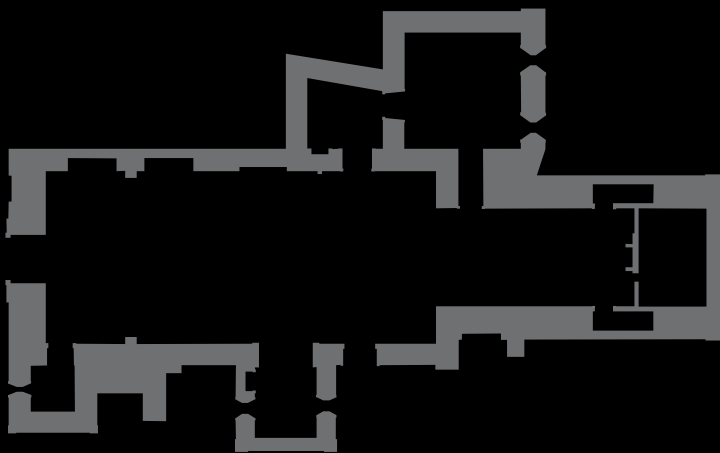


**MONASTERY**  
OF SAINT  
MARY OF VILA  
BOA DO BISPO

MARCO DE CANAVESES

**MONASTERY**  
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Plan.

## HISTORICAL SUMMARY

It is called a “vila” [town] because it was visited by King Afonso Henriques; “boa” [good] because it has fertile lands; and “do bispo [of the bishop]” because Siznando, the bishop of Porto, spent here the last five years of his life and is buried in its parish church (...)” (Aguiar, 1947: 141). These are the words used by Vieira de Aguiar to try and explain the origin of the toponym Vila Boa do Bispo. However, the writer of the corresponding entry in the *Grande enciclopédia portuguesa e brasileira* states instead that “the determinative “do Bispo” given to Vila Boa, which was really very ancient, was only imposed by the bishop Sisnando in the first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century” (Correia et al., 1936-1960: 363).

We do not know much about the history of Vila Boa do Bispo before the early 12<sup>th</sup> century (Mattoso, 2002a: 70). According to tradition, the Monastery of Vila Boa do Bispo was founded between 990 and 1022 by this bishop from Porto, the brother of Monio Viegas, in the place where a legendary battle between Christians and Muslims would have taken place, as mentioned in the chronicle of the Order of the Canons Regular, always focused on emphasising prodigious deeds (Santa Maria, 1668). According to the nobiliary by Count Pedro, one of the most important books of our Medieval Period, the first representative of the Gascos family from Ribadouro was Monio or Moninho Viegas I (+1066/68) (Mattoso, 2002a: 68). This noble family already had assets on the right bank of the Douro during the period of the reconquests made by Ferdinand the Great (1016-1065) in the region, between 1058 and 1065; they gradually expanded their property onto the other bank.

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Aerial view with the river Tâmega on the background.



Aerial view.

Vila Boa do Bispo is associated with the groups of monasteries built during the 11<sup>th</sup> century in the “civitas of Anégia”, such as Alpendorada (Marco de Canaveses), Bustelo (Penafiel), Valpedre (Penafiel), Vilela (Paredes) and perhaps Vila Boa de Quires (Marco de Canaveses) (Mattoso, 2002a: 124). It is hard to accurately define the extension of the territory of Anégia that, to the north of the Douro, encompasses almost the entire municipality of Baião, the entire municipality of Marco de Canaveses and most of the municipalities of Penafiel, Paredes and Gondomar; to the south of the river, the territory took up some area from the municipality of Castelo de Paiva and also a significant part of the northern areas of the municipalities of Arouca and Cinfães (Almeida & Lopes, 1981-1982: 133). We should not forget the strategic nature of its territory as a place crossed by the river, where it meets the mouth of the Tâmega. Besides, the Medieval documents mention an ancient road (probably Roman) that, coming from the south, from Arouca, would meet the Marco (Tongobriga)-Guimarães-Braga axis. Despite its strategic location during the Reconquest period, according to José Mattoso, the land of Anégia, whose seat was located on a promontory in Eja (Penafiel), presented a series of favourable conditions for monastic life in the following centuries: an uneven land that is seldom visited by travellers, with a well-rooted resident population, which was recently cleared for cultivation or repopulated (Mattoso, 2002a: 129).

The Gascos lineage managed to become the ruler of almost all the monasteries in the area located to the east of the Sousa such as Valpedre, Alpendorada, Tuías (Marco de Canaveses), Vila Boa de Quires and, of course, Vila Boa do Bispo (Mattoso, 2002a: 69). José Augusto de Sottomayor-Pizarro even mentions a certain “inclination” that this lineage had for the control of a large number of monasteries that were strategically located close to the affluents of the Douro, on both banks, along the route of the Reconquest<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> We may recall the examples of Cárquere (Resende) or Paço de Sousa (Penafiel). So, these monastic houses were ruled by members of the family and provided with relatively well-organized domains, a feature that, as a matter of fact, distinguished this lineage (Sottomayor-Pizarro, 1997: 446).



Aerial view of the river Tâmega near its mouth, in Entre-os-Rios (Penafiel) and Torrão (Marco de Canaveses). In the middle, the Duarte Pacheco bridge.

So, considering this context, José Mattoso finds it likely that the foundation of the Monastery under study is due to Sisnando, because, during the 12<sup>th</sup> century, it was in the hands of the Gascos, who were strongly settled between the Sousa and the Douro and even beyond the Tâmega, in the territory of Benviver (Sottomayor-Pizarro, 1997: 70-71)<sup>2</sup>. Also according to this author, the oldest documentary reference regarding the “hermitage of Villanoua” dates back to 1079, meaning that its foundation was surely prior to this year (Aguiar, 1947: 53). Although made in a later period, perhaps in the 13<sup>th</sup> century by a descendant of the Gasgos lineage in seeking social prestige, the funerary inscription of Monio Viegas, the “Gasco” – the great-great-grandfather of Egas Moniz, the Schoolmaster and Governor – and of two of his sons, Egas Moniz and Gomes Moniz, dates back to 1022 (Barroca, 2000: 73-77):

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ERA M<sup>a</sup> . 2 . X<sup>a</sup>. OBIIT: < DONNUS > MONNI . VENEGAS . PROLI . QUI  
 DICITUR GASCUS et FILIIS EIUS / EGAS – MONIZ et GOMEZ . MO-  
 NIZ . REQUIESCANT . IN PACE AMEN<sup>3</sup>

This inscription is engraved in the lid of a sarcophagus framed by an arcosolium located in the Monastery’s cloister, which is currently private property. Although we don’t know if the death of the three noblemen occurred in the same year, what we should really highlight is the information on a son of Monio Viegas who was ignored by the books of lineages. The nobiliary of Count Pedro only mentions two sons of the first Gasco who came to Portugal and initiated

<sup>2</sup> The territory of Benviver, which stretched from Paços de Gaiolo to the Tâmega, included the parishes of Fandinhães, Paços de Gaiolo, Penha Longa, Paredes de Viadores, Sande, Manhuncelos, S. Lourenço do Douro, Magrelos, Ariz, Vila Boa do Bispo, Favões, Alpendorada, Matos, Várzea do Douro and Torrão, occupying the long slopes over the Douro river of the mountains Grehal, Montedeiras and Rosém (Aguiar, 1947: 59).

