

12.

MONASTERY OF SAINT PETER OF FERREIRA



Avenida do Mosteiro
de Ferreira, Ferreira
Paços de Ferreira



41° 15' 53.388" N
8° 20' 37.661" W



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Wednesday, Friday
and Saturday, 8 pm
Sunday, 10.30 am



Saint Peter
29th June



National Monument
1928



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Yes

The Church of the Monastery of Saint Peter of Ferreira is a very unique and high-quality building that invites us for a dazzling visit. This Church is one of the most refined Portuguese Romanesque monuments.

The origin of the Monastery's foundation is not completely clear yet, although it was certainly founded before 1182, the date when we find it explicitly mentioned and when the construction of the temple - still preserved today - probably began. However, its origin is much earlier, probably dating back to the 10th century, as suggested by a reference made to it in Mumadona Dias's will from 959. There are no remains of the Church from this period. The oldest remaining elements correspond to a first Romanesque church that would have been built between the late 11th century and the early 12th century.

In the 13th century, between 1258 and 1293, the Monastery becomes part of the Order of the Canons Regular. In the 15th century, when the Order was extinct, the "coto" [a type of Portuguese administrative division] and its adjoining properties were transferred to the House of the bishop of Porto.

Composed of a wood-covered nave, the Monastery of

Ferreira features a vaulted chevet divided in two bays; the first bay is larger and higher, while adopting a typical solution from the Romanesque style of the Alto Minho region, whose influences are associated with the architecture of the region covered by the diocese of Tui (Spain).

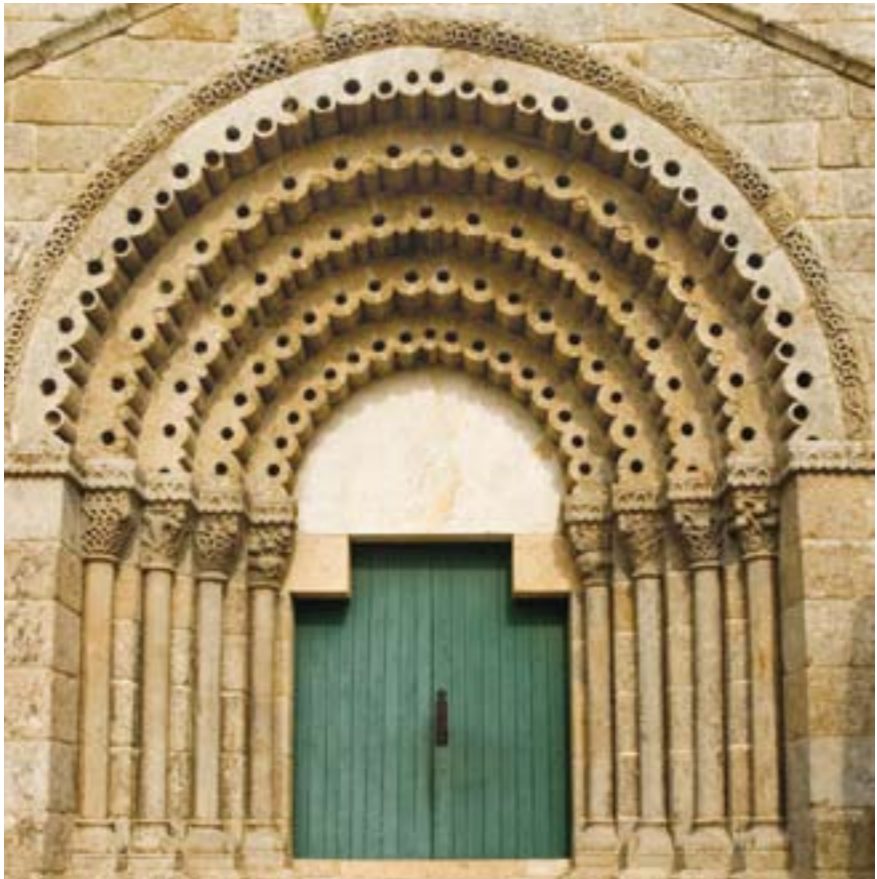
On the inside, the chevet of the Church of Ferreira is polygonal, despite being semi-circular on the outside. The building presents two storeys: the first features blind arcades, two of which mitered and the second with an arcade elevation alternated with crevices. Its main chapel is, therefore, relatively high and the body of the nave is even more so, thus offering a rather Proto-Gothic sense of space. The chevet's transverse arch is supported by

protruding pilasters decorated with scotias, an unusual solution within the Portuguese Romanesque context.

The chancel arch features capitals similar to the ones of the Churches of Fervença (Celorico de Basto) (p. 248), Valdreu (Vila Verde) or Ermelo (Arcos de Valdevez), which are inspired in models from the Alto Minho region, despite their less bulky treatment.

The main façade's portal is integrated into a pentagonal volume, a similar solution to the one found in the Churches of Sousa (p. 38), Unhão (p. 42) and Airães (p. 47), which are located in Felgueiras.

The large west portal with four columns on each side, two of which prismatic, is a well-designed element depicting a highly



valuable decorative treatment. Its ornamentation is based on a torus-shaped profile placed along the arcades' extra dorsum, which is emphasized by a large hole.

