

PLACES OF PRAYER
IN THE MONASTERY OF BATALHA

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INTRODUCTION

The Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, a veritable *opus maius* of artistic patronage during the first generations of the Avis dynasty, deserved the constant praise it was afforded year after year, century after century, by the generations who built it and by those who knew it.

It was praised, let it be stressed, with firm admiration, by chroniclers and foreign visitors, and compared by some in the 1500s to a new Temple of Solomon on earth, by others in the 1600s and 1700s to a prodigious *machina memorialis*, and interpreted, in its plans, forms, architectural dimensions and decorative pomp, as a manufacturer of symbolic signs laden with an almost apocalyptic mysticism, and also as a monument propitious to the civil and nationalistic *peregrinatio* of visitors, particularly the intellectual elites in the 1800s and 1900s. For all of them, still and always, it was a *domus admirabilis* seen throughout the centuries as an *inventio* and manifestation of the sacred and as a splendid and manifest rhetorical expression of the messianic providentialism which glorified the destiny of King João I, *pater patriae*, the king who had re-founded the kingdom of Portugal and the Algarve and the sovereign who, by conquering Ceuta in the north of Moorish Africa in 1415, had redeemed Christianity in the classical heartlands of the ancient Mediterranean orb.

As a *domus Dei*, an edifice of sublime *sacra memoria*, the Monastery of Batalha is also the magnificent royal memorial to a battle on 14 August 1385. It was raised to the status of a World Heritage Site in 1983 and has metamorphosed, myriad times, into an aesthetic, historical and allegorical compendium of the political affirmation of a second dynasty and of a new and “glorious” era in the history of Portugal, a place where the Portuguese people, even

in the dark years of the First Republic, and more precisely in 1921, made peace, through the transfer of the remains of the unknown soldiers killed in the Great War of 1914-1918 to its chapter room, with their history and homeland.

The Dominican *ecclesia* sought, *in radice*, to be a place of sanctity for the celebration of prayer, of the Divine Office in the altars and choir, of preaching and *fructus animarum*, the latter translated into confession and spiritual counsel. St. Paul’s allegory of the Christian as the temple of God, each of the faithful a builder of his own life (Cor. 3: 10-17), is reflected in the construction of the monastery, whose building, in its multiple places, designed for the prayer which saves the pious believer, is as much physical foundation as mental and symbolic “cornerstone” because it is a *locus sanctus* marked by a religious culture based on Biblical foundations which plunge into the interpretation of the creation of the world as the work of the supreme architect (Genesis 1), following the perfect proportions of the Ark of the Covenant (Genesis 6), the Tabernacle (Exodus 25-27) and the building of Solomon’s Temple (1 Kings, 6).

However, it did not matter to the Dominican friars of the late medieval era whether a single architectural model was used for all of the Order’s buildings, which were to be adapted to the geographical and social context in which they were constructed and the functions they were intended for; what united them was the historical and institutional respect for the *uniformitas* of cloistered life and the liturgy followed. A Dominican, in following the example of Christ (*imitatio Christi*), who the Gospels depict as a pilgrim constant in his teachings and sermons, is the supreme student and preacher of the salvific Word.

Since the beginning of the Order's history, especially after the death (1221) and canonisation of St. Dominic (1234), it has been argued that the churches and cloisters of preachers should be established *conventualiter* and, therefore, emphasise the observation of the principles of austerity and the strictly necessary for a life conforming with the monastic spirit of poverty, discipline, silence and obedience. These principles were recognised by all friars or brothers who donned the Dominican habit whatever their original nationality, and in a context, it should be stressed, of an Order in which itinerancy and "mendicity" were a constant and effective reality.

Worship and prayer at a Dominican house were organised hierarchically according to temporal divisions. These were called the canonical hours and differed in memorial and spatial meaning and place of celebration (choir, high altar, minor altars, pulpit, chapter, cloister and refectory), all of which were different from each other depending on the distance from the centripetal centre of the *capella maior*, where the tabernacle, the *sanctus sanctorum*, was kept with the sacramental bread of the body and blood of the human Christ.

Churches of the Dominican Order were generally divided by a physical and suitably ornate partition, chancel or wall, the *intermedium* or *murus transversum per ecclesiam*, on which was generally built the *pulpitum* where the *evangelium* was sung, between the *chorus fratrum*, also known as the *ecclesia fratrum* or *ecclesia interior*, the presbytery in other words, and the *ecclesia laicorum* or the laity. The presbytery is where the major celebrations would take place. These included the *officium*, the convent Mass celebrated in the *altare maius*, the *missae privatae* and the *orationes secretae*, which took place in the *altaria minora*.

The other places of worship and celebration, mainly for Mass and private prayer, were also organised according to this bipolar model. These places had specific furniture, altars, niches and images spread around the annexed chapels, sacristy, cloisters, chapter, refectory and dormitories where, as we can just make out at Batalha, there would have been sculptural and pictorial representations of

angels, Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, the evangelists and apostles, martyrs and virgins, confessors and saints of old Christianity and also those of the new Dominican Order. There would also have been some shrines or small chapels built at certain points along the conventual enclosure to enunciate and recall the memory of the lives of the martyrs and exemplary saints, inviting meditation, prayer and celebration of the faith not, as we see, in a static sense but rather one which is diverse in its models and dynamic in its functions.

When, in 1388, King João I – having overcome his doubts concerning the Dominican Order's Marian devotion, "we have some doubts", wrote the king in his testament in 1426, alluding it is thought to the contentious theological issue at the time of the worship and mystery of the Immaculate Conception, which was far from universally accepted in many sections of the Church – donated the monastery in memory of the "wonderful victory" to the Dominicans, its design necessarily had to respect the Order's principles and rules of building. But it was a royal monastery, which soon after its founding assumed the functions of a dynastic pantheon, combining the need to respect and publicise the majestic dignity and honour of the new kings of Portugal, on the one hand, with the role of a Dominican cloister of mendicant tendency. Perhaps the justification for some of the solutions implemented by the builders of the monastery have to do with the need to understand the essential architectural and artistic dialogue between these two sets of requirements.

King João I saw the monastery as a majestic tabernacle, another Temple of Solomon in Jerusalem, the memorial arc of his "wonderful victory", built out of magnificently worked stone and deserving of the treasure of silver-gilt images he placed by the altars, the liturgical objects made by the goldsmiths, the ornaments woven luxuriously out of gold and silver thread, the relics of Byzantine origin donated by Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos in 1400, authenticated by the imperial golden bull, and the lack of architectural altarpieces, for which it is assumed that no plans or unsatisfactory ones were made by the master builder and draughtsman.

