and guide, assisted by another angel, weighs the souls he will then lead to Paradise among the ones that are hanging or already burning in the fire of Hell. In the attic there is a representation – from the same period and author – of the Holy Trinity flanked by two figures (a male one and a female one, which may be the Virgin and Saint John the Evangelist) that dominates the integrated ensemble of furniture, paintings and imagery, whose original appearance has been, unfortunately, corrupted. The altarpiece, embedded in an opening surmounted by a broken archivolt whose scar (externally visible on the elevation) was

already mentioned, still shows signs of its specific condition – perhaps an altar or chapel that was associated with a family from the local elites.

Along the nave's side walls, some corbels support images that appeal to the local community devotion: such as Saint Nuno of Saint Mary, the Immaculate Conception, Saint Anthony of Lisbon and Saint Joseph (18<sup>th</sup>-century gilded and polychrome sculpture), both carrying the Infant Jesus; the Virgin of the Graces, Infant Jesus Saviour of the World, The Little Flower of Jesus (Saint Thérèse of Lisieux), among others of minor artistic and aesthetic relevance.



Nave. North wall.



Nave. South wall.

## CONTEMPORARY EXTENSIONS AND INTERVENTIONS

On November 9<sup>th</sup>, while responding to the enquiry sent to all parish priests in the bishopric of Porto<sup>8</sup>, which, nevertheless, he claims not having received, abbot José Joaquim Duarte Pinto M. da Costa, parish priest of Vila Boa de Quires, reports that the parish Church, despite “a few repairs”, it is “in a state of complete ruin, extremely miserable in terms of decorations” (Rosas, 1995: 528-529). Considering “all that is still required for its repair!! Furthermore”, abbot José Joaquim, while addressed the Director of Public Works of the city of Porto, Victor Le Cocq, claims: “Your Excellency, it would be a good work, and even a most meritorious one, if Your Excellency would take us under your valuable protection” (Rosas, 1995: 528-529).

But it was only almost twenty years later that the Church of Vila Boa de Quires was subject to a deep intervention that, as we have already mentioned, actually tried to respect its primitive elements despite the “improvements” introduced at the time. We were unable to find any previously unpublished source about it, so we chose to quote the description provided by Pedro Augusto Ferreira, the abbot of Miragaia (1833-1913), who resumed Pinho Leal’s work *Portugal antigo e moderno...?*:

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“The mother church is a very old, small, but worthy temple, with a Gothic style, walls clad in tiles, surmounted by several figures and mermaids sculpted in granite, a vaulted chancel with panels and good oil paintings depicting the Redeemer’s Steps; a main altar and 4 lateral ones, all in old gilded woodwork, and the confraternities or brotherhoods of the Blessed Sacrament, Our Lady of the Rosary and the God Child, all founded a long time ago. § As the church was too small for the parish’s current population, it has been recently enlarged, expanding almost to its double in size, extending the lateral walls until they covered the galilee or porch it had in the front, which was slightly lower than the church, closed on the south side by the wall, supported by stone columns on the north and west sides, and attached, to the east, to the church’s frontispiece, which faced and is still facing west. § They also added a tower, because it only had a belfry with two bell openings that surmounted the temple’s façade. § The greatest care was taken to respect its architectural style, so its current façade is only slightly different from the one it had before the extension. It was placed only a few meters further ahead, thus preserving its elegant portico, which is currently more eye-catching and free, with its four orders of columns and their corresponding arcades supported by richly ornamented capitals, showing heads of oxen and other animals, all in granite and, above them, the crevice of the old temple, displaying the same style as the portico. § A stone with a date that was believed to be 1180 was found during the demolition and removal. § After the extension of the temple, the altars were restored and gilded anew and the parish residence was added. § All

<sup>8</sup>Victor Le Cocq, through an order issued by the Minister of Public Works, had been commissioned to draw up a map of the state of repair, corresponding repairs and authorised expenses of all the buildings under that Ministry’s management. These buildings included those that were considered monuments, parish churches and public chapels, among others (Rosas, 1995: 511).

<sup>9</sup> He is the author of the final part of volume X and of volumes XI and XII.

these works were carried out thanks to the spontaneous generosity of a few well-deserving parishioners, under the active and zealous supervision of the not less well-deserving priest Victorino José Alves, royal priest in this parish, who was very efficiently helped by Antonio de Vasconcellos, from the noble house of Chãos” (Leal, 1873-1890: 674).

This concern with the respect for the Church’s primitive style meets what was being done at the time in buildings subject to interventions, which did not prevent the addition of elements to the primitive construction. This is why there is a reference to the “small difference” on the façade that took the place of the primitive galilee. Considering the existing description of the galilee, it would have been extremely elaborate, with arcades and capitals “filled with decorations representing ox heads and other animals”. Where they corbels instead? Is the corbel with the bovine head that we identified on the north façade the result of a reuse, like a minimal reminiscence of this galilee?

Besides the expansion of the nave – an obvious transformation of the structure of the primitive Church –, we should underline the construction of a bell tower, which replaced a gable; it is positioned on the center of the façade and has openings for two bells.