<sup>3</sup> “Prior Múnio Viegas, called the “Gasco”, died in the era of 1069 (1022) and is buried here together with his sons Egas Moniz and Gomes Moniz. May they rest in peace. Amen” (Correia et al., 1936-1960: 365).



Cloister.

the Ribadouro clan<sup>4</sup>: Egas Moniz, the “Gasco”, founder of the monastery of Cucujães (Oliveira de Azeméis) and married to Toda Ermiges; and Garcia Moniz, who is mentioned as the “tenens of Anegia” (Mattoso, 2002a: 69)<sup>5</sup>, between 1043 and 1066 and also founded the Monastery of Travanca (Amarante). So, according to this author, we should consider that Monio Viegas, the “Gasco”, had another son called Gomes Moniz, who was ignored by Count Pedro, perhaps due to the fact that he died young and left no children (Barroca, 2000: 77).

According to Mário Barroca, the inscription from 1022, which may even been made using information found in an obituary, should not be separated from the tradition that places the grave of Sisnando in this very Monastery. One of the these book of lineages also clarifies that “this Moninho Veegas, the first Gasco, came to Portugal... and another one, his brother, came with him; he was the bishop of Porto and his name was Sesnando; the latter died and is buried in Vila Boa do Bispo” (Correia et al., 1936-1960: 364).

Despite the great doubts arisen by its historic existence, the funerary inscription of Sisnando, the bishop of Porto between 1049 and 1085, was supposedly located in the hermitage of the Saviour, close to Vila do Bispo<sup>6</sup>. According to the chronicles, it was nearly a league away from the Monastery that the bishop – who had been living for a while in the Monastery of Saint Mary of Vila Boa, founded by his brother – was surprised by the Moors while celebrating Mass and was later buried by the Monastery’s monks under the altar in a stone memorial.

4 An excerpt from the book of lineages mentions the arrival of the Gascos to the Ribadouro area, where they eventually settled and took the lineage’s name from its geography: “(...) they came by sea to moor at Foz do Douro, between Porto and Gaia (...) and there they fought against a large number of Moors, several times, and there killed one of the sons, named Garcia Moniz, the Gasco. And above, the Moors won and went on conquering the land of Riba do Douro, on both sides” (Cunha, 1623 *apud* Barroca, 2000: 77).

5 For some time A. Almeida Fernandes (2001: 59) rejected this location, classifying it as fanciful and suggesting the hamlet of Gasconha, “close to the [lower] Sousa river”, as the Gascos’ place of origin. Rui de Azevedo suggested Cosconhe or Casconha, in the now extinct municipality of Sanfins (currently Cinfães) as the Gascos’ place of origin.

6 Despite the incompatibility between the date provided by the inscription – January 30<sup>th</sup>, 1035 – and the documentary references associated with the bishop, Mário Barroca (2000: 79-82) agreed with the reading made by Friar Nicolau de Santa Maria when discussing its credibility: “III Kal. Febr. Obiit / in Domino D. Sesnandus Episcopus Portugal .a Maurorum / Telis Confossus Dum Sacrum / Faceret . Era M L XX III” [Inscription regarding Sisnando that, supposedly, was in the hermitage of Saint Saviour].

Mário Barroca continues the narrative – following the tradition passed on by Friar Nicolau de Santa Maria and Friar Timóteo dos Mártires – telling us that, when the bishop of Porto, Pedro Rabaldis (episc. 1138-1145), heard about the miracles that took place close to the Sisnando's grave, visited it in 1142. But, considering the poor state of repair of the chapel, he ordered the transference of the body of Sisnando to Vila Boa [do Bispo], placing it in a high tomb embedded on the wall to the right of the entrance (Barroca, 2000: 82).

There are also doubts about the existence of the – now gone – funerary inscription of bishop Sisnando; it was supposedly a fresco commissioned by Pedro Rabaldis when the body of the tortured bishop was moved to the Church of Vila Boa, mentioned in chronicles from the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Barroca, 2000: 205-206). First of all, Mário Barroca highlights the unlikelihood of the support used for an inscription that is intended to refer the date of October 11<sup>th</sup> 1142, an aspect corroborated by the fact that the text does not seem to match the suggested year<sup>7</sup>. However, it was in this period that the epithet “do Bispo” [of the Bishop] began to be used, which seems to be a sign of the major importance and of the local and regional impression on the above mentioned event, which was often mentioned in later chronicles (Correia et al., 1936-1960: 364). However, the connection between the Gascos and the foundation of this Monastery is confirmed by the ownership, for a specific period of time, by members of the lineage, their direct descendants, of assets in Vila Boa do Bispo or in the territory of the existing parish (Correia et al., 1936-1960: 366).

We cannot ignore the attraction that the manorial nobility had, in this period, for the foundation and donation of monasteries, turning them into their patronages. The fact that the noblemen took advantage of the different religious movements of the period to secure their own individual or collective interests, i.e., to maintain their social positions and, possibly, to improve them or to try to avoid threats from external sources, is well known (Mattoso, 2002b: 149). That is why José Mattoso states that “the success of a religious movement results from a simultaneous coincidence of interests both of the dominant class and a group of clergymen” (Mattoso, 2002b: 149). Besides, the association of a given family with a religious community was an important bastion of its prestige, especially in the eyes of the local lower-class population (Mattoso, 2002b: 96).

In his inventory called “Freguesias da diocese do Porto: elementos onomásticos alti-medievais”, Domingos A. Moreira identified several documentary sources regarding the Monastery of Vila Boa do Bispo which prove its early chronology (Moreira, 1989-1990: 99-101). While in 1012 this institution is still referred to as “Monastery Saint Mariae Villaebonae”, in 1120 it is already called “Monastery... of Villa Noua [sic] episcopi”.

On February 12<sup>th</sup> 1141 the Monastery of Vila Boa do Bispo, or more specifically, the prior Egas, his brother Monio and their friars, received the land charter granted by King Afonso Henriques (k. 1143-1185): “(...) facio cautum omni conventuj de Sancta Maria Ville Bone et vobis domno Egee Prior jet Fratri vestro Munionj et socijs vestries (...)” (Barroca, 200: 322).

<sup>7</sup> The archaeologist (Barroca, 2000: 205) follows the reading made by Friar Nicolau de Santa Maria, while being, at the same time, cautious: “Martyr & Antistes Jacet Hic / Rite Sepultus V. Idus Octob. In / Era M.C.LXXX. / Sesnandus Nomine Que Christus / ad Arthera Subsist / III. Kal. Feb. In Era M.LXXIII”.