But this failure to provide for altarpieces in, for example, the high chapel of the *chorus fratrum*, forces us to recognise that, to a certain extent, its walls housed a Dominican presbyteral choir for centuries designed for twenty priests and ten novices, at most, which, in conjunction with several laybrothers, a constant presence at a Dominican convent, successfully implemented Dominican construction rules. These rules and traditions stipulated, out of fealty to the spiritual canons of Christ's evangelical poverty, simplicity, restraint and bareness of decorative elements in the respective churches, with a preference, for instance, for painted images rather than sculpted ones, and even so only in humble materials and never in gold or silver.

Successive maintenance, extension and restoration work on the Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, as is well known, have eliminated all traces of the old structures inside the building, which would necessarily have been part of the space used by the friars during these centuries. A Gothic Dominican *ecclesia*, with all the majesty required of a royal monastery, without prayer pulpits, without a presbytery with a choir befitting the hierarchies, but with markings on the floor and on the furniture, as is the situation today in the monastery church, does not reveal all of the intensity of the primitive scenes which it would have witnessed and in which preaching played an essential central role.

But the Monastery of Batalha, as we know, was not designed to be merely an *ecclesia fratrum* or even *ad populum*. It was above all an *ecclesiam regum*, a royal and noble church, necessarily accommodating the pastoral and conventual life of its friars to the *fructus animarum regum*, the Mass for the dead (*pro defunctis*) focused on the concern for the divine salvation of the souls of the kings, princes, *infantes* and *grandees* of Portugal who re-fashioned Portugal's place in the world in the 1400s. One might well write

that the social condition of the Monastery of Batalha imposed the condition of mendicant conventuality on the Dominican friars, who valued the academic study which equipped them to provide man with salvation through prayer.

The survey of the chapels and their altars at this monastery depended as much on the creative ingeniousness of the artists, architects, painters and goldsmiths who, *ex tempore*, created their work as stages for the discursive memorial expression of the spirituality, faith and devotions of their royal patrons, as on the changes also made to the conventual community. This, as we know, came to house a theological *studium generale* from the 1500s, necessitating extensions to the building and even the construction of new dormitories, cloisters and other facilities of use to the friars. This community suffered renewed difficulties, after 1550 in particular, in obtaining the funds that had been allocated to it by the Crown, from which point it gradually deepened a local and regional pastoral more suited to the lay elite of the social classes, to whom it gradually opened the monastery's doors by integrating them into the two existing brotherhoods and fraternities that existed prior to 1515: that of Our Lady of the Rosary and that of Jesus.

The monastery's church, it would do well to remember, had no parish functions and consequently had no baptistery or architectural provision, nor did its exclusive royal status grant it, to house private funeral chapels – with the exception of the Chapel of S. Miguel, handed by King João I to the Sousa of Arronches family – or altars in its naves. As it did not have them, it did not need to provide confessional areas, unlike other orders, and extended the naves above all for preaching to the faithful in seasonally high numbers (royal funeral rites and processions) and for processions.



I. The old Convent of São Domingos da Batalha

I.1. The building and its grounds

During the 446 years of conventual life, the architectural layout of the Monastery of Batalha and the way in which it interacted with the urban and rural area around it underwent change, following the great transformations which impacted the ideals of monastic life at the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the modern era.

Contrary to what was customary amongst the mendicant orders, the Dominicans of Batalha established themselves in a rural environment, the Quinta do Pinhal to be more precise, a farm which King João I had acquired from Egas Coelho a short while after the Battle of Aljubarrota on 14 August 1385 with the purpose of fulfilling his vow to build a monastery in the vicinity should he be victorious. This exceptional situation meant that, in 1391, the king was forced to request Pope Boniface IX to issue a papal bull authorising the Convent of Nossa Senhora da Vitória in Batalha to own property and assets such as rents.

Set in a large valley, Quinta do Pinhal was delimited to the west by a hill which it partly incorporated, to the south by a stream (Calvaria) and to the east by the River Lena, whose two banks it occupied in one place. It was not a continuous piece of land, including small plots belonging to others in the middle of Egas Coelho's property. It probably contained a tower as residence for its aristocratic owner, as well as the necessary farm outbuildings, and was reached by tracks which used to connect pre-existing settlements: Brancas, Alcanada and Porto de Mós; Tojal and Adrões; Canoeira and Golpilheira. From Vila Facaia, at the top of the hill, another track descended which led, one way, to Faniqueira and Leiria and, the other, to Calvaria and Rio Maior. The orographic

and hydrographic location and its network of communications were deemed very favourable to the establishment of a foundation whose main purpose was to politically affirm the new Avis dynasty through an architectural project of international scope.

The Dominicans thus arrived in Batalha in 1388. However, they would have to wait more than fifty years before the church and the main conventual outbuildings were finished. Therefore, they erected a smaller church and cloister, very probably making use of the tower in which Egas Coelho had resided. In the 15th century documents, this first group of buildings is referred to as the "small monastery" or "old monastery" (S. A. GOMES, 1990: 283-285). We know where the church of Santa Maria-a-Velha once stood from the plans and archaeological excavations, and its most recent appearance from photographs. The same document tells us that the enclosure to the east bordered the road from Golpilheira and headed towards Porto de Mós; in other words, the enclosure wall already connected to Santa Maria-a-Velha, alongside which ran Rua Velha, a road documented since the 15th century. This road survived until the second half of the 19th century as a drawing from 1879 shows (S. R. C. VIEIRA, 2008: 217). In the second half of the 15th century, the monastery's connections to the pre-existing roads were established, which became urban planning axes. The road descending from the hill was named "Rua Direita" and the road leading to Golpilheira "Rua de Baixo". By the end of the century, conditions were suitable for the conventual community to move into the *afonsino* cloister, of which a reference exists to a library, presumably on the upper floor.

As with other monastic complexes, the successive enlargement of the Monastery of Batalha up to around 1560 prevents us from

knowing where the portals before that date would have stood. No doubts exist, however, concerning the role of Santa Maria-a-Velha as a religious centre for the settlement which emerged through the countless building workers who established themselves there, several of whom would acquire plots of land and build houses. King Duarte's decision to build his own pantheon beside the church implied the purchase by the king of the necessary land from private owners in 1437. The introduction of this new element established two squares with different functions: that of Santa Maria-a-Velha, with its cemetery, and that which would come to be the civil and administrative centre of the town when it was raised to the status of a municipality in 1500, the two of them connected via Rua de Baixo.

