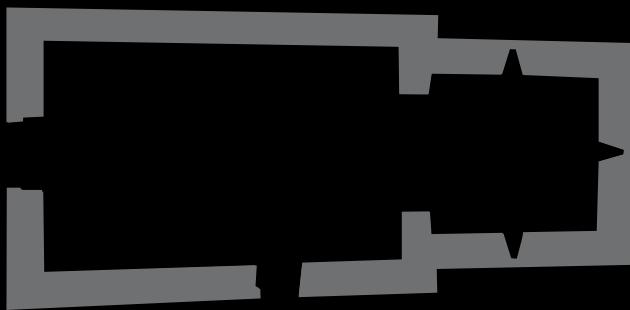


**CHAPEL**  
**OF OUR LADY**  
**OF PIETY**  
**OF QUINTÃ**  
PAREDES

CHAPEL  
OF OUR LADY  
OF PIETY  
OF QUINTÃ  
PAREDES



Plan.

Baltar – once a “honra” [a type of Portuguese administrative division] of the House of Bragança and currently a parish of the municipality of Paredes – is still one of the main crossing points in the Entre-Douro-e-Minho region, as proven by the heavy traffic and the new communication routes<sup>1</sup>. It was part of the old Medieval road from Porto to Penafiel and the writer Camilo Castelo Branco spent quite a long time describing it in his novel *Vinte horas de liteira* [Twenty hours by litter] – the time that, according to him, took to go from Vila Real to Porto in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Castelo Branco, 2002: 161-168). In the short story *Os percevejos de Baltar* [The bedbugs of Baltar], compiled in this book, Camilo goes on, and in a somewhat jocose tone, about the eccentric episodes that happened at the inn that once existed here, one of the many inns that provided support to travellers from the Entre-Douro-e-Minho and Trás-os-Montes regions. Furthermore, the toponymy preserved the memory of the place as a point of convergence: “Ponte da Pedra [Stone Bridge]”, a sign that the road was safe. And this is not a recent memory, since the stone bridge is already mentioned in the archives of the church of Baltar, which date back to 1600<sup>2</sup>.

The Chapel of Our Lady of Piety is located close to this road, not very far from the hamlet of Quintã; it is a building with discrete volumes, whose chronological span shows the hardships of the men and times that conceived it. In 1758, the parish priest of Baltar refers to it as a hermitage and calls it Our Lady of Quintã because it was close to the hamlet with that same name (Ferreira, 1758 *apud* Capela, Matos & Borralheiro, 2009: 475); the toponym derives from the Latin word *quintana*, meaning a small manorial housing unit or farmhouse, which reveals the importance of the place in the Medieval humanization process.

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Aerial view.

<sup>1</sup> The “honra” [a type of Portuguese administrative division] became part of the assets of the House of Bragança at the time of Nuno Álvares Pereira. However, it had previously belonged to the Pereiras who swapped it with the Constable. This was its status in 1706: abbey dedicated to Saint Michael, belonging to the patronage of the House of Bragança, with rents divided between the former and the monastery of the Stigmata of the Nuns of Saint Francis of Vila Viçosa. The election of the judge of the “honra” was made by the people and confirmed by the “ouvidoria” of Barcelos (similar to a judicial district and one of the institutions supervised by the House of Bragança in the Northern region), where the registrars of the municipality of Aguiar de Sousa worked (Costa, 1706-1712: 378).

<sup>2</sup> “Ponte da pedra” (ADP, 1600: fl. 226 v.º). This bridge is a common reference point for the definition of property limits; “(...) starts on the west, along the Brook streaming from the stone bridge and is surrounded by vines and, on the north, along the path that comes from the dolmen to the Church (...)” (ADP, 1600: fl. 227). Further ahead there is a reference to a place located between two bridges, possibly intended for different types of traffic (local and regional): “A so-called swamp between the bridges (...)” (ADP, 1600: fl. 229 v.º).









Chancel. Back wall. Niche.  
Sculpture. Virgin of Piety.