It is yet curious that this charter calls, as regards the term “couto” [a type of Portuguese administrative division], such location of “villa”, at least once, without distinguishing the agrarian “villa” from the urban “villa” (Correia et al., 1936-1960: 366). Looking at the boundaries defined for the “couto” we can see that it encompassed the entire parish of the Monastery, i.e., Vila Boa do Bispo, except for Lidrais (Vidrais) (Correia et al., 1936-1960: 366).

The Monastery of Vila Boa do Bispo had already belonged to the Canons Regular of Saint Augustine at least since the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century (Mattoso, 2002b: 53). After 1143, we already have references to the “canons of uille bone” (Moreira, 1989-1990: 100). So, the early privileges that were granted by King Afonso Henriques to the crosiers of Vila Boa do Bispo should not be surprising if we keep in mind the relationship that the first king of Portugal had with the mother-house of this order, which was based in Santa Cruz of Coimbra. In fact, “the Conqueror “commissioned” a great temple, with three naves, a work that he could call his own and that would serve as his royal chapel and burial place” (Gonçalves, 1894: 20). In the valley of Santa Cruz was the “balneum Regis” that the still Prince Afonso Henriques (1108/9?-1185) donated, in 1130, to the Archdeacon Telo for building the new seat of the new order (Alarcão, 2008: 155) which was founded on June 28<sup>th</sup> the following year, would be directly linked to Saint Rufus of Avignon (France).

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The pontiffs also granted several privileges to this Monastery of Vila Boa which, meanwhile, adopted the epithet of “do Bispo”. The Brief of Pope Lucius II (p. 1144-1145) allowed the priors of the Monastery to use a mitre in 1444 and in the Bull of Pope Anastasius IV (p. 1153-1154) from 1153, they were also granted the privilege of using a crosier (Monteiro, 1990: 85). This is why the lying figure of Nicolau Martins, which we shall analyse further on, features these insignias. In 1297, Pope Boniface VIII (p. 1294-1303) made an explicit confirmation of the rule of Saint Augustine in the Monastery of Vila Boa do Bispo.

The inquiries from 1258 are fine evidence of the importance achieved by the Monastery during the 13<sup>th</sup> century; besides many properties in neighbouring parishes, some of which quite distant, it held the patronage of several parishes that fulfilled their obligations towards it (Monteiro, 1990: 86). Among them, we find Saint Genesis of Boelhe (Penafiel) or Saint Martin of Várzea do Douro (Marco de Canaveses) that alternated between this Monastery and the monastery of Alpendorada (Marco de Canaveses). The 1258 document specifies that in the parish or “parish of Sante Marie Ville Bone Episcopi” where the “parish of the monastery of Villa Bona” himself took an oath, stating that the crown has no rights over it “quis cautavit ipsum cautum rex domnus Alfonsus senex”, i.e., that under King Afonso Henriques’s orders, the crown had “homens foreiros” [tenants] in the territory that became a “couto”, but subordinated them to the monastery or “gave them” (Correia et al., 1936-1960: 366). In this way, the Monastery was only forced to hand over to the Crown a quarter of its harvests, the so-called “vitualhas” [provisions, supplies] for the king.

In the catalogue of the Kingdom’s churches, commendations and monasteries from 1320, the Monastery of Vila Boa do Bispo is mentioned as having paid a sum of 1500 “libras” [former Portuguese currency unit], an amount that was relatively high in comparison with other monasteries and churches of the region (Almeida & Peres, 1971).

## THE MONUMENT IN THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

As we may infer from what has been said before, the oldest documentary traces regarding the existence of a monastery in Vila Boa do Bispo date back to the late 10<sup>th</sup> century. However, we have no knowledge on any material trace of the church and monastery that existed at the time, because what still remains as a legacy of the Middle Ages in the existing building is from a much later period.

Both in the Baixo Tâmega and in the Vale do Sousa regions, most of the buildings from the Romanesque Period show a somewhat late chronology – 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries – because they result from reconstructions of pre-existing buildings from the High Middle Ages. It is within this chronological framework that we should partly understand the rather interesting Romanesque sections that the Modern building shows as if they were “windows” opened during a restoration intervention.

First of all, considering its nature, we must henceforth acknowledge that when the Monastery’s Church was transformed during the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the primitive Romanesque structure was reused, or rather, masked. Only thus may we understand the way in which the remaining elements stand today.

The most original elements from the Romanesque Period can be found on the Church’s façade. Despite being incomplete, the two blind arcades that flank the main portal – which was completely transformed during the Modern Period – show, in the region of Baixo Tâmega, a solution that was very popular in the Romanesque style that grew around the Braga-Rates axis<sup>8</sup>. The leading exponent of this formula can be found in the remaining elements of the main portal of the Braga cathedral: in its two archivolts there are sculpted birds and four-legged animals around the perimeter of the voussoirs, whose surface was sunken to highlight the figuration of their bodies, leaving a continuous edge on the corner. So, on both sides of the voussoirs, we find symmetrical and antithetical compositions with the animals joining their heads over the arcade’s corner. These ornamental schemes are more appropriate for the frustums of capitals and were adjusted to the archivolts’ voussoirs. On the inner arcade, the animals seem to be outraged, standing against a foliage background. This scheme also appears in São Pedro de Rates (Póvoa de Varzim): on the archivolt of the main portal there is an Apostolate whose figures are represented a background with foliages. Belonging to a third stage (which was already developed in the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century), the main portal of Rates, despite the fact that its initial programme was reduced and subject to several rearrangements, is still one of the most elaborated programmes of the Portuguese Romanesque style<sup>9</sup>: the two inner archivolts of the portal show a series of sculpted figures on the voussoirs’ corners. So, in the first archivolt we have a series of angels with two wings that are slightly open but sloping; the hand placed closer to the tympanum holds a thurible and the other one holds a cross. On the second archivolt

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Church. West façade.

<sup>8</sup> On the matter, please read Botelho (2010a: 432).

<sup>9</sup> On the matter, please read Botelho (2010b: 213-228).





Church. West façade. Blind arcades.

there is an Apostolate, in which a group of seven apostles seated in cathedra hold a crosier on the innermost hand and a badge with an inscription on the outermost hand. In Saint Mary of Pombeiro (Felgueiras) we also find affronted animals, typical from the city of Braga, on the voussoirs of the main door.