The demarcation of the monastery's properties ordered by King Manuel, and essential for the management of the convent as a whole, dates from 1514. Throughout the 15th century, various plots of land on the Quinta do Pinhal passed into the hands of the friars, both by pious donation or purchase, in pursuit of the policy of unifying the land in the early decades of the 16th century, chiefly via exchanges of plots. However, this unification would have to wait for a new concept of conventual organisation and the willingness to put it into operation.

In fact, Batalha underwent an architectural reform absolutely identical to that experienced by Portugal's other large royal foundations during the reign of King João III, namely Santa Cruz de Coimbra, the Convent of Christ and the Monastery of Alcobaça. The big difference lies in the source of the financing, which, in the case of Batalha, came from the friars themselves, since it came, albeit indirectly, from the sale of the monastery's treasure. The traces of the building from this era were almost completely erased by the demolitions of the second half of the 19th century. Some sources, in particular the survey undertaken by the architect James Murphy in 1789 (P. REDOL, 2011: 11-14), nevertheless allowed its layout to be studied.

The last reform of the Monastery of Batalha is intimately linked to the fact that this institution became an university of the Order of Preachers in 1551. Given that the accounts were dependent on the



Fig.1 – Aerial view of the Monastery of Batalha and its wall from the last third of the 16th century.
Reconstruction: Techlimits, Lda.



Fig.2 – View of the Monastery of Batalha outside portal, Northeast side.
Reconstruction: Nídia Vieira.

small and irregular payments to the convent by the king, the building work was delayed for two decades, starting with the enclosure, which despite being under construction in 1542, would only be completed almost ten years later. In 1551, work on the building began, which lasted another decade. The project for the enclosure and new monastery was designed as a single plan to serve the needs of a large cloistered community with well delineated areas for all classes of members, servants or other interlocutors (fig. 1).

The building extended eastwards with two new cloisters – those connected to the portal and dispensary – behind a single façade by the Unfinished Chapels (*Capelas Imperfeitas*) with an opening in the middle consisting of a vaulted portico with three large arches which comprised the so-called outside portal (fig.2). This was the convent's point of contact with the town: the entrance for outside servants, children who came to learn their first words at the Monastery, outside students, beggars and, in general, all those who had business with the friars or required medical assistance.

Access to Santa Maria-a-Velha, which was highly valued by the convent until its last days, was via a section of wall with a carriage gate, through which one entered the barn courtyard, which, in turn, led to the enclosed farm to the north. Like the other complexes referred to, in which the convent and enclosure were treated as one, the enclosure at Batalha is not just a farming unit but is part of cloistral life as a place of contemplation, from the three balconies built for that purpose in the northern façade, of walks and of recreation, highly necessary in order to relieve the stresses created by confinement.

Ironically, and thanks to the records of James Murphy, we only have an accurate image of the convent's functional structure in its most extensive form, which is today largely amputated. The logic behind building the initial convent structure, centred on a single cloister with its attached outbuildings – chapter house, dormitory, refectory and kitchen – is identical to many other monastic houses, but it is thought that these outbuildings were not used for their normal function. In fact, once declared finished, the chapter house was used as a pantheon for King Afonso V and his wife, as well

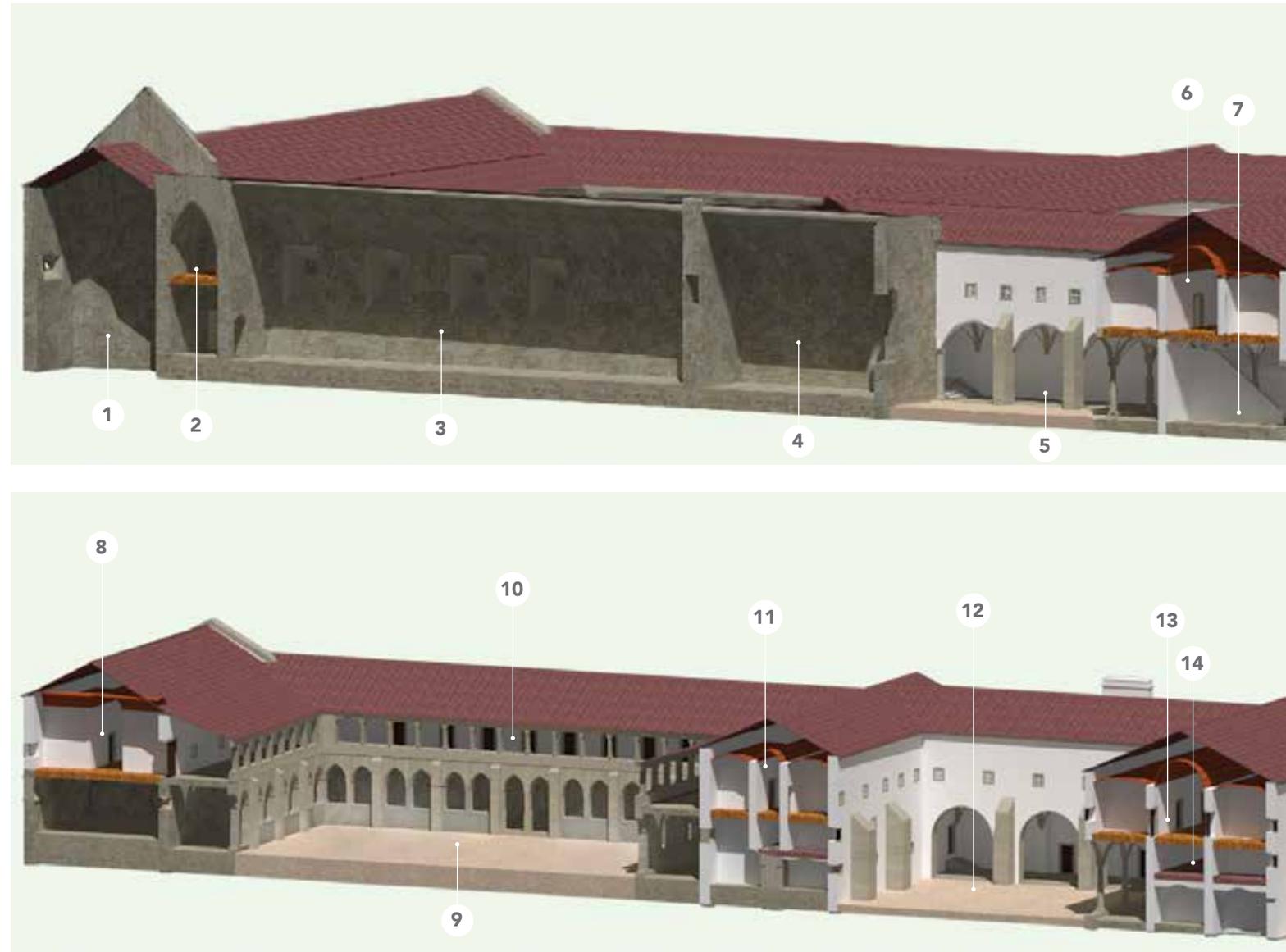


Fig.3 – West-East cross-section of the Batalha conventual accommodations.