The Church of Vila Boa de Quires was classified as a National Monument in 1927<sup>10</sup>. But, in the mid-1940s, an incessant struggle led by the then parish priest, Manuel Nogueira Coelho, begins. In



North wall. Nave. Corbel.

10 DECREE no. 14425. O.G. [Official Gazette] *Series I*. 228 (1927-10-15) 1989.

fact, an analysis of the administrative processes of the now extinct DGEMN – Direção-Geral dos Edifícios e Monumentos Nacionais [General Directorate for Buildings and National Monuments] shows us that the correspondence exchanged between the parish priest of Vila Boa de Quires and this institution was very active and lasted until the 1970's<sup>11</sup>. The former regrets the oblivion into which his parish church had fallen, the latter postponed the execution of building works. Or alternatively, as in the case of the clock that the parish wanted to install on the Church's tower, it established the requirements for its installation in a time-consuming process that lasted over two years<sup>12</sup>.

However, we should not get the idea that the interventions deemed minimum and urgent were not carried out. However, between 1967 and 1980, there were a series of interventions aimed specifically at the sacristy's roof system (1968), the chancel (1970) and the nave (1971-1972 and 1976). Naturally, other works were carried out, focusing on the masonry, the woodworks and the liturgical furnishings and that even included the Church's electrical installation (1967 and 1980)<sup>13</sup>.

We should not forget that, after the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, DGEMN's intervention policy became less and less visible, i.e., thus seeking, with a few exceptions, to preserve the existing buildings and not so much to restore what was considered to be their primitive image. That is why the removal of the plaster from the naves made in 1977 in Vila Boa de Quires is the intervention that introduced most changes in the building's image during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This intervention also included the "scraping and detachment of paint layers from the nave's wooden ceiling, including its waxing", as well as the conduction of surveys at the pavements' level for future works<sup>14</sup>. It is a shame that we were unable to ascertain anything about the latter.

In the 1990's the appeals came from the Building Commission instead<sup>15</sup>. They were more successful and it was possible to improve the Church's roofing in 1991<sup>16</sup>. [MLB / NR]

In 2010, the Church of Vila Boa de Quires was integrated into the Route of the Romanesque and, in 2013, it was subject to protection, preservation and valuation works. The implementation of the project was aimed at the general preservation of the Church's existing roofs in terms of ceramic cladding, woods, waterproofing systems, as well as tufts and gutters (Monte, 2010: 14-17). Under the scope of this intervention, the cleaning and preserving of the external walls, managed by the parish, was also carried out. In the future, plans have been made to intervene in the existing mural paintings found on the chancel arch and in the chancel, for which a preservation and restoration project has already been developed (Duarte, 2010a), as well as in the chancel's tile cladding (Duarte, 2010b). [RR]

11 Please refer to the documents related to this matter at PT DGEMN:DSARH-010/139-0023 [Online]. Available at: [www: <URL: http://www.monumentos.pt>](http://www.monumentos.pt) [Nº IPA PT011307310006]. In this case, with the purpose of saving space, we decided to reference the process and not every single document as we have been doing, given the extent of the process in question.

12 Idem.

13 Idem.

14 Memória de 29 de março de 1977 [SIPA.TXT.01493656]. Idem.

15 Please refer to the documents related to this matter at PT DGEMN:DSARH-010/139-0023 [Online]. Available at [www: <URL: http://www.monumentos.pt>](http://www.monumentos.pt) [Nº IPA PT011307310006].

16 Memória de 20 de março de 1991 [SIPA.TXT.01493328 and SIPA.TXT.01493328]. Idem.

## CHRONOLOGY

11<sup>th</sup> century: possible foundation of the cenoby of Vila Boa de Quires;

1118: reference to the "monastery [known as] of Vila Boa de Quires";

1180: date supposedly found on an engraving discovered during the works that were carried out in 1881;

13<sup>th</sup> century: references to Vila Boa de Quires as a "couto", to the "honra" of Portocarreiro and to the "honra" of Buriz;

13<sup>th</sup> century (2<sup>nd</sup> quarter or mid-century): construction of the existing Romanesque building of Vila Boa de Quires;

1320: Vila Boa de Quires would already be a parish church;

1536: Vila Boa Quires becomes a Commendation of the House of Bragança;

17<sup>th</sup> century (1<sup>st</sup> half): tiling campaign in the chancel;

1706: the commander of Vila Boa de Quires was earning 600 thousand "réis", adding up to the income from the parish of Rande, Penafiel;

18<sup>th</sup> century (2<sup>nd</sup> half): painting campaign on the chancel's vault;

19<sup>th</sup> century (last quarter): replacement of the Baroque main altarpiece with the existing Neoclassical one;

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1881: extension of the Church, displacing the main façade nearly 10 meters to the west, and construction of the tower;

1927: classification of the Church of Vila Boa de Quires as a National Monument;

1940-1970: conduction of several conservation works, paying a special attention to the Church's roofs;

1947: installation of the clock on the bell tower;

1977: removal of the plaster from the naves and ceiling;

1999: improvement works on the Church's roofs;

2010: integration of the Church of Vila Boa de Quires in the Route of the Romanesque;

2013: works for the general conservation of the Church, focusing on the roofs and external walls.



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