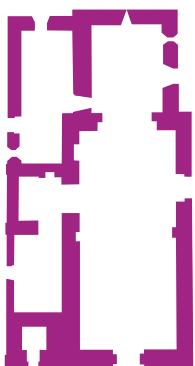




57.

CHURCH OF THE SAVIOUR OF RIBAS



Lugar da Igreja
Ribas
Celorico de Basto



41° 27' 17.26" N
8° 1' 2.44" W



+351 918 116 488



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Divine Saviour
6th August



Submitted
to classification



P. 25



P. 25



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Although royal inquiries from the 13th century do not mention the existence of a monastery of Canons Regular of Saint Augustine in Ribas, the truth is that tradition and certain chronicles associated the foundation of this Church with a narrative with topics that are common to other foundations: the bishop seeking for a miraculous place, the hermit chosen to show the signs, etc. The former would be João Peculiar, the archbishop of Braga and primate of Spain between 1138 and 1175; the latter would be a prior, the “Venerable Priest Mendo, a religious man of great virtue, who died in 1170, and was buried in the Monastery’s cloister (...)”. The Church of Ribas still stands as a rather well-preserved medieval building on the outside, despite the addition of a bell tower in the second half of the 18th century. Once again we are standing before an architectural example that, based on a taste and a know-how that were surely Romanesque, shows how shapes lasted over the centuries and were combined with “new” elements that announced a different style, the Gothic style. The stylistic features we find in Ribas match the first documentary reference to the Church (1240), although these may still relate to an older building.



PRIOR MENDO

It is said that, in the mid-12th century, prior Mendo took possession of the old hermitage, or even reformed it. Upon his death he was buried in the monastery of Ribas. In the mid-16th century his grave was opened and both the lower part of his legs and his feet, which still had their shoes on, were intact. The Augustinian chronicles argued that he had only walked to serve God (hence his incorruptible feet). The fame of such great wonder spread across the region and soon there were people coming to "see and worship those holy feet".

This "discovery" should be included in a series of inventions or "inventia" of holy bodies and was in fact an opportunity for the ancient mother-house of Santa Cruz to claim the right to take or regain the patronage of Ribas, which had been given to the Commendation of Christ in the 16th century. Despite the discovery, the worship faded out over time and, in the 18th century, the only reference is to the existence of a tooth from the alleged blessed man, who would protect against the bite of mad dogs; however, in the mid-18th century, the documents fail to mention both the blessed man and the ruins of the monastery.

Completed in 1269, the building of Ribas stands out for its homogeneity, as if it were built in one go: its walls do not show any marks that might suggest interruption or changes to the original project and there is a great consistency in terms of decoration. We should note that this Church is dominated by an ornamental motif that was cherished by the Romanesque style and that here achieved one of its greatest expressions within the Portuguese territory: the pearl carved in relief. Arises in both archivolts the main

portal and decorate the large gap on top, the cornices of the pediment of the main façade, on the triumphal arch and the back wall of the head, as well as along the cornices of the nave and the apse side. The Church's corbels are predominantly plain and only a few are decorated. But those that are decorated also include the pearl. This motif also appears on the triumphal arch, on the archivolts and on the impost from the Gospel side.

There is another very interesting feature in Ribas: in terms of capitals, the main





THE INSCRIPTION

There is an inscription in Ribas that used to be in the Church's tower and was re-used to work as a weight in the clock system, although it is currently a loose piece. Despite being truncated, the information it provides is very important because it allows us to suggest an approximate date for the construction of this Church:

[... era:] M^a : C^a : C^a : C^a : [VII^a:] / [...] T :
ISTE : FECIT : / [...m^a : clitis : mlvii :].

Therefore, we know that in Ribas there was surely an intention to document, either the completion of the Church or of some of its building stages in the Era of 1307, i.e., in 1269. Just like the expressions "Fundavit", "Fundata", "Fundatus", "Fundare" or its variations "Cepit Edificare", "Incepit Edificare", "Lecit Fundamenta", the expression "Fecit" is generally used in association with the foundation of temples.



portal and the triumphal arch repeat almost the same scheme. A foliage carved in relief is clinging from the capitals, showing a reduced volume, thus matching a composition made of small aligned pearls in the ensemble of the Church's exterior.

The composition of the terminal crosses placed on the gables, the existence of narrow crevices, the composition of the south portal and the corbels that suggest the existence of a porch-like structure are all elements that lead us to the medieval origin of this Church built in the mid-13th century.





The same cannot be said of its interior where a different, Post-Tridentine atmosphere prevails in the exuberance of the woodwork, in the altarpieces and in the large polychrome pelmet with marbled effects that surmounts the Romanesque triumphal arch, as well as in its rich and varied collection of sculptures: we highlight the Blessed Saviour, the Virgin of the Valley and the Virgin of the Rosary.

The work of the nave's coffered ceiling also deserves to be mentioned, as well as the choir's balustrade, composed of balusters with a circular plan, arranged in three sets of eight balusters each, alternating with four balusters with a square plan and botanic ornaments. On the chancel's back wall, behind the main altarpiece, a major campaign of mural paintings, depicting the Church's patron saint, was identified.



DON'T MISS OUT

- 9.5 km: Museum Centre and Tourist Circuit of the Watermills of Argontim (p. 283)