The hermitage of Our Lady of Piety, in the parish of Baltar, fits into the worship building typology whose axial door, opened towards the public space, is associated with a communitarian or patron-related devotional space. This type of structure with a simple plan, where usually there is no chancel (although this one features one), is different from chapels – small buildings that are privately managed and attached to manorial houses or churches – because they were dedicated to saints or had Christological or Marian invocations that were specially focused on attracting communitarian devotion. So as to understand the origin of the hermitage it is essential to learn about its location. Although it may appear within an urban context, its origin lies, as the etymon refers, in a devotion site that is outside the town, in an uninhabited, isolated or peripheral place. Nevertheless, it is usual to mix chapel and hermitage, mainly after the 18<sup>th</sup> century, since these words were used to express the same referential: a small building used for worshipping an invocation that is especially famous among commoners<sup>3</sup>.

So, the hermitage or chapel of Our Lady of Piety is part of the peripheral communal space of the hamlet of Quintã and it represents its collective religious expression, as an element that takes on the protective and unifying sense of the word communal. Its location is extremely expressive: built according to the canonical orientation on the side of the Medieval road, it took advantage of the surrounding agricultural area to lay its foundations. It is, therefore, natural that its origin was a small building intended to worship a propitiatory Christian entity<sup>4</sup>. The different construction stages, which are clearly visible in its structure as we shall see, lead us to the conclusion that these different construction periods are also associated with different interests regarding the invocation worshipped in this hermitage. Over one or more worships, it was the Marian that eventually prevailed and it was later called Virgin of Piety, an expression of the maternal suffering as a response to the tragedy that took place in the Golgotha – a subject related to the reformation that was probably behind the change in patron saint.

Despite the fact that it is not located on the summit or on the slope of a hill, as most of the Calvary-hermitages that left their contours in the landscape over the 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries (partly influenced by Franciscan preachings), it is likely that the Chapel of Our Lady of Piety was part of the Calvary or Via Crucis theme, being the destination of one of the processions that took place during Lent<sup>5</sup>. Unfortunately, the documents fail to mention any such references, so we can only speculate about this circumstance.

This building is hard to date. In his reply to the survey sent to all parish priests from the episcopate of Porto in 1864<sup>6</sup>, abbot Agostinho Lopes Coelho Ferraz, the parish priest of Baltar, mentions the existence of the “Chapel of Our Lady of Piety, located in the hamlet of Quintã, which is in good state of repair”<sup>7</sup>. However, the parish priest is unable to specify “the date of its construc-

<sup>3</sup> About this issue, please read Resende (2011).

<sup>4</sup> We assume that the following excerpt is a reference to the hermitage: “The Campo de Viso located in the field of Our Lady (...)” (ADP, 1600: fls. 232 v.º-233).

<sup>5</sup> Close to the hermitage we find the hamlet of “Calvário [Calvary]”.

<sup>6</sup> Victor Le Cocq, through an order issued by the Minister of Public Works, had been commissioned to draw up a map of the state of repair, corresponding repairs and authorised expenses of all the buildings under that Ministry's management. These buildings included those that were considered monuments, parish churches and public chapels, among others (Rosas, 1995: 511).

<sup>7</sup> Ferraz, Agostinho Lopes Coelho – Missiva, 21 de outubro de 1864. IRHU/Arquivo ex-DGEMN/DREM, Cx. 3215/21. Igrejas do concelho de Paredes. 1864-1869.

tion, although it seems to be extremely old because its architecture fits into the Gothic style”<sup>8</sup>.

First of all, we should note that the first study in Portugal specifically focused on the subject of Portuguese Romanesque architecture, which was then called “Roman-Byzantine” architecture (Simões, 1870), was only conducted in 1870. Following the trend of foreign historiography on the matter, despite showing a significant time lag, the truth is that Medieval architecture only began being appreciated as such over the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which definitely released it from the stigma created by Italian Renaissance. Since the word “Gothic” was understood as “Barbarian” (because it was not Roman), thus, taking on a pejorative sense, it was applied since then to all architectural types that, considering their features, did not fit into Classical architecture or into the one that resulted from its “renaissance”. In other words, and being aware that the Goths were responsible for the construction of all the architecture built between 410 (the date of the destruction of Rome by Alaric) and 1419 (the date of the first record regarding Brunelleschi’s work), the “Gothic” style and the Middle Ages came to be understood as synonyms; both pejorative concepts associated with a long historical diachrony. Besides, the word “Romanesque” wasn’t commonly used in Portugal yet. Augusto Filipe Simões only studied this architectural style as such for the first time in Portugal in 1870, despite the terminological inaccuracy that was still associated with it<sup>9</sup>. So, the classification of the Chapel of Our Lady of Piety as “Gothic” by the parish priest of Baltar is not surprising. Furthermore, this rapporteur mentions its “antiquity”. We should not forget the Romantic context of the period, the common feeling of some nostalgia for the past, which was reflected on the appreciation of the historical value and of the antiquity value of built heritage that was beginning to be acknowledged and protected in Portugal<sup>10</sup>.

