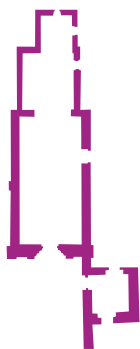


52.

MONASTERY OF THE SAVIOUR OF FREIXO DE BAIXO



Rua do Mosteiro
Freixo de Baixo
Amarante



41° 17' 57.01" N
8° 7' 20.18" W



+351 918 116 488



Sunday
9 am



Divine Saviour
6th August



National Monument
1935



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In Amarante, located in a valley that divided the municipalities of Santa Cruz de Ribatâmega and Basto and where most of the traffic between the Minho and Trás-os-Montes regions still circulated in the 18th century, stands the Monastery of the Saviour of Freixo de Baixo.

The foundation of this Monastery, which is closely connected to the usual family patronages of regional nobility, occurred before 1120. The Canons Regular of Saint Augustine were associated with its early chronology. Despite the fact that it was deeply changed during the Modern Period and subject to a significant restoration intervention around the 1940s, the remaining monastic ensemble of Freixo de Baixo is still extremely significant within the framework of the Romanesque buildings of the Tâmega valley. The persistence of the foundations of the original Church porch and traces of the original cloister, along with a sturdy bell tower, provide this ensemble with an unusual monumentality and legibility within the panorama of Romanesque architecture in Portugal.

The Church stands out for features different-sized volumes, but little remains from the Romanesque period other than the main façade and the foundations of the

south side of the frontal galilee that define a square forecourt. In the Modern Period the nave was changed and the chancel was rebuilt.

The façade is the best-preserved element from the primitive Romanesque Church. Reinforced by two angles, it is livened up by a sturdy portal composed of three slightly broken archivolts decorated with dihedral tori on the chamfers; this motif, originally from Porto, was well accepted by Romanesque builders from the Sousa and Tâmega valleys. Besides, this portal stands out for the variety of its decorative motifs: chained circles on the surrounding arch and on sections of the imposts, floral motifs and a stylized ivy on the latter. The capitals were finely carved and depict affronted animals emerging from the relief, phytomorphic and botanic motifs attached to the frustum, as well as plaited motifs that remind us the Churches of the Monasteries of Ferreira

(Paços de Ferreira) (p. 66) and Paço de Sousa (Penafiel) (p. 90).

On the right side of the façade stands a mighty bell tower. It is a solid building with impressive proportions, whose upper section is livened up by a pair of round arches sheltering the bells. Close to the tower's portal, facing the area of the primitive cloister, we see two carved ash-lars that suggest a reuse: there is a horizontal ashlar with a denticulate structure ending its lower section and, above it, we see a reused corbel (?) decorated with a stylized floral motif. In the Church, facing the same space and to the portal's right, we see the engraved funerary inscription of prior Afonso, dated from 1379 (Era 1417). In the early 18th century it was still possible to see the primitive cloister.

Inside, we find a building where sobriety prevails. From the smooth and plain walls, granite stands out in all its might. The classicist language of the triumphal



THE CLOISTER

According to Francisco Craesbeeck, the cloister had "on the south side was a one-hundred spans square, and its sidewalk was fourteen spans wide; and on the east side it had five very old arches; and on the south side it had houses; and close to the church it had a 24 spans square tower that was 50 spans high; and, close by, there was an arch with a tomb in it".

arch immediately reveals the intervention carried out in the Modern Period in which the chancel and part of the nave were refurbished.

It is also worth mentioning the fresco that, despite detached and currently placed on a mobile support, can be admired on nave's south wall, next to the pulpit. It is a scene from the *Epiphany of the Lord* (Matthew 2, 1-12), ascribed to the workshop led by the "Master of 1510", who was also responsible for the paintings found in the Churches of Vila Verde (Felgueiras) (p. 49) and Saint Nicholas (Marco de Canaveses) (p. 179).

Although, throughout the 18th century, this Church underwent a number of interventions aimed at its conservation and aesthetic update, their only remaining trace is part of the main altarpiece, in National Baroque [style which develops during the reign of King João V (k. 1706-1750)] woodwork, which was later combined with a new throne, predella and altar frontal. The bare appearance of this Church's interior is a result of the puristic precepts of the restoration intervention carried out between 1941 and 1958, which sought to restore what was considered to be the "primitive style" of the Church of Freixo de Baixo.



THE EPIPHANY

In a rectangular composition, the painting of the *Epiphany* shows, to the observer's left, a seating Virgin with the Child on her lap, behind Whom stands Saint Joseph followed by a cow and a donkey. On the opposite side, Melchior, the eldest Magi, is kneeling in adoration to the Child, while his two companions, Caspar and Balthazar, are standing, waiting their turn to pay homage to the King of Kings. As we can see, the Magi are represented according to their age group (the three stages of life: youth, middle age and old age) and the three continents known in the Middle Ages (Europe, Asia and Africa). Above this scene there is a celestial firmament, where the presence of the star that guided the Magi to Bethlehem stands out, and we can guess the depiction of a rainbow, the symbol of the alliance between God, Men and all living creatures on Earth (Genesis 9: 13-17).

