



MEMORIAL
OF ALPENDORADA
MARCO DE CANAVESES

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THE "MARMOIRAIS [MEMORIALS]"

“ In Portugal, especially in the North, there are small isolated monuments along the passageways, whose news, faithful or fanciful, are kept alive by tradition. People call them “marmoirais” (a corruption of the word “memoriais”) or just arches, given the shape of almost all of them” (Vitorino, 1942). It is with these words that Pedro Vitorino tries to define this type of funerary monuments that, from what is known, are exclusively Portuguese and popularly called “arches, little arches, memorials and marmoirais” (Correia et al., 1936-1960: 857). Toponymy has preserved the tradition of these burial sites in the northwest area of Portugal, down to the Vouga. The Medieval documents also confirm the great popularity that this type of monuments achieved in this region. Both the word “Memorial” and the word “Marmoiral” have a clear funerary tone and context. The former, with an erudite origin and seldom found in documents, derives from the Latin word *memorāle* (“that helps memory”), with the meaning of “monumentum, sepulcrum”, while the latter surely corresponds to an evolution of the former through its popular use. Both words combine the ideas of the tomb and memorial monument, thus corresponding to the preserved specimens and to the difficulties in their functional interpretation (Silva, 1998: 21-22).

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Aerial view.

Since, generally, these are independent funeral monuments, the “marmoirais” are stone structures that, including a burial cavity in their base, are also dignified by an arch, which is usually decorated (Barroca, 1987). Within this context, the Marmoiral [Memorial] of Sobrado (Castelo de Paiva) is an exception because, from a typological point of view, it is the only known “marmoiral” that doesn’t include an arch. Located at the entrance of Quinta da Boavista, this monument is composed by two vertical epitaph stones with discoid tops, featuring Latin crosses engraved on each side, which support two horizontal slabs: the upper one is rectangular and the lower one, corresponding to a burial lid, features a convex-shaped surface.

The Memorials of Ermida (Irivo, Penafiel) (Rosas & Barros, 2008: 223-233) and Saint Anthony (Santa Eulália, Arouca) are those that present a structure closer to that one that exists in the parish of Alpendorada e Matos, although the latter, which we’re now analysing, stands out due to the fact that it doesn’t have a sepulchral slab in the arch’s opening (Silva, 1986: 8). Moreover, they show clear structural (and perhaps functional) similarities with the arcossoliums that were opened on the external walls of Romanesque churches (Silva, 1986: 19), from which we may highlight the geographically close example of the Church of Vila Boa Quires (Marco de Canaveses), which is an evidence of this method of building a memorial monument over the graves, in line with an increasingly evident “personalization of death”.

86 According to Mário Barroca (1987: 387), we should seek the roots of the personalization of the Medieval tomb in the Entre-Douro-e-Minho region in the 11th century. We owe this will perpetuate a “post-mortem” memory to the members of the nobility and the high clergy who, at the time, turned the monasteries into the privileged stage for the first expressions of tomb personalization. Several formulas were used to achieve this goal, including the elevation of the grave to a prominent position, through the insertion of inscriptions and coats of arms, which were direct and effective means of individualization, or even through the display of decorations that contribute to a better identification of the person who was buried in the grave. As specified by the same author, the iconographic subjects tend to have a Christian and apotropaic flavour or, at most, in a more advanced period, they allude to religious (sarcophagus of Dume) or allegorical narratives (Barroca, 1987: 390). So, the sarcophagus of Egas Moniz, which we may appreciate in the Church of the Monastery of Paço de Sousa (Penafiel), was designed in the mid-13th century as an attempt to depict the deed of the governor and schoolmaster in its mythical trip to the Court of Toledo (Spain) and is the first evidence of the use of a retrospective subject in funerary sculpture in the Entre-Douro-e-Minho region (Barroca, 1987: 390). Finally, the lying statues are one of the highlights of the whole path towards the personalization of death, an essentially aristocratic and masculine expression, which is a result of the import of a foreign trend (Barroca, 1987: 401). We may refer the examples from the Monastery of Vila Boa do Bispo (Marco de Canaveses).

