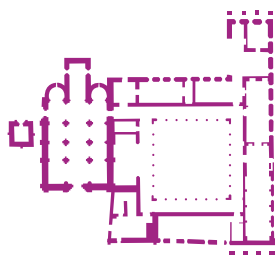


50.

MONASTERY OF THE SAVIOUR OF TRAVANCA



Rua do Mosteiro
Travanca
Amarante



41° 16' 40.43" N
8° 11' 35.21" W



+351 918 116 488



Saturday, 7 pm (winter)
or 8 pm (summer)
Sunday, 8.15 am



Divine Saviour
6th August



National Monument
1916



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Despite the inconsistencies in terms of dates and names, the foundation of the Monastery of the Saviour of Travanca has been ascribed to Garcia Moniz (1008-1066), the son of Monio Viegas, the Gasco; the latter is suggested as the founder of the Monastery of Vila Boa do Bispo (Marco de Canaveses) (p. 163). So, the history behind these two Monasteries seems to be associated with the Gascos lineage, whose presence is documented until rather late in time, both in terms of patronage rights and in terms of its real and symbolic connection to the ecclesiastical and monastic space: the founder's descendants joined this space and were buried in it, thus ensuring total control during their lives and after their deaths, for example, through masses and memorials on the anniversary of their demise.

Throughout the Middle Ages, this Monastery showed a growing influence in the economic, political and religious control of the region, either through donations or a careful management of its assets. At the time, the institute was part of the "terra" of Sousa and remained within the sphere of the limits of the municipality of Ribatâmega, despite the fact that it was turned into a



"couth", supposedly still during the period of Count Henrique (1066-1112) and Teresa (1080-1130), the parents of King Afonso Henriques (k. 1143-1185), the first king of Portugal. In fact, only a solid financial capacity could guarantee the construction of the building that still exists. Through its location and pomp,

the monumental medieval ensemble (Church and Tower) is a good expression of the agricultural economy that developed it and of the successive demands of those who were associated with it throughout its history.

In fact, this Monastery's Church, together with the geographically close examples of

A CHURCH WITH THREE NAVES

According to Manuel Real, the Monastery of Travanca is the most accomplished example of the "'Portuguese Benedictine plan' for churches with three-naves" that here are defined by four bays and a wooden roof resting on diaphragm arches; it features a chevet composed of two semi-circular vaulted apse chapels that are flanking a chancel, nowadays deep and rectangular as a result of an extension work made during the Baroque period. The Romanesque apse, with two floors, was probably circular and higher than the two apse chapels. In this author's opinion, "the 'Portuguese Benedictine plan' for churches with three naves, provided with a specific programmatic meaning, corresponds to a very particular way of conceiving architecture, which is generally interpreted with grandeur and emulation."





the Churches of the Monastery of Pombeiro (Felgueiras) (p. 30) and Paço de Sousa (Penafiel) (p. 90), belong to the small family of churches with three naves built in Portugal during the Romanesque period. On the Church's outside it is quite noticeable that the lateral naves are much lower than the central one, either by looking at the monument's side elevations or when we analyse its main façade. In general, the composition of the latter is close to the one of the façade of the Monastery of Paço de Sousa, meaning that this church from Amarante fits into the so-called "nationalised Romanesque" style. The richly ornamented portal was opened on a protruding volume surmounted by a cornice supported by rectangular corbels (the latter are a result of the restoration conducted in the 1930's). The plain tympanum is supported by bovine head-shaped corbels. Its archivolts are livened up by dihedral tori, which reveal an influence from Porto. However, what indeed dis-

tinguishes this portal the most is precisely the sculpture of its capitals, which is rather protruding, small and very delicate, thus being considered the best in the region. Some of the themes depicted here are repeated on the north portal and inside the Church: birds with intertwined necks, a human figure shaped as an atlas on the capital's corner, intertwined serpents and a composition whose origin lies in Braga, which depicts monsters swallowing naked figures hanging from their mouths, suspended by the legs.

Closed in on itself, the Church's interior is illuminated by narrow crevices with a Romanesque flavour. The ones that illuminate the central nave are larger and bear more decorative elements: they feature columns that, together with their capitals, support dihedral tori, thus proving the influence of Porto once again. The north portal is composed of three slightly pointed archivolts with sharp edges, and its capitals present symmetrical composi-

tions: the intertwined snakes, the mermaid and the birds with entwined necks. The back façade of the Church of Travanca is well worth a visit, not only to see how a building is able to combine such antagonistic structures (the Romanesque body and apse chapels with the Baroque chancel), but also to admire the thematic variety of the sculptures found both on the capitals and the corbels (with anthropomorphic motifs) of the circular apse chapels. To these aspects we should add an observation related to the quadrilobed oculus opened above the chancel arch, whose interior is richly ornamented with an "ee"-shaped cordate motif.

