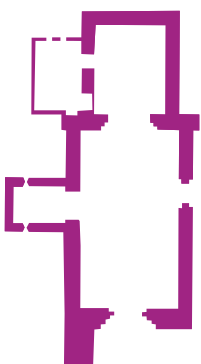




43.

## CHURCH OF THE SAVIOUR OF TABUADO



Rua da Igreja  
Tabuado  
Marco de Canaveses



41° 11' 9.51" N  
8° 7' 11.54" W



+351 918 116 488



Saturday, 6.45 pm  
Sunday, 8 am



Divine Saviour  
6<sup>th</sup> August



Public Interest Building  
1944



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Unlike the churches from the Douro valley, the Church of Tabuado was built in an alignment parallel to the slope, according to the canonical orientation used in the Middle Ages. Located on a plateau between the rivers Ovelha, Galinhas and Lardosa, at the foothills of the Aboboreira mountain, this Church was built in a territory whose toponym - “tabuado” - may derive from “tábua” [clapboard], a word that was currently used in the Middle Ages to refer to the wood used in construction works. It is associated with the names of several local families that held the right of patronage: Farias, Montenegros, Sousas, Correias, Barros and the lords of the House of Novões.

Although the available documentary references prove the existence of one or two temples in Tabuado (one dedicated to Saint Mary and another to the Saviour), whose foundation is prior to 1131, the truth is that this remaining architectural traces of the Church of the Saviour tell us of a more recent chronology that should be placed as early as the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century, as indicated by the main façade’s Proto-Gothic rosette and by the stylistic elements that show blatant parallels with the aesthetic language



## THE LOCATION OF A MEDIEVAL CHURCH

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The Church of Tabuado fits into a model of ecclesiastical deployment very common in the Middle Ages and follows a logic that has not been always understood. The study of the property at the time when it was built would provide us with very important elements to assess the reasons underlying the construction of many churches from the medieval period. While, in the case of a few monastic churches, we may stand before a trace of the eremitical phenomenon, which was duly shaped according to the ecclesiastical guidelines, in the case of ecclesiastical buildings, whose patronage remained in the hands of laymen (persistence of the private or family church model), we may be standing before a legacy of the intervention of an individual or a lineage on the landscape that was under construction during the post-Reconquest period. In any case, its permanence became the spiritual, social, economic and cultural axis that would define the landscape and urban design of the following centuries.

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of the Monastery of Paço de Sousa (Pena-fiel) (p. 90), thus integrating the family of churches where the so-called “nationalised Romanesque” achieved its greater expression, of which the geographically close Church of Vila Boa de Quires (Marco de Canaveses) (p. 168) is also an example.

The main portal stands out for the quality of its design: to the tympanum resting on corbels shaped as bovine heads, the bevelled carvings of its capitals, the design of its surrounding arch (with a diamond pattern), which are elements that surely resemble the ones found on the





## THE "NATIONALISED ROMANESQUE" STYLE

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There is a series of buildings that integrate the so-called *nationalised Romanesque* style; they were built according to an aesthetic language that was first used in the Monastery of Paço de Sousa (Penafiel) (p. 90) and feature a series of common characteristics: a late chronology (13<sup>th</sup> century), the composition of the portals, the use of arcatures to support cornices, the virtual absence of the human figure in terms of sculptural representations and the erudite plasticity of the sculpted ornaments, stand out for the quality of its bevelled carvings.

The "nationalised Romanesque" style is the result of a combination of different influences (from the Coimbra and Porto regions) - some of which were of foreign origin - with local pre-existing elements; this helped to create a rather peculiar visual language that was very much centred in the Sousa basin, despite the fact that it extended to other geographically close areas.