Reconstruction: Nídia Vieira.

1- kitchen; 2- chapel of the novices; 3- cellar; 4- lecture room and chapter house; 5- Portal Cloister; 6- quarters of the prior; 7- outside portal; 8- house of the novices; 9- King Afonso V Cloister; 10- dormitory of the laybrothers; 11- hostel; 12- Dispensary Cloister; 13- dormitory of the priests; 14- dispensary and infirmary.



Fig.4 – View of the Dispensary Cloister in the Monastery of Batalha.
Reconstruction: Nídia Vieira.

as for Prince Dom Afonso, and it is likely that the area reserved for the dormitory, which was uncomfortable and unsuitable for the Dominican lifestyle at the time, was never used as one. We mention here that the aforementioned “old monastery” continued to function. The construction of the *afonsina* quadrangle seems to have been a response, still during the end of the medieval period, to the need for both domestic service outbuildings (workshops and storage, for example) and a dormitory with individual cells, as had become common amongst the Friars Preachers, who were also provided with a nearby library.

Incorporating the *afonsina* quadrangle, the refurbished building in the mid-16th century was organised not in terms of cloisters but in terms of floors, from upper to lower. The complex thus consisted on the upper floor (fig.3) of three parallel blocks, whose annexes (mostly cells) were laid out as corridors from east to west: the large dormitory of the professed friars (including the library), the hostel and the novitiate. Although restricted by a pre-existing irregular structure, the new plan derived from existing models, specifically that of the Convent of Tomar, developed around a large cross whose arms were the south nave of the King Afonso V Cloister (*Claustro de D. Afonso V*) and the wing that linked it to the dormitory of the priests, and whose foot was the hostel. In each quadrant, there was a courtyard, with the exception of the Royal Cloister (*Claustro Real*) which was a law unto itself.

Since the 1500s, the house of the novices and its chapel was separated canonically from the rest of the convent by walls in the NW and SW corners of the cloister. The areas in which the laybrothers worked and moved around was also clearly separated: their cells were located in the north wing of the same cloister, between the novitiate and the hostel; the ground floor of the quadrangle and contiguous vanished Dispensary Cloister (*Claustro da Botica*) (symptomatically called the “Laybrothers Cloister” (*Claustro dos Conversos*) in the drawings published by Murphy) (fig.4), where the storage area for provisions was located, the workshops, wine press and barn (facing the aforementioned outer courtyard), was reserved for the use of the laybrothers and servants (fig.5). From

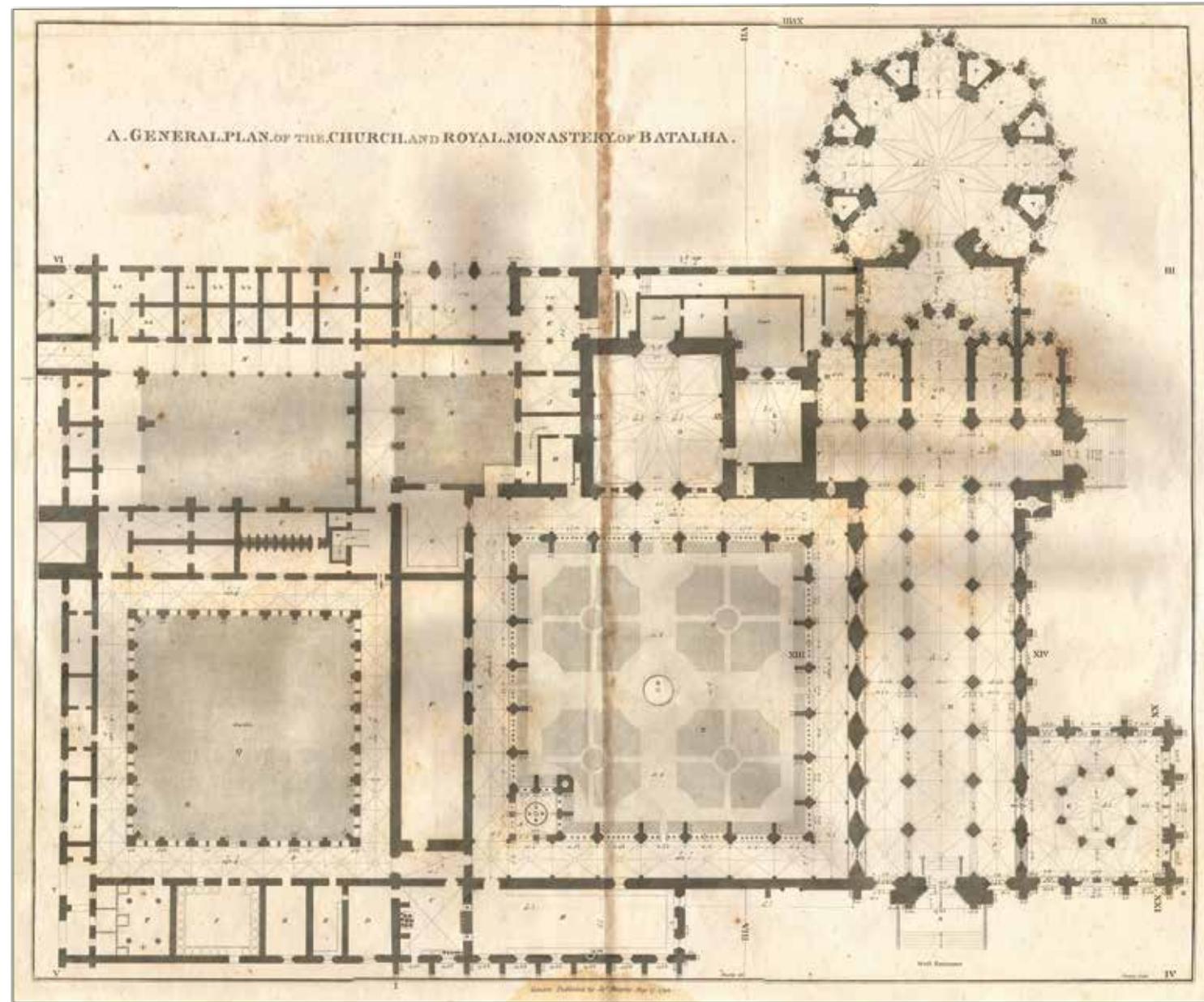


Fig.5 – James Murphy, plant of the Monastery of Batalha, 1792-1795.
L- Portal Cloister; N- Dispensary Cloister.