It is believed that our “marmoirais” find their pristine origin in the Roman tradition – from the first centuries of Christianity – of placing graves – “monimenta” or “memoriae” (Silva, 1998: 23) – along the side of the roads, of which there are many surviving examples in the areas of Marco de Canaveses and Penafiel (Correia et al., 1936-1960: 857). It was not until the period of Pope Gregory, the Great (p. 590-604) that the first cemeteries appeared, usually in churchyards, because burials were forbidden inside the churches (Vitorino, 1942: 5).



Memorial of Sobrado (Castelo de Paiva).



Memorial of Ermida (Penafiel).



Memorial of Alpendorada. Arch opening detail.



Church of Vila Boa de Quires (Marco de Canaveses). South façade. Nave. Arcosoliums.



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



Monastery of Vila Boa do Bispo (Marco de Canaveses). Church. Nave. North wall. Tomb of Júrio Geraldês.

In Portugal there were cemeteries at least since the Council of Braga, held in 561. The use of stone sarcophagi from the late 12th century onwards quite possibly coincides with the time when burials were once again taking place on the sides of the church's portal (Silva, 1998: 16). The tradition of "digging openings on the external walls of the churches, or their outbuildings, which are similar to the *arcosolia* aligned along the corridors of Christian catacombs, is related to the permission to perform burials near the church's walls" (Vitorino, 1942: 5). We may refer, once again, the example of the Church of Vila Boa de Quires (Marco de Canaveses). Other arches also began emerging in churchyards (a generic word that alludes to the surrounding area of a religious building), separated from the temples. The tomb of Count Sesnando Davides (d. 1093) has been one of the most referred examples¹. At the same time, "in other sites, away from churchyards, as one can tell from the remains one was left with, arches or marmoirais were also erected for burials" (Ribeiro, 1810-1836: 6). We can mention, as an example, the tomb of the bishop of Porto, Sesnando, who suffered his martyrdom in 1074 and was the possible founder of the Monastery of Vila Boa do Bispo. According to the author of the *Agiologio lusitano...*, in the geographically nearby Chapel of Saint Saviour, "the place where his memorial stood, and in it the stone that covered it, and, half-way up the hill, a monument was built bearing witness of the existence for many years of the said sepulchre, after his relics were removed to the said monastery" (Cardoso, 1652: 297).

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The *Primeyra Partida* by King Afonso X of Castile and Leon (k. 1252-1284) and emperor of the Holy-German-Roman Empire (1257-1273) explains that there were low graves, the "campam", built with volumetric shapes and called "moimento" (Beirante, 1982: 380). However, the Wise king does not fail to criticize those "who build very high graves or paint them so much that they more closely resemble altars than memorials. Moreover, he clarifies that these are built more as a whim and to indulge in the will of the living, than for the good or the sake of the dead" (Ferreira, 1980: 167), thus confirming the idea of memory that underlies these monuments.

Despite the historiographical debates and questions that have arisen regarding the primary function of the "marmoirais", the truth is that we should understand their emergence within this context of personalization of death, as a typology of monuments that has been confirmed as exclusive to the Portuguese territory (Ferreira, 1980: 6; Barroca, 1987: 400). The chronology of the remaining traces should be generally placed in the first half or in the mid-13th century (Barroca, 1987: 401), although it is believed that they were quite between the 9th and the 14th centuries².

However, as their own name indicates, the remaining monuments³, more than having a sepulchral nature, are memorials that were certainly associated with funeral rituals (Vitorino,

1 João Pedro Ribeiro (1860: 199) clarifies that "Pedr' Alvres Nogueira, in the Manuscript Catalogue of the Bishops of Coimbra states, somewhere, that Count Sesnando was buried in a Memorial, which featured an Arch, whose place was unknown, and, elsewhere, he states that it was said that the grave was in the Churchyard".

2 While memorials are mentioned in documents from the 10th century onwards, it seems that around the 15th and 16th centuries their construction had not been a habit for a long time, something that coincides with the fact that the practice of prestigious burials inside churches had already begun in the early 13th century (Silva, 1998: 22, 31, note 24).