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In the blind arcades of Vila Boa do Bispo, the themes of the animals that are facing forward on the voussoirs, whose origin lies in Braga, are already rather evolved and late, meaning that their chronology may be placed in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century, if not already in the 13<sup>th</sup> century (Rosas & Sottomayor-Pizarro, 2009: 111), in which case they would be almost coeval with Braga<sup>10</sup>. Carlos Alberto Ferreira de Almeida drew our attention to the exceptional nature that this solution for the ornamentation of façades had among us; its origin lies in the influences of the French western region (Almeida, 1986: 99) or, most likely, from the region of Ourense (Galicia, Spain) and we may highlight the examples of the churches of “Saint Pelagius Diamondi” or “Saint Stephen of Ribas do Minho” (Almeida, 1978: 280-281). So, in this author’s words, we stand before a “unicum” in Portuguese Romanesque architecture” (Almeida, 1978: 280). In 1944, in the article he dedicated specifically to the Romanesque traces found on this Church’s façade, Armando de Mattos tried to identify several French and Spanish examples of façades in which the portal was flanked “by “blind arches”, or rather, “blind openings”” (Mattos, 1948: 72-75), concluding that the “mutual influences” are justified by the fact that the identified temples were located along “the pilgrimage route” to Santiago de Compostela (Espanha). So, according to this author “it is not hard to see that both the decorative sculptures of Vila Boa do Bispo” and even the geographically close sculptures of Pombeiro and Travanca, “in some way, an even despite their increased rusticity, fit into that decorative movement, which is quite

<sup>10</sup> On the matter, please read Botelho (2010c).



Church. South façade. Nave. Crevice. External view.



Church. South façade. Nave. Crevice. Interior view.

different from other movements found in other Portuguese, and even Spanish, temples” (Matos, 1948: 75).

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It is indeed curious that the Romanesque elements that remain in the Church’s body lead us to a later chronology than the one suggested by the ones in the main façade. We refer ourselves to the corbels that are still preserved under the cornice, in the chancel, but on the side that is hidden by the remaining monastic structures; these corbels have a quadrangular profile, and one of them shows a face taking up all its available space. On the south side elevation, the narrow crevices that punctuate the granite wall, which was recently uncovered as we shall see further ahead, still allude to a Medieval nature that cannot be dissociated from the Church of Vila Boa do Bispo. Inside, they show a dihedral torus that works as a decorative element, which together with the remains of broken arches that are partially exposed inside the Church (for example, over the access door to the sacristy), confirms the thesis that the 17<sup>th</sup> century “masked” the building’s Romanesque nature. In addition, we consider the possibility that its interior may have been decorated with blind arcades, which would reinforce the prominent position that this building had within the context of Portuguese Romanesque architecture.

But one of the most curious Romanesque traces is found on the south elevation of the Church. Based on its visible elements, we can state that the primitive chancel would have been square with a stone vault (as the buttresses reveal) and it would have also been externally decorated with blind arcades. There are fragments of a chequered frieze that also point to a chronology that can surely be placed in the Romanesque Period. However, the most significant element is a capital featuring the mermaid theme, which we also find depicted in a capital on the north portal of the Monastery of Travanca. Among all mystical entities, the fish-tailed mermaid was one of the most depicted themes in our Romanesque style (Almeida, 1986: 157). According to Carlos Alberto Ferreira de Almeida, the lustful mermaid with a feminine face, long hairs and a fishtail in one of the most popular themes (Almeida, 2001: 160). In Portugal, this iconography of the mermaid, whose origin is probably post-Carolingian and it will be spread throughout central Europe, almost replaced



Church, South façade.

the Classical shape of the mermaid: the one that represents it with a female head and the body of a bird, which is also known as harpy (Almeida, 2001: 160).

So, these are the elements of the Romanesque building that are still preserved in Vila Boa do Bispo. There are also other traces from the Medieval Period integrated in the so-called funerary art, which we shall deal with later on.

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Church, South façade. Chancel. Capital.

## The tombs of Vila Boa do Bispo

It was during the Romanesque Period that tomb sculpture became increasingly important and reached its height in the Gothic period with the tombs of King Pedro and Inês de Castro, in Alcobça. However, we should seek the roots of the personalization of the Medieval tomb in the Entre-Douro-e-Minho region in the 11<sup>th</sup> century (Barroca, 1987: 387). Besides the development of masonry work during the Romanesque Period, the new mindset related to matters of the Afterlife and mortal remains greatly contributed to this phenomenon (Almeida, 2001: 165). In this period there was an emphasis on the belief that each soul was judged individually right after death. The most important members of the lineages began reserving a burial space close to the monastery they sponsored, a sort of pantheon, with a lifelong suffrage service. The patronage interests were passed on from one generation to the next, something which contributed to a gradual monumentalization of the grave; there was an increasing urge to customise the grave, using inscriptions, insignias, paraments and coats of arms for that purpose.

The inscription carved on the grave of Monio Viegas, the “Gasco”, the great-great-grandfather of Egas Moniz, the Schoolmaster and Governor (who is buried in the Monastery of Paço de Sousa, Penafiel), is a good example of how the preservation of memory, even though a simple inscription mentioning one (or more) name(s) and a date, was becoming a moral imperative and, simultaneously, in a response from a society with a feudal organization that was strongly hierarchical and fully aware of its social order (Almeida & Barroca, 2002: 210). However, the fact that this inscription was made after the date it shows, as we have already seen, also draws our attention to a phenomenon that was usual at the time: the renovation of sarcophagi with the mortal remains of people who had founded monasteries (Almeida, 1986: 60).



Cloister. Arcosolium and tomb of Monio Viegas.



Church. Nave. North wall. Tomb of Nicolau Martins.

On the tomb of Nicolau Martins, which is protected by an arcosolium opened on the Gospel side of the nave during an intervention carried out in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there is a carved inscription with the date November 25<sup>th</sup> 1348 (Barroca, 2000: 1692-1697).

+ AQUI : IAS : DON : NICOLAO MARTI(n)S : PRIOR : QUE : FOY :  
 DE : VILA : BOA : DO BISPO : E : PAS(s)OU : [a XXV] / DIAS : DE  
 : NOVENBRO : ERA : D(e) : M : CCC : LXXXVI : ANOS :<sup>11</sup>

But there is another element that allows identifying the person who was buried here: the coat of arms carved on the tomb chest, which constitutes its only decorative element. It is a carved coat of arms broken and had two sequences of three roses placed one on top of the other. Besides, the prior had himself portrayed in a voluminous lying statue. He is wearing the religious habit with a long cloak and the pleats are wide and a bit stiff, despite the fact that these already show certain realism. The prior is also wearing a mitre and a stole with its trapezoid fringed trims and is holding the crosier between his hands. An iconographic confirmation of the pontiff privileges granted to the Monastery's priors in the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century.

We also find the same identifying elements in the tomb of Júrio Geraldês:

+ AQUI : IAZ : IURIO : GIRALDEZ : VAS(s)ALO : QUE : FOY :  
 DELREY : DON : FERNANDO : E : SEU : COR(r)RGEDOR : /  
 DANTRE : DOIRO : E : MINHO : E : PAS(s)OU : < XXX : DIAS >  
 : DE < IANEIRO > : ERA : DE : CCCC : < XIX > : ANOS :<sup>12</sup>

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Together with the funerary inscription engraved on the lateral section of the grave's lid, which shows the date January 30<sup>th</sup> 1381 (Barroca, 2000: 1878-1886), there are two heraldic shields carved in relief on the flat tomb chest. These are quartered coats of arms showing a corn stalk on the first quarter, three rosettes aligned in a row on the second and third quarters and a goat on the fourth quarter<sup>13</sup>. The pieces that integrate this coat of arms are similar to the ones that appear, in an isolated way, on the memorials of Nicolau Martins and Salvado Pires, thus confirming the strong kinship they shared.