the ground floor the laybrothers could enter another important service area – the dispensary (which the cloister is named after) and infirmary – which was also their responsibility, located beneath the dormitory of the priests and with access to the portal, as we have already seen, via turnstiles which could be reached via a stairway. Of course, the professed friars also had their own areas: a dormitory with a library, the Chapel of the Hours (*Capela das Horas*), at the end of the dormitory (to the south, between the prior's quarters and the chapter house), and finally the Royal Cloister.

The movements of the servants were restricted only to the ground floor of the service cloisters. Those of the laybrothers extended to the entire convent, since they attended the minor liturgical hours, meals and chapter of sins, but they were concentrated above all in the areas where they worked, on the ground floor, and of course in the corresponding residential area, portal and almost certainly at the hostel. The priests, for that matter, had direct access between the dormitory and the Royal Cloister, passing by the private quarters of the prior, on to the Chapel of the Hours (*Capela das Horas*) and descending stairs which emerged in the cloister through a magnificent portal photographed by Charles Thurston Thompson in 1868 (C. T. THOMPSON, 1868: photograph no. 9). The cloister was the centre of all the areas which comprised their daily lives, besides those already mentioned on the upper floor: church and royal pantheon, chapter house, lecture room and refectory. The room identified in the plan published by Murphy as the "Hall where the Professors give Lectures", in the east section of the block today called the "Friar's Wine Cellar" (*Adega dos Frades*), is named "Old Chapter House" (*Capítulo Velho*) in Murphy's field notebook.¹ Apparently this was an area of some versatility ideally located between the cloister reserved for the priests and the rest of the convent, allowing all kinds of people to meet, including those from outside who came to sign or witness notarial acts that took place at chapter meetings. The school for the townspeople

was also strategically located in a place with direct access to the portal reception area.

The tension caused by a life of seclusion was not only relieved by contemplation of the landscape from balconies which overlooked the enclosure or by strolling or moments of recreation within it, but also by means of stays, short and long, at Quinta da Várzea, a farm located a few kilometres north of the monastery. The exact moment when the friars of Batalha decided to reserve this Quinta for their exclusive use is unknown, but it is likely to date back to the conventual reform of the mid-16th century which redefined the life of seclusion. In fact, the creation of "*bréviás*", or rest houses, at this time was a practice common amongst convents and monasteries, including for example the Convent of Christ.

Of the buildings which still stand today, though in a very ruined state, the domestic outbuildings and the chapel stand out, separated from each other by mere metres (*fig.6*). The first, on the ground floor, comprise a small press, the wine cellar and the stores and, on the upper floor, the living quarters. An initial analysis would suggest that the facing block, vaulted on the ground floor and with an outer stairway and porch, was the oldest, probably built on the orders of Nicolau Salgado, the noble who rented the property from the monastery in 1535.² Transversal to this stands another surviving block which has a small dormitory with cells separated by a corridor, opening out into the oldest area via a stone arch. The characteristics of this allow us to date the dormitory to the 17th century. A major extension to the rear seems to have been built at the time Quinta da Várzea belonged to the Mousinho de Albuquerque family, after the dissolution of the conventual community at Batalha in 1834. Dating from this time also is the galilee of the Chapel of S. Gonçalo. Inside the small shrine, now desacralised, the altar can also be seen, though stripped of the magnificent 17th-century tiling it once had (*Cat.30*).

PR

1 – Society of Antiquaries of London, Sketches of Batalha, ms. 260 (1789)..

2 – ANTT, Conventos Diversos, Batalha, Lv. 2, fl. 108-110 (Batalha, 1535, 9 September).



Fig.6 – Buildings at Quinta da Várzea, in 2014; in the background, to the left, the Chapel of St. Gonçalo.
Photograph: ADF/José Paulo Ruas.

I.2. The keeping and marking of time

Keeping and marking the time, namely by sounding the bell, was a necessity at Batalha from the very first day, not only for the conventual community but also for the people living in the monastery's vicinity. Only that way was it possible to obey the liturgical hours and royal funeral duties punctually, on the one hand, and the daily obligations, during its first one hundred and fifty years especially, relating to the building of the monastery, on the other.

Time was kept on a daily basis by using, amongst other simpler methods, sundials, of which some have come down to us. These were constantly exposed to the sun, on both vertical and horizontal surfaces: by the church's southern portal (Cat.1); and on the buttresses of the Founder's Chapel (*Capela do Fundador*) and refectory (Cat.2); on the parapet of a span of the northern gallery of the Royal Cloister; on the parapet of a span of the upper northern gallery of the King Afonso V Cloister. We have no way to date these sundials. However, bearing in mind that the clock in the refectory may never have been used (see Cat.2), it is possible that the sundial by the portal may have existed since practically the moment the former was built, at the end of the 14th century, in accordance with normal practices in many churches.³ As it consists of a simple metal rod perpendicular to the dial, this type of device only marks seasonal time, a weakness that would be overcome by the invention of the *gnomon*, which had an angle parallel to the earth's polar axis and as such was built for a specific latitude. Sundials of this latter type were extremely useful for setting the time on mechanical clocks.

During the night, use was made of natural indications, such as the crowing of cockerels, which occurs at certain hours.