3 Besides the ones that were already mentioned in the text, the arch of Paradela (Tarouca), the memorial of Odivelas and the arch of Lordelo (Ancede, Baião) are also noteworthy. Built on the side of the road that connected the Monastery of Ancede to Pala, this memorial was demolished in the 19th century. About this subject, please read note 9 from the chapter about the Bridge of Esmoriz, Baião.

1942: 6) and were erected outside the blessed area of the temples (Silva, 1986: 17). Popular tradition considers these small monuments as works that were made to remember “pousas”, or breaks in the funeral processions of great personalities, being placed in their corresponding locations, much like the seven memories (“Montjoies”) that were built in 1270 between Paris and Saint-Denis (France) as milestones of the funeral procession of Saint Louis (Correia et al., 1936-1960: 857).

Within this context, the Memorials of Alpendorada, Ermida, Sobrado and Saint Anthony have been identified as places of “pousa” of the funeral procession of Queen Saint Mafalda (about 1200 and 1256)⁴, the daughter of King Sancho I (k. 1185-1211), as suggested (though not explicitly identified), among other chroniclers, by Friar Fortunato de São Boaventura in his *Memórias para a vida da beata Mafalda...*⁵. According to some authors, while the memorials of Arouca and Ermida may be directly related to her funeral, which left from Rio Tinto (Gondomar) (where she probably died after returning from one of her visits to Our Lady of Silva in the Porto cathedral, of whom she was a devotee) towards the monastery of Arouca, where she was buried, the same cannot be said of the specimens from Lordelo (Baião) and Alpendorada (Silva, 1998: 22). Due to its topographic location, the Memorial under study does not fit into the breaks pattern, since “it stands too far from the Porto-Arouca route” (Correia et al., 1936-1960: 858).

Since they did not fulfil the need to signal the “pousa” places of certain funerals, but provided a proper response to their primary function as tombs instead, these monuments had a real, though perhaps extravagant presence considering their exceptional nature within the religious geography of the time; they provided the territory with rhythm and holiness in combination with a tight network of parish churches and monasteries, brought in a sense of belonging to their place (or places) and were clear landmarks amidst the landscape of our Romanesque Period, so typical of a specific territorial anthropology⁶. The truth is that these graves were apparently isolated constructions, sometimes built in wastelands, but often placed along major roads, thus opposing the trend to locate necropolis in consecrated spaces, in the surrounding areas of churches and chapels (Silva, 1998: 23). It’s in this context that we should understand the outrage of João de Barros when he mentions the existence [1549], “in the jurisdiction of Entre-Douro-e-Minho, of a few ancient graves that are not of the Romans and were built on the hill much like a “moimento”, with an arch over them; they don’t have any engravings and don’t provide any information about who they belong to or why they were built there, outside the Churches” (Barros, 1919: 109).

4 Popular tradition has been confusing this figure with her grandmother, Queen Mafalda of Savoy (1125-1157), the wife of King Afonso Henriques (k. 1143-1185). In fact, they were both personalities who deeply marked the Douro regions and to whom the chronicles and tradition ascribed the creation of inns, the building of bridges, the construction of chapels and other pious acts. From the anthropological point of view, we should note that, through these two Mafaldas, the popular imagination weaved a bond with royalty (Silva, 1986: 22).

5 As described by Friar Fortunato de São Boa Ventura (2008: 104), in his text from 1814: “when the mule departed from Rio Tinto it headed towards Arouca; after making three stops, whose memory is still kept today by three arches or “moimentos” from that period, it finally arrived to the church of Arouca (...)”.

6 About the subject, please read Botelho (2010: 367).



THE MARMORIAL [MEMORIAL] OF ALPENDORADA

With no inscription⁷, the Memorial of Alpendorada, built in granite, is composed of a base with two well-cut stone rows, surmounted by a round arch made up of ten plain voussoirs. The ensemble is topped by a protruding horizontal double-framed cornice running along its entire length that, in turn, supports a steep gabled top, framed on both sides by two casings with hexagonal cross-sections. This arch rests on a solid parallelepipedic base with a footing, in which a double mortuary cavity was opened.