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main portal of the Monastery of Paço de Sousa, we should add the pearls (a recurrent motif in the Romanesque style from the Tâmega and Sousa basins) that decorate its torus-shaped and already broken archivolts. On the south portal we see a repetition of the bevelled cut on the botanic motifs of the capitals and of the to-

rus-shaped modénature of the archivolts. Our attention is immediately drawn to the bell tower that creates a perpendicular axis with the main façade. Composed of a massive granite block surmounted by a belfry sheltering two bells, when seen from the north, it almost looks like a strong and massif defensive tower with





thick ashlar. Two buttresses still remain in the nave's body and in the area of the chancel arch. We believe that their existence is justified by the massif nature of the walls that surround them and that, along the naves, it was only interrupted by the narrow crevices that illuminate its interior. The diameter of the arch, in relation to the size of the nave, protects the space of the chancel that, in Romanesque times, would be intimate and sheltered from the eyes of the devotees.

The inside of the building also features the same simple nature of the architecture and the same severity of the external ornamentation. The exposed granite in the nave is only decorated by a base, also made of ashlar, and by a triple-framed cornice, placed at a higher level. From the Romanesque period, what stands out the most is the triumphal arch, with a very original arrangement, presenting itself like a portal: the two broken-arched archivolt are surrounded by a frieze fea-

turing a composition based on corded and denticulate motifs. The archivolt rest on two columns, and the impost are adorned with saw teeth and chained circles. On the Gospel side, the capitals feature birds with intertwined necks and on one of them there is a depiction of a man hanging from the capital's frustum by a rope while, on the Epistle side, we see the very common theme of the affronted four-legged and single-headed animals and a large bird.

We should remember that the puristic appearance of the Church's interior results from a deep restoration intervention conducted during the 1960s that, aiming to restore the building's alleged medieval purity, stripped it from significant artistic and liturgical elements that had been added throughout history. Among these, we should highlight the altarpieces that were in the meantime eliminated. Only documentary sources and old photographic records provide us with an idea

## CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION INTERVENTIONS

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A chronicle signed by father Afonso Ribeiro Moreira, in 1964, published in a major newspaper, reveals two surprising features of the building of Tabuado that immediately lead us to consider the extent to which the Romanesque elements we know are a result of the restoration interventions carried out in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. So, the three "flowery" terminal crosses that "crown the gables were made by a stonemason from São Martinho da Aliviada [Marco de Canaveses], Jerónimo Martinho, and were designed, on cardboard, by the parish priest himself, who picked the ones that pleased him the most in terms of simplicity from among the several models of crosses included in «The Romanesque art» by Marques Abreu [1918]". On the other hand, the capitals located on the chancel arch and on the support reaching the angle, i.e., the extension of the impost under the shape of a frieze, "were made in concrete by the skilled artist Miguel de Sousa". This restoration work, completed on January 17<sup>th</sup> 1925, was carried out in just 11 days. When the Direção-Geral dos Edifícios e Monumentos Nacionais [General-Directorate for National Buildings and Monuments] began the intervention of restoration and conservation of the Church of Tabuado, some 25 years later, the altarpieces were already placed against the nave's lateral walls. These evidences are essential for the legibility of this Romanesque Church but prove, above all, the importance that the study of the restoration and preservation of built heritage has for the understanding of our Romanesque heritage, which can not be separated from it.

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of what the interior of the Church looked like in the days before the restoration. But it was during this deep intervention that the Church's only remaining mural painting was discovered, on the back wall of the apse and still rather well preserved. In the central area, we see an image of *Christ the Saviour*, enthroned in a chair with a backrest and a fringed canopy; it is the figure of the *Pantocrator*. This depiction of the Christ-Judge is flanked, as a sort of *Sacra Conversazione*, by *Saint John the Baptist*, the Precursor, who is pointing towards the direction of the Saviour

with his right hand, and by *Saint James*, depicted as a pilgrim, featuring a scallop on his hat and holding a walking staff in his left hand. Featuring a red-painted background dotted with fleurs-de-lis and roses, these three images are framed within ribbed vaults. The lateral areas are taken up by a decorative pattern with a geometric nature closely resembling a wreath of diamonds. Painted in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century, the mural of Tabuado is a unique specimen, as there are no records on any other paintings made by the workshop where it was designed.