The free-standing tower is one of the highest medieval towers in Portugal. Crowned with merlons that surround a balcony supported by machicolations, this structure should be understood as an element of manorial assertion. Its militarised appearance is purely rhetorical. Facing east and located opposite the Church's north

portal, the tower's portal is one of the most discussed Portuguese Romanesque portals. Its evolved structure, which is already considered Gothic (carved in the thickness of the wall, without any columns or capitals and with archivolts resting on the imposts), is combined with the elementary nature of the decorative graphic elements concentrated on the archivolts and are a reflection of the resistance and prestige of Romanesque art. There are vousoirs with affronted animals on the edges that try to imitate a typical model from Braga, thus reflecting its prestige. On the inner archivolt we see the theme of the *beak-heads* that we also find in Cárquere (Resende) (p. 121), Fandinhães (Marco de Canaveses) (p. 143) and Tarouquela (Cinfães) (p. 109). On the tympanum we see a very original representation of the *Agnus Dei*, the mystical Lamb of God, which is partly bending its knees and holding a cross pattée up high. Associated with the belief that it would guard the entrance



from certain beings, it is one of the most common themes found in our tympana, despite the variants it may show.

So, let us go inside the Church. At first glance, the emphasis put on the granite of the walls and pillars is more than obvious; this appearance was only restored in the 20th century. The pillars are cruciform and their role is to support the diaphragm arches and the ribs that rest on their columns. This is one of the most rhythmic spaces in Portuguese Romanesque architecture, which does not alter the fact that it reveals several irregularities in terms of design, different arcade solutions, as well as a technical and stylistic diversity in terms of impostes, capitals and column bases.

It is in the mid-13th century that we may find an average date for the construction of this monastic Church, which also

stands out for the thematic variety of the capitals that populate its interior; some of them are narrative capitals, a significant aspect within the context of the Portuguese Romanesque style in which human figures were not frequently used.

The sacristy is still a remain from the modern age, although the major works conducted during the Modern Period were associated with the adjacent building, namely the cloister, the dormitories and other premises. The remaining sculptures and paintings that had been placed along the Church's lateral and collateral altars were transferred to the sacristy. In the Church, only a modest National Style [1690-1725] altarpiece survived; given that it was placed in the north apse chapel, it was considered as the only one that could be reused and, therefore, it was placed in the chancel.





A DEEP INTERVENTION

Between the 16th and 20th centuries, the Church of Travanca was subject to structural interventions (of which the Baroque is the utmost example); it also witnessed an increase in terms of integrated assets, as a result of the adjustment of the medieval space to the growing needs of the monastic and lay communities and to the normative guidelines produced in the Council of Trento (1545-1563).

The visitor is now allowed to walk inside a temple which is very different from the one used by religious and lay people between the 16th and 19th centuries: the altarpieces and the pulpit were disassembled, the high choir was pulled down, the vaults' stucco (which imitated white marble) was completely removed and the mortar plaster that existed on the internal and external walls was completely eliminated; three of the windows from the main façade were replaced by crevices; the militarized character of the tower, which ceased to work as a belfry, was emphasised... all in the name of a desired aesthetic "correction" and "harmonisation" that prevailed over the need to ensure the monument's preservation.

So, the image we currently have of the Romanesque Church of Travanca is a result of this deep intervention that the 1930's have left us and it is a significant example of the importance that the history of the restorations conducted has for the understanding of any building.

THE SACRISTY

On the intradorsum of the door providing access to the lobby (or antesacristy), the date 1585 presumably marks this area's first extension stage, which was later renovated according to the Baroque taste, between the late 17th century and the second half of the 18th century. Built according to a rectangular plan adjoined to the Church's south wall, this structure accommodates two chest of drawers placed laterally along the east and west walls, a cabinet and a table for chalices. The space is dominated by the nobility of the materials used. At the top, there is a chapel that houses a National Style [1690-1725] altarpiece. We should highlight the remarkable carpentry and painting works of the coffered ceiling, which express a preference for classical motifs with direct or symbolic connections to the religious semantics conveyed by the Holy Scriptures.