Pedro Vitorino was who, in 1942, reported that his friend and researcher from Penafiel, Abílio Miranda, had examined the upper part of the “Arch of Alpendorada” after the stones had been sufficiently moved. So, the “existence of two distinct cavities, with different sizes, carved on the rocks that, due to their reduced size, were most certainly used to collect bones” (Vitorino, 1943: 10) was thus clarified. In this way, the physician from Porto himself refutes the thesis he had previously advocated, which alluded to the existence of a “double grave”, one sheltered by the lid and the other placed under the arch (Vitorino, 1943: 8-9)⁸.

There is a detail worth mentioning, both because it gives us a vague clue about the nature of this specific monument, and also because it may be a possible chronological dating element, even if relative. We are talking about the long sword whose hilt ends with a circular pommel and shows a straight guard, which is engraved in the upper stones of the plinth that supports the arch. The design of the blade is in line with the common typology of the 11th and 12th centuries, showing parallel edges and a tip which is only slightly pronounced, thus indicating it would be essentially used for cutting. As explained by Mário Barroca (2003: 136-137), this type of blade was intended to be used while mounting a horse, for striking and cutting, if possible using a swift movement pulled from behind, in order to hit the metal mesh protections with enough strength to cut them. During the 11th century, this sword became increasingly long, following the assertion of mounted combats. From the second half of the 12th century onwards, most pommels had a discoidal shape, similar to the one engraved in this stone. This terminal element played an essential role in the structure of the sword by moving its centre of mass back and placing it closer to the hilt due to its weight, thus contributing to balance the sword. Finally, the sword represented in Alpendorada is 120 centimetres long, while real Medieval swords had a total length that ranged between 100 and 115 centimetres.

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⁷ Pedro Vitorino (1998: 9, note 1) tries to explain the absence of an epitaph in certain monuments with the fact that these “usually belonged to noble people, and according to the eldest it was an unnecessary element”.

⁸ In fact, in an almost unknown text from 1937, Abílio Miranda (1937, 12-13) himself fits the Memorial of Alpendorada within the typology that he classifies as “double sarcophagus: one under the arcosolium and the another above it – from Lordelo and Alpendorada – most likely, husband and wife”. We regret the fact that Pedro Vitorino isn't more accurate in terms of the context of the discovery made by this man from Penafiel, surely between 1937 and 1943.

This attribute associated with the nobility was also present in the monument of Lordelo, which was demolished in the 19th century, as well as in the one of Sobrado (Costa, 2005: 83). In the so-called “Templars’ grave”, a Medieval granite grave located in Alpendorada e Matos, near the convent of Alpendorada (Marco de Canaveses), there are also reliefs on the lateral ends that, despite being hardly visible, could correspond to one sword on each side (Costa, 2005: 75).



Detail of the base with mortuary cavity.



Memorial of Sobrado (Castelo de Paiva). Lid detail.



“Templars’ grave” (Marco de Canaveses).

Therefore, the presence of this icon that characterizes an entire social class allows us to infer that we are standing before a funerary and memorial monument related to a member of the nobility, most likely a knight. This idea is also supported by the specific features of this kind of monuments in terms of location. The fact that they appear outside the so-called consecrated areas is not a mere coincidence. In the Middle Ages, the graves located away from the temples were usually associated with “believers in God” who had been victims of some sort of accidental death; their graves were marked with mounds of stones or with crosses made of wood or stone to indicate the location where they had passed away (Silva, 1986: 17). So, within this context, the “marmoirais” should be understood as funerary expressions related to individuals with a certain social importance. Besides, men who were killed in duels were ecclesiastically forbidden to be buried in consecrated land, an example for the rest of society that is explicitly mentioned in *Primeyra Partida* by Afonso, the Wise (Ferreira, 1980: 525)⁹.