Júrio Geraldês was a chief magistrate for King Fernando (k. 1367-1383) in the Entre-Douro-e-Minho region, as he asked to be recorded in his epitaph. This brother of Nicolau Martins and Afonso Martins, the prior of Alpendorada (Marco de Canaveses)<sup>14</sup>, is represented wearing long civil clothes with large asymmetrical pleats. He is holding a sword with both hands; the

<sup>11</sup> It reads: Here Lies Nicolau Martins, who was Prior of Vila Boa do Bispo, and Died on November 15<sup>th</sup> of the Era of 1386.

<sup>12</sup> It reads: Here Lies Jurio Giraldez Vassalo, who was King Fernando's chief magistrate for Entre-Douro-e-Minho, and Died on January 30<sup>th</sup> of the Era of 419.

<sup>13</sup> For a more detailed approach to these heraldic coats of arms, in which some parts are inverted, please read Barroca (2000: 1884-1885).

<sup>14</sup> Mário Barroca (2000: 1881) mentions the several proposals that seek to explain the degree of kinship between Júrio Geraldês and Nicolau Martins considering the different patronymic names that, despite the lack of documentary grounds, would be more easily explained if they were considered half-brothers – sons of the same mother but from different marriages.





Church. Nave. North wall. Tomb of Júrio Geraldês.

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sword's sheath is decorated with a spiralled ribbon with rosettes rolled up around it (the chief magistrate's coat of arms), showing an option that is also noble. At his feet, there is a harrier, a dog trained to hunt hares, a symbol of nobility that practices hunting and horse riding.

The two tombs with lying figures of Vila Boa do Bispo were probably commissioned to the same workshop by Júrio Geraldês after 1362. Nicolau Martins' monument was personalised with a complete inscription while Júrio's featured an unfinished inscription showing blank spaces that would be filled after his death. The first engraver did not hesitate to engrave ERA DE CCCC, meaning that the commission was made in 1362 or after that year; besides, the author who was responsible for adding the missing information was unable to perfectly imitate the characters that had been previously engraved<sup>15</sup>.

The stylistic affinities between the two memorials are obvious. So, the tombs' authorship has been ascribed to the workshop of master João Garcia de Toledo, the architect responsible for the Gothic work of the cloister of Alpendorada; they may be considered as some of the best funerary statues in Entre-o-Douro-e-Minho and, in general, within the context of Portuguese granite statuary, for they reveal an unusual quality (Barroca, 1987: 461; 2000: 1883). Both Nicolau Martins' funerary inscription and the first stage of Júrio Gonçalves' inscription were made by the same person who carved the inscription in the cloister of Alpendorada in 1382 (Barroca, 2000: 1891-1897).

Salvado Pires' tomb is simpler; he was also a prior in Vila Boa do Bispo and his tomb is also from the 14<sup>th</sup> century, showing a funerary inscription carved on the lid of the sarcophagus (Barroca, 2000: 2025-2031):

<sup>15</sup> For more information on this matter, please read Barroca (2000: 1882).

+ ESTE : MOIMENTO : E : DE : DON : SALVADO : PIRES : PRIOR  
: DESTE : MOOSTEIRO : QUAL ERA : DOS : + / MILHACOS : E  
DOS : PEIXOES :<sup>16</sup>

Similar to Nicolau Martins' and Júrio Geraldês' memorials, this chest was also placed in the Chapel of Our Lady the Elder, according to the information provided by Rodrigo da Cunha in 1623: Salvado Pires' tomb was on the Epistle side and the other ones on the Gospel side; Nicolau Martins' closer to the chancel and Júrio Geraldês' closer to the west door (Cunha, 1623 *apud* Barroca, 2000: 2025-2026). Currently, this tomb is in the churchyard of the Monastery of Vila Boa do Bispo. However, the fact that the inscription and the heraldic blazon are engraved on the chest's right-side surface contradicts this information provided by Rodrigo da Cunha, because it shows that this tomb was clearly designed to be placed against the temple's north wall, thus allowing the simultaneous reading of these two identifying elements (Barroca, 2000: 2029-2030).

The depicted blazon is a quartered coat of arms of the Gothic or French type. On the first and fourth quarters, it shows two fishes, one over the other; on the second and third quarters there is a sorghum stalk with three leaves alternately arranged around the stalk, which is crowned by a cob. These "talking pieces" remind Mário Barroca of the two surnames in question, the Milhaços and the Peixões (Barroca, 2000: 2030). As we have seen, the Milhaços' coat of arms appears on Júrio Geraldês' tomb and on the tomb placed on the cloister of the Monastery of Vila Boa do Bispo, as well as on the sarcophagus that is preserved in the churchyard of the Monastery of Paço de Sousa, and even in one of the sarcophagi found on the back of the chancel of Tarouquela (Cinfães).

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Churchyard. Tomb of Salvado Pires.

<sup>16</sup> It reads: This Memorial belongs to Salvado Pires, Prior of this Monastery, which belonged to the Milhacos and the Peixoes.

## THE MONUMENT IN THE MODERN PERIOD

Although, in 1320, Vila Boa do Bispo was part of the most profitable monastic churches, two centuries later the effects of the commendatory management were already being felt. João de Barros, in 1549, states that “the Monastery of Vila Boa do Bispo is no longer inhabited by monks” (Barros, 1919: 117). Although this was not the case (the chronicler’s generalist analysis is well known), the monastic community of Vila Boa probably suffered, over more than a century, the effects of the commandment system that embezzled the revenues for private purposes and allowed the monks to be neglectful and licentious. The presentation of commendatory abbots began in 1475 and ended in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century with Miguel de Almeida<sup>17</sup>. The reformation was applied here in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, in 1605, a time when one of the monks refused to comply with it. This disobedience was described by the author of *Corografia portuguesa...* as a mix of extravagance and bonhomie:

“This Convent was reformed in 1605 and one of the old Cloistral Canons, who are commonly known as Bravos, did not accept the reformation, and they called him André Carneyro de vasconcellos, son of Gaspar carneiro de vasconcellos and brother of maria Velho Carneyro, wife of Francisco Giraldes e vasconcellos, lady of Asa Nova. It always featured a door to the Convent, so he could come in from the house where he lived and pray with the friars, something he did until 1673, the year in which he died of a very old age and in perfect mood, after an honest life throughout which he gave plenty of alms; he occupied himself with hunting in the free time he had after his prayers and contemplation, praying everyday to all the churches he saw from the Monastery; he was nearly thirty years old in the year of the [Convent’s] reformation and lived sixty-eight years after that” (Costa, 1706-1712: 399).

Surely this was not an isolated case among the monasteries who came out of the commendatory management period. The sons of the Portuguese nobility who lived in these institutes were used to a certain lifestyle they refused to abandon in the reformist period, despite the threats made by the inspectors.