The marking of time and the summoning of the friars to fulfil their obligations was done by sounding the bells. Only two of

the old monastery bells have come down to us: one from 1645, belonging to the chapter house bell tower (Cat.3); the other from 1784 from the clock tower better known as the "Stork Tower" (*Torre da Cegonha*) (Cat.4). The first of these bells was activated by pulling a rope, via a small space adjacent to the chapter house clearly marked on the drawings of the building published by James Murphy (J. MURPHY: 1792/1795), which must have been used primarily to summon the friars to the chapter. The continued use of bells often produces cracking, which leads over time to their recasting, as indeed occurred with the piece in question, which contains an inscription referring to this fact in relation to a bell presented by King Manuel in 1501. This may have been the chapter's first bell, taking into account the delay in finishing the chapter building, which, due to the incomplete state of King Duarte's pantheon, was turned into a funerary chapel for King Afonso V, from 1481, and afterwards for his grandson, Prince Afonso. These circumstances pushed the chapter to the eastern end of the hypothetical first dormitory, which was partitioned to fulfil the dual functions of a wine cellar and chapter house, which was also given an imposing portal during the reign of King Manuel. Documents reveal that, up until the 16th century, the chapter meetings occurred in various other places around the monastery and in particular at the Church of Santa Maria-a-Velha (S. A GOMES, 1990: 283-285), which, due to the fact that it accumulated all of the spiritual functions of the community and place for a long time, had to have its own bell.

The bell in the Stork Tower (Cat.4) is also much more recent than the clock mechanism which used to make it chime, as we shall see, almost certainly the result of the recasting of the single bell (the clock only marked the hours) that necessarily existed there ever since the mechanical clock was installed. It is striking not only for its copious and varied decoration, but above all for the fact it includes the only emblematic image of the Monastery of Batalha known about,

3 – Cf. Christopher Daniel, *Sundials*, em <http://www.buildingconservation.com/articles/sundials/church-sundials.htm>. Page accessed on 19 September 2013.

certainly transferred from the first clock bell by order of the prior, Fr. José de S. Tomás Vasconcelos, in 1784. The replacement of the clock, in 1889, occasioned the introduction of a new bell, with the same date inscribed, to mark the time hour-by-hour, tuned to D in a conventional combination with A sharp of the 19th century bell.

PR

The oldest reference to a mechanical clock at the Monastery of Batalha dates back to the reign of King Afonso V and appears in a document from the 1450s or 60s, of which only a 19th-century transcription is known of. In it, the king reminds the inspector of works, Fernão Rodrigues, of the need to fulfil the paternal aim of building the “tower, which is to be erected at the main doorway for the clock” (S. A GOMES, 1990: 143).

The idea of a tower on the main facade is extremely interesting because it attests to the intention to make the clock more than just a means of daily orientation for the friars and to extend its usefulness to all residents and above all to reinforce the symbolic presence of the king. However, it was eventually given a more discreet location, beside the northern top of the transept in the form, however, of Batalha’s most imposing spire, which came to be known by the name of Stork Tower, as these birds habitually nested there in the past.

In 1460, records show that the watchmaker João Rodrigues Alemão took up residence in Batalha (S. A GOMES, 1990: 144). The arrival of this expert in an art necessary for the completion of the construction of Batalha from distant lands, i.e. the Holy Roman Empire, was not the first such case. At the end of the 1430s, when the church was nearing completion, it was necessary to call upon Luís Alemão to make the stained glass windows.

João Rodrigues Alemão is also mentioned in the repair of the clock at the Church of Santa Cruz of Coimbra and was hired as a “time-keeper” of the public clock in Vila de Pombal. In 1478, Brother João da Comenda, a Franciscan friar from the Convent

of Conceição de Leça da Palmeira, was given permission to build a clock with iron wheels for the Monastery of Orgéns. For the same building, there is mention of one Gonçalo de Anes, charged with ensuring the functioning of the clock on Porto Cathedral. It should be recalled that Lisbon Cathedral already had a clock by 1377.

These facts show that, at the end of the 15th century, some of the country’s main towns and monastic buildings already had mechanical clocks, embryonic mechanisms that were the jewels of medieval engineering and of the art of ironwork and its connection with fire and the casting of metals.

Most of these mechanisms were lost over the centuries as a result of progress. Initially built with a rudimentary escapement system – the so-called highly imprecise *foliot* escapement – as science advanced and it was discovered how to apply the pendulum, first by Galileo and then Christiaan Huygens, who described it in his work *Horologium Oscillatorium* in 1673, the era of pendulum clocks began. With it, mankind finally obtained the technical capacity to build mechanical machines able to measure time by modern parameters with reliable precision.

From the late 17th century, the new technology spread throughout Europe and the old *foliot* clocks were gradually abandoned and exchanged for the new pendulum type. A few medieval examples using this system still exist today in Western Europe.

However, this did not spell the end of medieval clock making. Many of the old clocks were converted to the pendulum system, thus saving the mechanism. At the level of kinematics and mechanics, the technology is identical: replace the vertical axis with the foliot for a verge with pallets and an escapement wheel. A good master blacksmith would have used all of the components for the new parts.

Although it deserves more in-depth study, the old clock of the Monastery of Batalha (*Cat.5*) may be one of those lucky cases in which a medieval mechanism survives until the present day. It is possible that it is the same clock which João Rodrigues Alemão looked after in 1460.

The tower’s spire, heavily affected by the earthquake of 1755, was eventually destroyed by a storm in 1816 and rebuilt between 1851 and 1862 (M. J. B. NETO, 1997: 116). However, the clock and bell tower remained in operation until the final days of the Dominican community, as confirmed by the various instances of maintenance recorded between 1831 and 1833.⁴

HN

4 – We owe this information to Luísa Bernardino, the author of the study “Os últimos anos. A vida quotidiana no Mosteiro da Batalha (1830-1834)”, written in 2013 and available for consultation at the Centre of Information and Documentation of the Monastery of Batalha.

II. Cloistered life

II.1. The conventual community and daily life

King João I donated the monastery to the Dominicans in 1388, during the height of the Western Schism in the Catholic Church, and the year in which the Portuguese vicarage of the Dominican Order was also established canonically. In 1391, the Roman Pope Boniface IX tacitly recognised the convent's full legal status and authorised it to own property to sustain its community. The first community must have had around twelve friars and as first prior, Fr. Lourenço Lampreia. In his testament of 1426, King João I stipulated that the conventual community of Batalha ought to have 20 professed friars and 10 brothers consisting of laybrothers and novices, perhaps to moderate the trend for ever more friars living there. In fact, while there were 8 recorded friars in 1400-1409, and 7 in the following decade, in 1420-1429 there were 43, after which the number dropped sharply: 16 in 1430-1439, 26 in each of the two following decades, less than two dozen between 1460 and 1489, 22 in 1490-1499, 31 between 1500 and 1509 and, in the subsequent decade, the extraordinary number of 56.