So, we are faced with an operational hypothesis proposed by António Manuel Pinto da Silva (1986: 16-18), which associates these monuments with knights that were killed in duels, or even in military combats. Only the appearance of new documentary evidence may clarify this issue, although we consider as certain the existence of a relationship between these monuments and people connected to warfare, which may explain the large number of “marmoirais” documented in the Portuguese territory during the Middle Ages (Silva, 1998: 23).

Although there are no grounds to substantiate it, the popular attempt to associate the Memorial of Alpendorada with the knight Sousino Alvares – a personality that is also connected to the monument of Irivo – is now easier to understand (Barroca, 1987: 448). According to a document from 1114, quoted by friar Antonio da Soledad in the 18th century, the latter would be his grave (Rosas & Barros, 2008: 232). However, taking into account the style of this monument, we are standing before a memorial that was raised after his death with the intention of keeping his memory alive. The truth is that, although João de Barros already ignored the primary function of this type of monuments in 1549, he stated that, according to tradition, these graves belonged to “men who died in a defiant way and, because they were noble, their relatives built them those memorials, since they were not entitled to have an Ecclesiastical Grave (...)” (Barros, 1919: 109-110).

⁹ Tit. XVI, Act X “as cemeteries should not bury those who die in tournaments, as well as thieves”.

THE MEMORIAL TODAY

Declared a National Monument in 1910 – shortly before Portugal became a Republic – by a Decree published in the Governmental Gazette no. 136 of June 23rd, the Memorial of Alpendorada was almost ignored until 1939, the year in which the owner of a “small countryside property in the parish of Alpendurada” mentions the existence, on one of the property’s ends, of “a stone arch, (that, on site, he calls “memoria” (“memory”)). On this occasion, the owner doesn’t lose the opportunity to show his indignation about the fact that “those black stones with moss and waste that time has piled up and that I [him, Mário Lobo], much like my ancestors, did not care for at all, were a National Monument”¹⁰. Curiously enough, in October 1946, Armando de Mattos – ignoring the fact that this legacy was already part of the long list of constructions classified as National Monuments by the First Republic – proposes, as he had already proposed for other Romanesque buildings found in the surrounding region, the classification of this funerary legacy from the Middle Ages that he identifies as a “Marmoiral or Funerary Memorial from the High Middle Ages and labels as Romanesque”¹¹.

As far as we could ascertain, the documentation that exists in the archives of the former DGEMN – Direção-Geral dos Edifícios e Monumentos Nacionais [General Directorate for Buildings and National Monuments] reveals that, from then on, the concerns around this “Marmoiral” were focused on its recovery and on increasing its legibility. It is within this context that we should understand the demolition request submitted in 1951 by the land owner, Mário Lobo, in order to obtain permission for the demolition of “a small prop that is holding the end of a trellis (...) as soon as the next grape harvest was finished”¹²; the competent authorities expressed their agreement, since they considered this demolition was “favourable to the Monument, which would consequently benefit from clearer surroundings, thus allowing a better observation of its ensemble”¹³. As we can see, the owner of the land on which the classified building stands was careful enough to contact the competent authorities in order to obtain an approval for the demolition of the prop that stood close to the monument, and the DGEMN expressed its concern in emphasizing the recovery of the Memorial’s image, which would benefit from a “clearer” view and, therefore, obtain an increased legibility.

In 1962, the location of this Memorial is considered “terrible” because, despite being “located close to National Road 108, it is almost invisible from the road since it is standing on a much higher plan than that of the road itself, meaning that there are lots of people who simply pass by unaware of its existence”¹⁴. Considering this situation, the Marco de Canaveses Town Council, in collaboration with the Comissão Regional de Turismo da Serra do Marão

10 Ofício da Câmara Municipal de Marco de Canaveses, 4th July 1939 [SIPA.TXT.01492743]. PT DGEMN:DSARH-010/139-008 [Online]. Available at [www: <URL: http://www.monumentos.pt>](http://www.monumentos.pt). [N.º IPA PT011307010004].

11 Cópia, 1st October 1947 [SIPA.TXT.00626540]. DGEMN:DSID-001/013-1832/3 [Online]. Available at [www: <URL: http://www.monumentos.pt>](http://www.monumentos.pt). [N.º IPA PT011307010004].