To oppose the place’s vulgarity and decadence, the chronicle of the Order of the Canons Regular of Saint Augustine written in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century emphasizes the importance of the monastic complex by promoting the sanctity of its founders, namely of bishop Sisnando, who is seen as being responsible for several miracles. By adding value to his life they were adding value to his body, a relic that the men of the Monastery could turn into something profitable.

His proto-hagiography, written by the authors of *Agiologio lusitano...* and of the chronicle, presents him as a foreigner who rejected all pleasures and merits to become a hermit monk in the thickets of Vila Boa. Refusing the monastic luxury, he prayed and celebrated mass in

17 [S.a.] – *Galeria das ordens religiosas e militares, desde a mais remota antiguidade até nossos dias: adornada com muitas estampas*. Porto: Typographia na Rua Formosa, 1843. Vol. II, p. 93.



Church. General interior view from the nave.

neighbouring chapels, assuming the risk of being caught in one of the Muslim raids that, in the end, were the cause of his death. The circumstances of his demise, within a hermitic context, may provide very relevant leads regarding the construction of memorials or “marmorais” [the same as memorials], whose origin may be explained by a period characterised by bellicosity:

“The year of his glorious martyrdom is not mentioned, but we can conclude from good conjectures that it was 1074, in the Chapel we called of Saint Saviour, in the monastery’s parish, between the hamlets of Adeguilhas and Bairal. And not the one of Our Lady the Elder, as some says. Because in Saint Saviour’s, which we mention [of which there are no longer more than traces], the local people show the very place where his memorial used to stand, and there, the stone that used to cover it, and from amidst the hill, a stone pillar built in memory of the tomb that had been there for many years, after his relics were transferred to the monastery, where they lie in the Church’s body, in the place where we can see a painting with the history of his martyrdom and an inscription that is now impossible to read due to its antiquity” (Cardoso, 1652).

Jorge Cardoso’s *Agiologio...* indicates the day of the martyrdom – January 30<sup>th</sup> –, as well as the day of the memory, despite the fact that the Church never included him in its altars. Nevertheless, it may have contributed to ascribe him a circumstantial aura of venerability, not just because of the glorious miracles that his body supposedly performed from the inside of the



Church. Nave. North wall. Balcony.

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Church, but also due to the fame of a coeval and namesake thaumaturge for whom Alfonso III of Asturias (849-910) had a special interest. Like the Portuguese Sisenando, the one from Cosgaya (Camaleño, Cantabria, Spain) was also a bishop and monk; he died in 92 (Lorente Fernandez, 1882: 357). Both were popularly adopted as examples of beatitude.

Despite the fact that the monks of Vila Boa do Bispo were not interested in this confirmation of sanctity – but only in adding prestige to the decadent abbey – the laudatory speech that in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century rekindled the wonderful memory of the local martyr seemed very convenient.

The distribution of several dated cartouches inside the building whose dates span between 1599 and 1686 confirms a new impulse and investment dictated by its integration in the congregation of Santa Cruz of Coimbra in 1593 (Sousa, 2005: 197). The most important building campaign is Baroque.

In 1758 the vicar Manuel Moreira, by order of Francisco do Rosário, the people's priest, wrote a parish memoir that tells us, among other things, that the Church was “out of place”, that it was dedicated to Our Lady of the Assumption and that it had a single nave and four altars. About their titles, the vicar mentions that the main altar (altarpiece) had the images of Saint Augustine and Saint Theotonius – devotions that were well loved by the Canons Regular; one of the collateral altars was dedicated to Holy Christ, another was dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary and, finally, there was one dedicated to the Blessed Sacrament where the Virgin and Saint Anthony were worshipped (Moreira, 1758).

Despite the fact that the reporter does not make long descriptions about the mobile and integrated assets, it is likely that in 1758 the building's interior already had a similar look to the one we can admire today: in addition to the referred altarpieces, there is a choir and an extravagant balcony with balustrade (placed above one of the arcossolia) whose base or box, decorated with *chinoiserias*, is supported by an atlas standing on a half-shell and flanked by angels, asexual



Church. Arch that supports the choir. Painting detail.



Church. Access to the pulpit. Painting detail.

figures and extravagant women with serpent-shaped bodies, perhaps representing Echidna, a nymph from Greek mythology. Right next to it, the pulpit and the door to the sacristy – which were probably made in 1686, as suggested by the date added above the jambs – are proof of the reformist needs that privileged preaching and encouraged the space to be reorganized according to an increasingly scenic liturgy.

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Almost all the faces of the nave's openings show *trompe-l'œil* paintings, either with the use of faux marble elements (on the sacristy's door, on the pulpit and on the arch that supports the choir), or with scenic decorations (chapel of the Blessed Sacrament) where there are plenty of fake architectural elements and the usual floral ornaments with brutesque elements, much to the taste of the theatrical Baroque celebration.



Church. Arch of the chapel of the Blessed Sacrament. Painting detail.





Church. Nave. South wall.  
Chapel of the Blessed Sacrament.

The tiles that cover the chancel together with the woodwork and the coffered ceiling are an ornamental ensemble associated with the scenic luxury that the society and the Church were so fond of in the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Here we see a series of tiles that dates back around 1740 and shows the most common types of separate figures – “little stars”, vases and dolphins – arranged in 4x4 panels divided by lines of jugs (Simões, 1971: 109). The ensemble is surrounded by a common stripe with twisted leaves.

The main altarpiece features a National Baroque style [style which develops during the reign of King João V (k. 1706-1750)] and the one in the chapel of the Blessed Sacrament (currently called of Our Lady of Grace) is from the Johannine period [style which develops during the reign of King João V (k. 1706-1750)], when the *horror vacui* was more meaningful. Together with the scenic woodwork whose decoration imitate fabrics and an entire series of ephemeral ornaments, there is a “faux damask” background painting that “extends the grammar of the Johannine repertoire” (Rodrigues, 2004: 311-312). The artwork ensemble is completed by an “a secco” painting on the ceiling, with the usual hagiographic themes. From the altarpiece to the chancel arch we see the Apostles and the Evangelists, Saint Theotonius – an invocation that was well-loved by the Canons Regular – the bishop Saint Herculanus, Saint Anthony of Lisbon and the martyr Saint Possidonius. Despite being extravagant, the presence of venerable men whose lives somewhat resemble Sisnando’s, the bishop and martyr, is actually an interesting proposal for the analysis of the intensification of his worship during the 17<sup>th</sup>- and 18<sup>th</sup>-century campaigns.

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In the sacristy, there is a granite lavatory from 1727 that extends the Baroque aesthetic language of the nave and chancel. Divided into three levels – a lower one, a central one from which there was water spouting from two mascarons or masks, and a third one decorated with little wings that frame a mitre –, this washbasin reminds us of one of the sacristy’s purposes: that of preparing people for liturgy through ablution.