This decoration, which has been compared with the one found on the Gate of the Bishop of the Zamora cathedral (Spain), is rather different from that specimen. The origin of the decorative pattern of the portal of Ferreira does not lie there; it is much closer to the one of the church of Saint Martin of Salamanca (Spain) and even closer to the typical decorative solutions of Seville's Almohad art (Spain) from the second half of the 12th century. This portal also shows some similarities with models from the Braga cathedral. This cathedral and the church of the former Benedictine monastery of São Pedro de Rates (Póvoa de Varzim) were Romanesque building sites that concocted

and spread formal and thematic models from the Ave and Sousa basins that reached several churches in the Braga and Guimarães regions.

We should highlight the sculptural quality of the capitals from the lateral portals, some with ribbons and animals and others with botanic decorations, which resemble the motifs used in the Churches of Pombeiro (p. 30) and Unhão, in Felgueiras.

From the combination of these elements, it is possible to infer that this Church, built between the early and the mid-13th century, simultaneously adopted models from regional architecture of its time and from the Romanesque style of the Alto Minho region, Andalusia, and even Castile (Spain).

The architectural unity and the plastic precision of this work show that the temple was probably built over a short period of time, benefiting from exceptional





technical, material and financial conditions within the context of Romanesque construction in Portugal, considering that the Church was built between 1180 and 1195.

It is noticeable the presence of three masters in the Church of the Monastery of Ferreira: one from the Zamora region, another from Coimbra, and the third one with professional experience in the building sites of the Vale do Sousa.

The similarities with the Gate of the Bishop of the Zamora cathedral are obvious, despite some differences in the number of projections, in the decoration of the jambs and in the outline of the combs, which are rope-shaped in the Spanish city while, in Ferreira, these are circular.

The portals of other churches from Zamora - Saint Thomas, Saint Mary of Horta, Saint Ildephonse, Saint James of Burgo and Saint Leonard - have circular combs like the ones in Ferreira. This master, or the artists who worked with him, also

demonstrates an in-depth knowledge of the sculpture of the Santiago de Compostela cathedral (Spain), made before Master Mateus's work. It is considered that the capitals of the western portal are accurately based on the design from Compostela. The chevet was also probably designed by the master from León (Spain), who would be assisted by artists from Coimbra. The upper level of the internal elevation shows similarities both with the Coimbra cathedral and the collegiate of Saint James, located in the same city. In the last quarter of the 12th century, Master Soeiro Anes, who had collaborated with Master Roberto in the Coimbra cathedral, together with several artists who had worked in this cathedral's building site, moved to Porto.

The nave is an element that should be highlighted due to its unusual height. That is why features buttresses on the outside and adorsed columns on the inside, which help to support it.

The lateral façades are surmounted by a cornice formed by small arches resting on corbels, a solution we also see in the Monasteries of Paço de Sousa (Penafiel) (p. 90) and in Roriz (Santo Tirso), among others examples.

In front of the main façade, the Church preserves the ruins of a porch or galilee for funerary purposes, which is an excellent and rare example of this type of constructions, present in many Romanesque churches. This element corresponds to a space reserved for burials and funeral rites, of which there are surviving examples in the churches of Serzedelo (Guimarães), Vilarinho (Santo Tirso) and Frietas (Valença) - demolished during the 1935 restoration - as well as some sections in the Monastery of Freixo de Baixo (Ama-

rante) (p. 224). Judging by the existing documents, the church of Saint Martin of Cedofeita (Porto) also had a similar element that, in the case of the Church of the Monastery of Pombeiro, adopted a more monumental dimension.

In the Monastery of Paço de Sousa, this element was located on the side of the Church, as it probably happened in Roriz (Santo Tirso), and is still exemplified today in the lateral chapel of the church of Ansiães (Carrazeda de Ansiães).

These solutions were probably a result of the ban on burials inside churches which was in effect for a long time. Through donations to monastic communities, the nobles chose the galilee as their burial space, thus ensuring that the monastic community complied with their testa-





mentary dispositions as a way to achieve salvation. However, despite the fact that their primary function was a funerary one, these porches were also used for shelter, trial sessions and other legal acts. From the tombs of Ferreira only two funerary pieces remain: a trapezoidal sarcophagus and the sepulchral lid, with lying statue, of João Vasques da Granja's tomb, currently at the Municipal Museum of Paços de Ferreira (p. 256). From the entire monastic ensemble of Ferreira only the Church remains, given that the

monastic chambers disappeared or underwent deep transformations. Before the restoration works began, the Church of the Monastery of Ferreira was masked by aesthetic frenzies produced in the Modern Period. By way of example, we may refer the high choir, which was deemed at the time as an element that concealed the temple's superb austerity. The choir, built between the 17th and the 18th centuries, took up a fourth of the nave's space, leaning against the main façade.

ORNAMENTAL UNIQUENESS

What makes the Church of the Monastery of Ferreira such a unique work - besides the excellency of its architecture, is the fact that it combines, in perfect harmony and in common parts of the Church, architectural designs and ornamental motifs from different regions and workshops: Zamora-Compostela (Spain), Coimbra-Porto and Braga-Unhão.



DON'T MISS OUT

- 3.9 km: Municipal Museum – Furniture Museum (p. 256)
- 8.5 km: Archaeological Museum of the Hill Fort of Sanfins (p. 257)
- 11.1 km: Hill Fort of Sanfins (p. 257)