12 Lobo, Mário – Missiva, 15th June 1951 [SIPA.TXT.01492727 and SIPA.TXT.01492728]. DGEMN:DSARH-010/139-007.

13 Ofício n.º 3166, 27th July 1951 [SIPA.TXT.01492730].

14 Ofício da Câmara Municipal do Marco de Canaveses, 30th October 1962 [SIPA.TXT.01492735].

[Regional Tourism Committee of the Mountain of Marão], proposes the “transference of the Monument to a more appropriate place within the surrounding area, placing it in the triangle formed by the junction of National Road 108 and National Road 210”¹⁵. The DGEMN’s technicians considered that, besides the fact that the chosen site did not provide “the necessary guarantees to ensure its protection, its original location” should be taken into account. Recommendation: “removing the stones that were piled up around the Monument, in order to improve the appearance of the site, which is harming its environment, while offering all the technical collaboration required for the development of a recovery study for the site”¹⁶.

In the early 1970s, the debate about the relocation of the Memorial of Alpendorada is put up for discussion again; this time, the suggestion was to move it “to the Avenue adjoining the Campo dos Mouros, on the side of the path that leads to the Parish Cemetery of Alpendurada”¹⁷ where there was already “another Medieval tomb, more modest and yet to be classified” – the aforementioned “Templars’ grave” –, which would also benefit “from the suggestion that was being made”. According to a note from the Direção-Geral do Ensino Superior e das Belas-Artes [General Directorate for Higher Education and Fine Arts], the Memorial of Alpendorada was no longer in its original location because it was “moved when the road had been opened (...)”¹⁸ However, we were not able to ascertain the date and the effectiveness of that relocation; we also don’t know if this relocation actually happened and, in case it did, if it was accompanied by surveys or archaeological excavations.

After a proposal for “the preparation of a landscaping study”¹⁹, the truth is that when the works were supposed to begin, in mid-1975, “a great number of people got together and orderly opposed the relocation of the MEMORIAL stating that they did not agree with that violation of their rights, because the MEMORIAL should be kept on the site where it was built and settled, giving rise to the name “Lugar do Memorial” [Memorial Place]²⁰. So, in the following year, trying to provide an answer to the “immediate need to protect the Memorial”, and after a public tender, there were building works that involved “the consolidation of foundations, cleaning procedures, improvements in the surrounding area and new access steps”; these works amounted to a total of 40.000\$00 (forty thousand “escudos” [former Portuguese currency unit]).

In 2010, the Memorial of Alpendorada becomes part of the Route of the Romanesque and, therefore, an intervention for the conservation, protection and overall enhancement of the construction has already been designed. The proposed works are intended “to ensure the maintenance and enhancement of the construction and to improve the Memorial’s possible conditions of visibility” (Costa, 2012: 4). Since it is not possible to ensure its universal access, there should be a concern to strengthen its visibility and promotion. [MLB]

15 Idem.

16 Ofício n.º 1558, 18th December 1962. [SIPA.TXT.01492738].

17 Ofício n.º 956, 26th September 1972 [SIPA.TXT.00626558]. DGEMN:DSID-001/013-1832/3. [Online]. Available at [www: <URL: http://www.monumentos.pt>](http://www.monumentos.pt). [N.º IPA PT011307010004].

18 Ofício da Direção-Geral do Ensino Superior e das Belas-Artes, 13th December 1970. [SIPA.TXT.00626556 and SIPA.TXT.00626557].

19 Ofício da Direção-Geral dos Assuntos Culturais, 23th November 1972 [SIPA.TXT.00626564].

20 Ofício n.º 585, 27th August 1975 [SIPA.TXT.00626576 and SIPA.TXT.00626577].

CHRONOLOGY

12th century: possible dating of the Memorial of Alpendorada;

1910: listing of the Memorial of Alpendorada as a National Monument;

1976: consolidation of the foundations, general cleaning, improvements in the surrounding area and new access steps to the Memorial of Alpendorada, all done under the DGEMN's responsibility;

2010: integration of the Memorial of Alpendorada in the Route of the Romanesque.

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