The mitre above a heart, the symbol that closes the woodwork lining of the chancel arch, reminds us of the importance of the abbey within the context of the Augustinian rule. Above this element, which is immersed in the effusive Johannine decoration, and taking advantage of the narrow crevice that illuminated the nave, a full-body image of Our Lady of the Assumption resting on a cloud from which three angel heads emerge recalls the Church’s faithful patron saint.



Church. Sacristy.

Church. Chancel.



## CONTEMPORARY INTERVENTIONS

“By an Order issued by the Public Works Department on August 8<sup>th</sup> last year, the Directorate for Public Works of the District of Porto has ordered the demolition of the tower of the Church of Vila Boa do Bispo, in the Municipality of Marco de Canavezes and, after, its reconstruction”<sup>18</sup>. It is with these words that the explanatory statement, dated January 21<sup>st</sup> 1882, informs us on the decision to rebuild the tower of Vila Boa do Bispo. Such a radical option is justified by the serious state of ruin in which the tower found itself.

In response to a request from the chairman of the Parish Council, the chief-engineer of the 5<sup>th</sup> Section of Public Works of Porto was sent a “project for the internal stonework stairs surrounding the walls of the tower” of the Church of Vila Boa do Bispo<sup>19</sup>. This project dates back to November 1886. In the following year, the works were already being carried out and duly inspected<sup>20</sup>. It was expected for the work to be completed by June 11<sup>th</sup> that year<sup>21</sup>, because part of the cornice was already set up on the previous day, a request was sent to Porto for orders “to build the dome of the same tower, before the stonemasons left”<sup>22</sup>. Therefore, in the following month, they were working on the bell tower’s finishings, although the “stone placed as a clock display (...) had not” been cut yet.

However, on January 24<sup>th</sup> 1888, the Palace directly informs the Director of Public Works of Porto that His Majesty, King Luís I (1861-1889), ordered the suspension of the reconstruction works in the tower of the Mother Church of Vila Boa do Bispo, which he had previously approved by the Decrees of August 8<sup>th</sup> 1881 and September 27<sup>th</sup> 1883<sup>23</sup>. However, by contributing with an allowance of one hundred and sixty thousand “réis” [former Portuguese currency unit], the completion of the works would be left to the parish’s own responsibility. We should note that, in the previous year, the monarch had already contributed with four hundred thousand “réis” “for the Mother Church’s repair works”<sup>24</sup>.

Lúcia Rosas tells us that it was during the 1940’s that the tombs of Nicolau Martins and Júrio Geraldes were placed in arcades opened on the nave’s wall, on the Gospel side (Rosas & Sotomayor-Pizarro, 2009: 113). In 1946, the Building Commission was already working on “the accommodation of the stone tombs that formerly belonged in the cloister. Two years later, 9500\$00 [former Portuguese currency unit] had already been spent in the Church’s works, including the construction of the loculi to accommodate the two tombs” (Monteiro, 1990: 149-150).

The following news regarding Vila Boa do Bispo were found in 1955 and these relate to the opening of the process for the classification of the Church as a National Monument, including

18 *Memória justificativa*, 21 de janeiro de 1882. IRHU/Arquivo ex-DGEMN/DREM 1706/14. Igrejas do bispado do Porto: concelhos de Lousada e Marco de Canaveses.

19 Silva, Augusto Anthero da – Missiva e projeto das escadas interiores, de pedra torneando as paredes da torre: medição e orçamento, 16 de novembro de 1886. Idem.

20 Silva, Augusto Anthero da – Missiva, 8 de julho de 1887. Idem.

21 Silva, Augusto Anthero da – Missiva, 9 de junho de 1887. Idem.

22 Idem.

23 [Illegible] – Missiva, 24 de janeiro de 1888. Idem.

24 [Illegible] – Missiva, 18 de fevereiro de 1887. Idem.



South façade. Bell tower.

its tombs<sup>25</sup>. Taking the opportunity, Father Manuel de Oliveira Sousa Vales – the parish priest of Vila Boa do Bispo at the time – quickly contacted the DGEMN – Direção-Geral dos Edifícios e Monumentos Nacionais [General Directorate for Buildings and National Monuments], requesting the implementation of works he deemed urgent: the complete electrification of its interior, the repair of the woodwork that covered the chancel arch and several roof works<sup>26</sup>.

As, at that time, the conservation of the monument was the “sole responsibility of the Parish that has the usufruct of its property, due to the fact that the legislation stating that the minimum conservation works needed in classified buildings, despite being privately owned, may be financed by the State whenever the financial inability of their owners is duly proved”<sup>27</sup> had not been approved yet; the DGEMN, being unable to give its contribution, made an offer to “provide technical assistance to the works that might be carried out by the Parish Priest of the Church of Vila Boa do Bispo in the future”<sup>28</sup>. So, as far as we could understand from the analysis of the documents regarding this monument, the “electrical installation” was a priority; the specific reference that this intervention included both the lighting of the entire church and the installation of a sound system provided with a loudspeaker circuit<sup>29</sup>.

Only in the 1990’s do we notice an active intervention of the responsible governmental institutions in the Church of Vila Boa do Bispo. Although there was a verification of the state of repair of the gilded woodwork altars in September 1990 – carried out by the former Instituto Português do Património Cultural [Portuguese Institute of Cultural Heritage]<sup>30</sup> –, six years later, the technicians from the Centre of Conservation and Restoration of the then IP-PAR – Instituto Português do Património Arquitectónico [Portuguese Institute of Architectural Heritage] conducted an inspection in the monument under study<sup>31</sup>. Although, by then, the “existence of a numerous artistic collection, comprising gilded woodwork altarpieces, tiles, a coffered ceiling and the stalls, some of which required interventions in terms of conservation and restoration” had already been detected, the truth is that the previous conduction of a study on the “built part, particularly focused on the stability of its structures”<sup>32</sup>, was considered as being important. We cannot forget that the good state of repair of the collection integrated into a given monument depends necessarily – in addition to the required cleaning and maintenance operations, preferably conducted by technicians who are specialised and have a thorough knowledge regarding the materials that were used and the variations that these are subject to –, on the stability and conservation of the architectural structure that accommodates them. Naturally, the occurrence of water infiltrations in a vault such as the one of the chancel of Vila Boa do Bispo would cause serious damages in the structure concealed by the coffers, damages that, in most cases, are silent... Therefore, it is deemed “obvious that it is not possible to separate the

25 Ofício n.º 1250 da Direção-Geral dos Assuntos Culturais, 28 de janeiro de 1975 [SIPA.TXT.00671971]. DGEMN: DSID-001/013-005-1981/3 [Online]. Available at [www: <URL: http://www.monumentos.pt>](http://www.monumentos.pt) [Nº PTO11307300016].