At the head of the community was the prior, whose decisions were generally taken in agreement with the chapter. At Batalha, besides the prior, there are regular references to the sexton and, from the 1450s, to the provisioner of works, always a Dominican, and to the regular visits to the monastery of the provincial of the Order. From the 1470s, emeritus friars, friars who were of advanced age and had held important positions (e.g. priors, masters and doctors, confessors and preachers) began to appear. Superior to the prior was the provincial, the highest authority in Portugal, regularly assisted by the provincial chapter. The hierarchy within the

Order was complemented by the master general and the general chapter which, in the 1400s, tended to meet every three years.

The community was assisted in its menial work by servants including a dough kneader, cook, washerwoman, cobbler, gardener, tailor and one or more muleteers.

The presence of the Dominicans in the region appeased the sympathies of some of the local inhabitants, who were generally farmers or people belonging to the gentry who donated properties out of kindness to the friars, with or without reserving usufruct during their lifetimes, and at the end of the 1420s, the lay brothers of the Order appeared, a cell of third-order lay Dominicans in other words. Between these and other families in the region, some discovered a religious vocation and, upon their profession, handed the inherited property they were owed to the convent. This we know occurred with Father Álvaro de Aljubarrota, Father João Infante and several others around the end of the 15th century and beginning of the 16th.

Although they took the vow of stability with regard to the convent where they professed, the Dominican friars were known for being highly itinerant. Great care was taken with their learning, in which they were encouraged to study the Holy Scripture and the arts of rhetoric with a view to preparing them in the arts of preaching and biblical exegesis and the exam on the orthodoxy of ideas and religious practices. At the Monastery of Batalha, the community always remained conventual; in other words, it was unaffected by reformist trends in observance, even though King Manuel I had petitioned Rome at the beginning of the 16th century to have the convent subject to the reform in observance.

The daily life of the Batalha friars was regulated by the practices of prayer and the celebration of the canonical hours and Mass,

marked by the sounding of the bell, with matins and academic study being of particular importance. The diet was frugal. From Easter to the Feast of the Cross, two meals were served per day, the “*prandium*” and the “*cenam*”, except for days of rogation, Fridays, the Vigil of Pentecost, St. John the Baptist and Saints Peter, Paul, James, Lawrence and Bartholomew and the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Between the feasts of Santa Cruz and Easter, friars fasted constantly, eating only once a day after nones (3.00 pm), with the exception of Sundays. They also fasted constantly during Advent, Lent, the four ember days, the Vigils of Ascension, Pentecost, Saints John, Peter, Paul, Mathew, Simon, Jude, Andrew and All Saints, at the Birth of Our Lord and on Fridays, when they had only one meal of a fatty food of some sort (“*cibus*”), which friars were excused from for reasons of work or if they were on travel.

Meals were taken in the refectory at the hours marked by the sounding of the bells. Upon arriving at the refectory, friars washed their hands after which they entered and took their places. Once the prior had given blessing, the meal began. The food was brought to those sitting furthest away and moved gradually to the prior’s table. They would all eat the same, sharing a diet dominated by soup or broth, fish and legumes, eggs, bread, fruit and diluted wine, with the exception of the sick in the infirmary, who were given a meal, generally meat, to help them recover. The food served was predominantly boiled, though some food might be roasted or grilled. Boiled meat might be served as an accompaniment (“*pulmenta*”) to illustrious visitors since they were *extra claustrum*.

At Batalha, hygienic care for the wellbeing of the community was seen mainly in the construction of sewage systems, pipes for drinking water and rainwater drainage. Also in terms of hygiene and health practices, we know that the friars let themselves be bled (“*minuciones*”) four times a year (September, Christmas, after Easter and at the Feast of St. John the Baptist), at which times they were allowed to eat outside the refectory but not to eat meat. These were medicinal therapeutic practices to which the Batalha friars could also associate a famed dispensary, a common feature of Dominican

convents in Portugal – the dispensary at Batalha was in fact very popular amongst the local population in the mid-18th century – without dispensing with visits to spas (mainly in the neighbouring city of Caldas da Rainha), retreats at farms for rest and itinerancy, mainly for study purposes, which introduced them to other convents, cities, countries and continents.

During the meal, extracts from the Gospels would be read, especially that of St. Paul, or appropriate patristic. Once finished, the collation and compleatory could, if the sexton so chose, be performed in the cloister or church, the community listening to the readings in silence, ending the collation with the relevant blessings and prayers. Confession of sin – minor, grave or mortal – very often took place in chapter, to which were applied the, generally corporal, penitence deemed most suitable.

The friars took their rest on hard beds in the common dormitory or individual cells, when these became the norm, from the end of the Middle Ages in particular. Their hair was cut close and tonsured. Clothes consisted of a surplice under a woollen habit that reached down to the ankles, with short capes and a scapular to the knees, socks and sandals.

Royal funeral rites and anniversaries of the deaths of kings, princes and *infantes* buried at the monastery were the occasion for extra pittances and even doling out of alms and charitable donations of food to the poor and needy to whom the friars were obligated. On these days, the liturgical offices were renewed with pomp and circumstance.

At the funerals during the 15th century, expenditure rose on wax, incense and the decoration of the building during mourning and at bright and luminous affirmations of the Eucharist, both processional and chanted. The moment of consecration and raising of the sacramental bread, “*o salutaris hostia*”, so much a part of the faith of the *devotio moderna* which flourished at the end of the Middle Ages, was performed with great splendour.

On these occasions, before illustrious figures or at moments of great significance in the political life of the Court, the Batalha friars, or others from outside, Dominicans or not, also had the opportunity

to impress and shine at very awaited moments of prayer. In the funeral ceremonies for King João I at Batalha, the sermon, “very appropriate and powerful”, was given by Fr. Fernando de Arroiteia of the Order of St. Dominic and preacher to King Duarte. At the funeral rites for Prince Afonso, in August 1491, the preacher at Batalha was the Franciscan Father João, “the Sated”, “a great scholar and singular preacher”, while the Bishop of Tangier, Diogo Ortiz, preached at the ceremony for the transfer of the body of King João II in 1499.