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South façade.

8 Idem.

9 For further development on this matter, please read Botelho (2010).

10 For further development on this matter, please read Rosas (1995).



South façade. Chancel. Corbels.

Comprising a single nave and a rectangular chancel, the Chapel of Quintã stands out for its small size; this feature is understandable considering its function, which was emphasised in 1758. We should look carefully at its external ashlar: the chancel was built using isodomic ashlar that, despite featuring different sizes, define rows with similar heights. In the nave the ashlar is completely irregular and the construction is characterised by a vernacular *modus aedificandi*. This is the reason why we believe that this building had two different construction stages; the first one corresponding to the apse, probably dating back to the late 13<sup>th</sup> century of to the first quarter of the following one.

Therefore, we think that, in the case of Quintã, the chevet only existed for some time, thus standing as a hermitage. The ashlar in this section of the building provide evidence that its structure was more carefully built. On the other hand, its sparse decorated elements are also located here: there is a cornice showing floral motifs carved in relief. The variety of themes leads us to consider the possibility that there was some kind of reuse of the ashlar that had been previously carved in relief, or even of the ashlar that came from another building, perhaps earlier. Among them we identify specimens similar to the motif defined by Joaquim de Vasconcelos with “no. 45 – four-leaved ivy flower with chamfered leaves; isolated motif; high relief” – in his inventory called “Formas ornamentaes extrahidas dos monumentos portugueses e classificadas segundo a sua analogia” (Vasconcelos & Abreu, 1918: 71-72). The cornice is supported by a series of corbels where we can also depict irregularities in terms of shape and motifs, although most of them are protruding corbels and some of these are occasionally distinguished with a floral motif or a mask. The protruding corbels found in the chevet of the Church of Cête (Paredes), which are identical to the ones in the Chapel of Quintã, have been dated back to the late 13<sup>th</sup> century, and even to the first quarter of the 14<sup>th</sup> century (Rosas, 2008: 162).





South façade. Chancel. Corbels.

At some point, the nave was added to the building, as shown by the difference in the walls. Several reasons may have been behind the temple's extension. Where there more devotees? Was there a local lord, brotherhood or confraternity that wished to ennoble the building by extending it? Was it due to the change of patron saint that we have already suggested? The lack of documentary sources regarding the building does not allow concluding anything else about this issue. Only the traces found in the building itself allow us to suggest these possibilities, whose causes we cannot explain and whose chronology we cannot specify.

Just like the Church of Saint Mammes of Vila Verde (Felgueiras) or the church of Saint Peter of Ermida (Cinfães), the Chapel of Quintã fits perfectly into a category that has been called the "popular Romanesque" style. All these churches show a similar structure to that of many other Portuguese Medieval buildings, thus proving the persistence of the Romanesque *modus aedificandi* and of the shapes that are associated with it beyond the Romanesque Period itself. The most recent historiographical theories have been considering this architectural typology – if we can call it so – as one of the faces of the "resistance Romanesque" style, because it is still possible to be identified in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. There are several reason why Romanesque formulas persisted over such a long period of time. To some extent, the technical, cultural and socioeconomic isolation may lead to the survival and stagnation of specific construction formulas and, consequently, to the inability to adopt new models, even if they are known. At some point, the



West façade.



Church of Vila Verde (Felgueiras). West and south façades.

Romanesque construction mode was so deeply assimilated in certain contexts that a new style, such as the Gothic style or even the aesthetics of the Renaissance, would eventually become “erudite luxuries”. Only so may we understand this out-of-time “ruralisation” and persistence of certain artistic models; these were more coherent with the socioeconomic and spiritual conditions of specific contexts that had a more peripheral nature when compared with the most important artistic centres of the period, which were more cosmopolitan and more attractive for artists and artisans with a more erudite education.