26 Vales, Manuel de Oliveira Sousa, Missiva de 20 de junho de 1975 [SIPA.TXT.00671974 and SIPA.TXT.00671975]. Idem.

27 Ofício n.º 453, 11 de junho de 1975 [SIPA.TXT.00671976 and SIPA.TXT.00671977]. Idem.

28 O.S. n.º 1094, 21 de julho de 1975 [SIPA.TXT.00671978]. Idem.

29 Memória, 26 de abril de 1977 [SIPA.TXT.00671985 and SIPA.TXT.00671986]. Idem.

30 Ofício do Instituto de José de Figueiredo, 21 de setembro de 1990 [SIPA.TXT.00671994 and SIPA.TXT.00671995]. Idem.

31 Ofício da Secretaria de Estado da Cultura, 29 de janeiro de 1991 [SIPA.TXT.00671996 and SIPA.TXT.00671997]. Idem.

32 Idem.

intervention on the building from the intervention on the elements that became attached to it over time”<sup>33</sup>. So, carrying out inspections and ensuring a permanent control are essential to preserve our historic and artistic heritage for future generations.

In April 1991, an extensive “Diagnosis of the building’s state of conservation and pathologies” had already been conducted, accompanied by a prior proposal of intervention for the building’s conservation and improvement<sup>34</sup>. The scope of this study does not include a specification of all the items observed, as well as of the solutions suggested and, among these, of those that were actually implemented. The truth is that, although the documentary sources we were able to analyse do not clarify it, through the analysis of several photographic sources we may say that, at least externally, the building was only subject to a conservation intervention after 2006.

So, following one of the proposals from the 1997 document, the (lime and gravel-based) plaster was restored on the Church’s external wall faces, thus giving them the appearance that we see today. We do not know the reason why, in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, there was a certain urge to contradict an intervention strategy that had almost become “standard” in terms of intervention in the built Romanesque heritage in Portugal, which has to do precisely with the elimination of the Church’s external whitewash layer. We also question if this option wasn’t ultimately intended – and this is merely our conjecture – to add aesthetic value to the ornamental elements of the portals and, particularly, their Romanesque elements that, here and there, punctuate the external walls much like “restoration windows”. Is this intention of granting visibility to specific elements of the Romanesque construction that were integrated in the “new” structure during the Modern Period and emphasised by the contrast between the granite and the Contemporary whitewash related to the idea of the “rememoration” values that Aloïs Riegl associated with the concepts of antiquity and historicity?<sup>35</sup>. The question remains.

There have already been some interventions focused on the (silent) damages caused by water infiltrations in the roofing systems and, in this particular case, in the chancel’s vault. This intervention offered the possibility of admiring the 17<sup>th</sup>-century mural painting with hagiographic themes that covers the vault and had been hidden by the coffered ceiling. [MLB / NR]



Church before the intervention carried out in the 1990’s.  
Source: IHRU archive.



West façade before the intervention carried out in the 1990’s. Source: IHRU archive.

33 Ofício n.º 92/DSDREM, 15 de abril de 1997 [SIPA.TXT.00672005]. Idem.

34 Documentação vária [SIPA.TXT.00672004 a SIPA.TXT.00672015]. Idem.

35 About this matter, please read Choay (2000: 138).



## CHRONOLOGY

990-1022: according to tradition, the Monastery of Vila Boa do Bispo was founded by Sisnando, the brother of Monio Viegas;

1012: first reference to the "Monastery Saint Mariae Villaebonae";

1022: date included in the funerary inscription of Monio Viegas and of two of his sons, Egas Moniz and Gomes Moniz, engraved in a sarcophagus lid found in the cloister of the Monastery of Vila Boa do Bispo;

1120: reference to the "Monastery... Villa Noua [sic] episcopi";

1141 (February 12<sup>th</sup>): the Monastery of Vila Boa do Bispo – or, more specifically, the prior Egas, his brother Monio and his monks –, received the land charter granted by King Afonso Henriques;

1142: the bishop of Porto, Pedro Rabaldis (epic. 1138-1145), visits the chapel where Sisnando was buried; later, he would have his tomb transferred to the Monastery of Vila Boa [do Bispo];

1143: there are already reports on the presence of the Canons Regular of Saint Augustine in Vila Boa do Bispo;

1144: in the Papal Brief of Pope Lucius II (p. 1144-1145), the priors of the Monastery were allowed to use a mitre;

1153: in the Bull of Pope Anastasius IV (p. 1153-1154), the priors were also distinguished with the permit to use a crosier;

Late 12<sup>th</sup> century/13<sup>th</sup> century: chronology of the remaining Romanesque elements of Vila Boa do Bispo;

1297: Pope Boniface VIII (p. 1294-1303) made an explicit confirmation of the rule of Saint Augustine in the Monastery of Vila Boa do Bispo;

13<sup>th</sup> century: the Monastery of Vila Boa do Bispo held many farmhouses and patronages in several parishes of the region;

14<sup>th</sup> century: design of the tomb of Salvado Pires;

1320: the Monastery of Vila Boa do Bispo pays a tax of 1500 Portuguese "libras" [former Portuguese currency unit];

1348 (November 25<sup>th</sup>): inscription engraved on the tomb of Nicolau Martins, the Monastery's prior;

1362: after this date, the tombs of Júrio Geraldês and Nicolau Martins were commissioned by the former to the same workshop;

1381 (January 30<sup>th</sup>) funeral inscription engraved in the lateral section of the lid of the tomb of Júrio Geraldês, chief magistrate of King Fernando (k. 1367-1383) for the region of Entre-Douro-e-Minho;

1475: the presentation of commendatory abbots in Vila Boa do Bispo begins;

1593: the Monastery of Vila Boa do Bispo is integrated in the congregation of the Holy Cross in Coimbra;

1599-1686: earliest and latest dates of the various cartouches placed inside the building, which offer evidence of the great transformation it underwent during the Modern Period;

1605: reformation of the Monastery of Vila Boa do Bispo;

17<sup>th</sup> century (2<sup>nd</sup> half): transformation of the Romanesque building of Vila Boa do Bispo;

1650-1660: tiling of the baptistery;

1686: possible construction of the sacristy, purposely opening an access door to the chancel, duly identified over the jamb;

18<sup>th</sup> century (1<sup>st</sup> half): chronology of the Baroque intervention in the Church's interior, based on existing stylistic elements;

1727: date engraved in the sacristy washbasin;

1740: tiling of the chancel;

1758: according to the information provided by the parish memories, the building of Vila Boa do Bispo would already present an identical look to the one we see today;

1834: under the scope of the extinction of the religious orders, the Monastery was sold and became private property;

1882-1888: disassembling and reconstruction of the tower;

1886 (November 16<sup>th</sup>): project for the inner stairs surrounding the tower's walls;

1977: classification of the Church (and tombs) as National Monument; classification of the area of the former Monastery as Public Interest Building;

1997 (onwards): restoration of plaster coatings on the Church's internal and external walls;

2010: the Monastery of Vila Boa do Bispo becomes part of the Route of the Romanesque's complex of monuments;

2012: conservation intervention on the chancel's vault, revealing a 17<sup>th</sup>-century mural painting, after the removal of the existing coffered ceiling.

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