We believe that, more than in the church of Saint Peter of Ermida, the Chapel of Quintã takes on a vernacularisation of shapes, as proven by the irregularity of the ashlar that build the nave or by the profile of its main portal, which is only inscribed in the thickness of the wall, thus not featuring any decorative elements. The portal is slightly broken and its voussoirs also show irregular profiles. In addition to the portal, only a belfry seeking to create an illusion of verticality stands out from the main façade. It is positioned at the centre, on the gable’s apex. If it weren’t for the south portal, we could say that the nave’s elevations were blind walls. Closed in on itself, the Chapel of Quintã features a rather sober interior. Here we are also able to pinpoint the differences in terms of the quality of the walls. A careful analysis of the triumphal arch leads us to assume that it was modified during the Modern Period, considering the regular appearance of its voussoirs (when compared to the rest of the building), although there is a decorated frieze with floral motifs carved in relief from a previous period that was reused and adapted to stand as an impost. A narrow crevice with a Romanesque flavour stands out from the apse’s back wall.

Using a Contemporary concept as its starting point, art historiography tends to consider buildings such as the churches of Saint Peter of Ermida, Saint Mammes de Vila Verde or the Chapel of Quintã as archaic<sup>11</sup>. There are several features that allow us to understand the

<sup>11</sup> On this matter, please read Dias (1994: 151)

scope of this architectural type, considered as being essentially rural, although we would rather consider it as popular, thus alluding to the cultural reality of the period in a more truthful manner<sup>12</sup>. There are various parameters that allow us to understand what some authors have called the “popular Romanesque” style: the existence of a first-order need (the worshipping, by the community), financial limitations and, consequently, technical limitations in terms of the structural solutions chosen and of the materials and ashlar used, showing a clear symbiosis with the built surroundings. By using shapes that became timeless themselves, the popular Romanesque style eventually takes on a nature that is considered as archaic, showing an inversely proportional ratio between chronological distance and technical evolution.

Considering what has been mentioned above, we may suggest the following construction stages for the current Chapel of Our Lady of Piety. Using protruding corbels similar to the ones found in the chancel of the Monastery of Saint Peter of Cîte as a central element, we may say with some degree of certainty that the existing chevet was built between the late 13<sup>th</sup> century and the first quarter of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. First, it stood as a hermitage and, in the Modern Period, it was extended with the addition of a nave, thus justifying the use of the word chapel that became common from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards. However, it is hard to specify the date of this intervention in a more accurate way, considering the more erudite nature of the ashlar used in the triumphal arch, which contrasts with the markedly vernacular appearance of the walls that shape the nave.

The Chapel of Quintã became part of the Route of the Romanesque in 2010 and is currently awaiting its formal classification. Its new condition of protected building was based on the fact that this Chapel “features heritage values grounded on the materialisation of its historical past as a “honra” and abbey “of the House of Bragança, thus maintaining its Medieval Romanesque features”, as well as on the fact that the rural nature of its surroundings is still preserved, an aspect evidenced by the toponym Quintã<sup>13</sup>. [MLB / NR]

Together with its classification, the Chapel of Quintã is awaiting the implementation of the protection, preservation and valuation project, which is due to begin early in 2015. The project’s ultimate goal is to “provide the building with better conditions for the function it keeps alive – being a place of worship and organization of ceremonies” (Silva, 2012: 1). The intervention shall be based on the principle of reversibility to ensure the building’s continuity, resorting both to traditional and current techniques in order to achieve so; many different actions shall be carried out, focusing mainly on issues related to infiltrations and moisture, which are the cause for main existing problems (Silva, 2012: 4). [RR]

12 On this matter, please read Botelho (2010: 395).

13 ANNOUNCEMENT no. 11820. O.G. [Official Gazette] *Series II*. 104 (2012-05-29) 19263.





## CHRONOLOGY

1600: reference to the hermitage of Our Lady;

1758: referred to as hermitage of Our Lady of Quintã;

1864: referred to as Chapel of Our Lady of Piety, featuring "a Gothic style";

2010: the Chapel of Quintã becomes part of the Route of the Romanesque;

2012: opening of the process for the classification of the Chapel of Quintã.

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