As a monastery and dynastic pantheon, throughout its history Batalha received frequent visits by royalty (those for example by King Sebastião and João V became famous), courtiers and ambassadors from foreign countries, as well as high dignitaries of the Church (cardinals, archbishops and bishops) and other illustrious visitors, especially from overseas. Of these, for the memories they left, the visits of Sir Thomas Pitt, James Murphy and William Beckford from Britain stand out, with the community, to a greater or less extent in terms of festivities and improvements to the friars’ diet, sharing these exceptional moments in daily conventual life.

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II.2. Prayer and preaching: devotion and study in a male Dominican community

The Dominican liturgy has been characterised from very early on for its universal application, one single liturgy for every house, and for its canonical conformity to the *Ecclesiasticum officium secundum ordinem Fratrum Praedicatorum* whose *Prototypus* codex, preserved in the Order’s archives, was created in the mid-13th century. In 1256, the Blessed Humberto de Romanis sent a letter to the General Chapter in praise of the Order’s efforts to unify its rites and liturgy, indicating that all of the Order’s ecclesiastical rites had been compiled in 14 volumes: *Ordinarium, Antiphonarium, Lectionarium, Psalterium, Colectarium, Martyrologium, Libellum processionale, Graduale, Missale maioris altaris, Evangelistarium eiusdem, Epistolarium eiusdem, Missale pro minoribus altaribus, Pulpitorium and Breviarium portatile*. In 1267, Clement IV, by the papal bull *Consurgit in nobis*, confirmed the Order’s uniform liturgy.

The contents of these books are characterised in general terms by the following particularities:

Ordinarium containing the texts followed during the *officium* (first the temporal followed by the santoral) and Mass (also the temporal and then the santoral).

Martyrologium compiling necrological information about the martyrs for each calendar day intended to be read at the first daily assembly of the community in the chapter room.

Colectarium compiling the collects or prayers, blessings and rites which priests should say every day besides Mass.

Processionarium relating to the organisation, rituals and order of the processions held during the feasts of the saints or in particular circumstances.

Psalterium with the 150 Psalms.

Breviarium (*portatile*) with shortened information on the calendar and scripture readings during Mass and day and night offices intended to be observed by each priest on his itinerancy and missions.

Lectioarium with the lessons and readings to be observed during the choral rites.

Antiphonarium containing the antiphons, verses and versicles of the rites in musical form.

Graduale comprised of the antiphons, verses and responsories of the Mass in musical form.

Pulpitarium a specifically Dominican book intended for cantors, a lectern book, and containing elements common to the Antiphonary and Gradual.

Missale maioris or complete missal with the texts observed in the different parts of the celebration.

Epistolarium containing the scripture readings of the Evangelical Epistles read during Mass.

Evangeliarium with the texts of the four Gospels read during Mass.

Missale minorum altarium with the proper rites for private Masses.

Although not recorded on this list, it was the practice amongst friars to have portable Bibles which they carried along with the breviary at all times when on their itinerant travels.

All of these ecclesiastical liturgy and prayer books were known to the successive generations of friars at the Monastery of Batalha, though not a single copy has come down to the present day. The great antiphonary of the second half of the 16th century in the Leiria's District Archive may, however, have belonged to this convent, even though it came from the estate of the former Convent of Santa Ana of Leiria, a cloistered community of Dominican friars. All we can safely say is that it is Dominican in origin given its material characteristics and the contents of the repertoire of festive antiphons compiled in it.

The friars of Batalha managed to save some of the manuscript codices during the Napoleonic wars by hiding them on top of the altarpiece in the high chapel, as Julia Pardoe recalls from her visits to the monastery in the 1820s. In 1823, in the inventory of church property, three old Missals were recorded, two of which Dominican and one Roman, two tomes of the *Theatro Ecleziastico*

which were used by the choir and a further "two ancient books of plainsong which were old and incomplete and of no use; and one of Invitatories, because all the others were destroyed by the French."

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II.3. Liturgical chant

Over the course of the centuries, music always played a preponderant role in daily conventual life and was directly related to Christian worship. It can be considered the supreme tool for adding solemnity to the set of regularly practised rituals comprising the Liturgy of the Hours (or Divine Office) and the celebration of Mass.

Music, practised daily by monks and nuns in their convents, was taught to successive generations to ensure rituals were rigorously followed in the community. The musical repertoire, called Gregorian chant, was made uniform by Rome so it could be used by all Christian Communities. In the Iberian Peninsula, Gregorian chant replaced the Visigoth rite after the Council of Burgos in 1080. It began to be adopted in as early as 1070, in the Braga diocese, then in Coimbra in 1099 and universally in the lands that were conquered in the 11th century (J. A. ALEGRIA, 1985:18).

So that each diocese could celebrate its worship, its cathedrals and monasteries needed to have specific musical codices: the musical books used to celebrate Mass were the Gradual and Missal. The books used in the Divine Office were the Antiphonaries, Responsories, Hymnals and Psalter. During processions, Processionaries were used (J. A. ALEGRIA, 1985:19).

Alongside the celebration of the Divine Office, ordinary Mass was held every day in the convents in accordance with the religious calendar, at which the choir was responsible for interpreting the *ordo missae* with the participation of the assembly: Kyrie, Gloria, Credo, Sanctus and Agnus Dei. Every day two solemn Masses were also held. In the musical component of the celebration, the Gradual was used, containing the Introit, Gradual chant, Tract or Alleluia, Offertory and Communion (the Proper of the Mass); as well as the *ordo missae*. The Missal was intended for the celebrant. The musical sequence in a solemn Mass was as follows: Introductory antiphon – Kyrie – Gloria (chanted on feast days) – Gradual – Alleluia or Tract – Sequence – Credo – Offertory – Sanctus – Benedictus – Agnus Dei – Communion.

The Roman Divine Office consisted of an extensive set of prayer rituals based on the key element of chanting of the Psalms. This

was composed of 8 canonical hours spread throughout the day, an obligation celebrated every day of the year, in which the 150 psalms were divided up by the days of the week. The canonical hours are as follows: Matins, around midnight; Lauds at 3.00 am; Prime at 6.00 am; Terce at 9.00 am; Sext at midday; None at 3.00 pm; Vespers at 6.00 pm and, finally, Compline at 9.00 pm.

To get an idea of how the hours were organised, we'll take the example of the celebration of Lauds during holy week: Lauds began with the Invitatory followed by three psalms and three antiphons, three lessons, three versicles and a *Te Deum* (W. BONNIWELL, 1945:144). The psalms are preceded by an antiphon, a short chanted phrase, taken from the first verse of the respective psalm. After each lesson, a versicle is chanted consisting of a verse taken from the psalm.

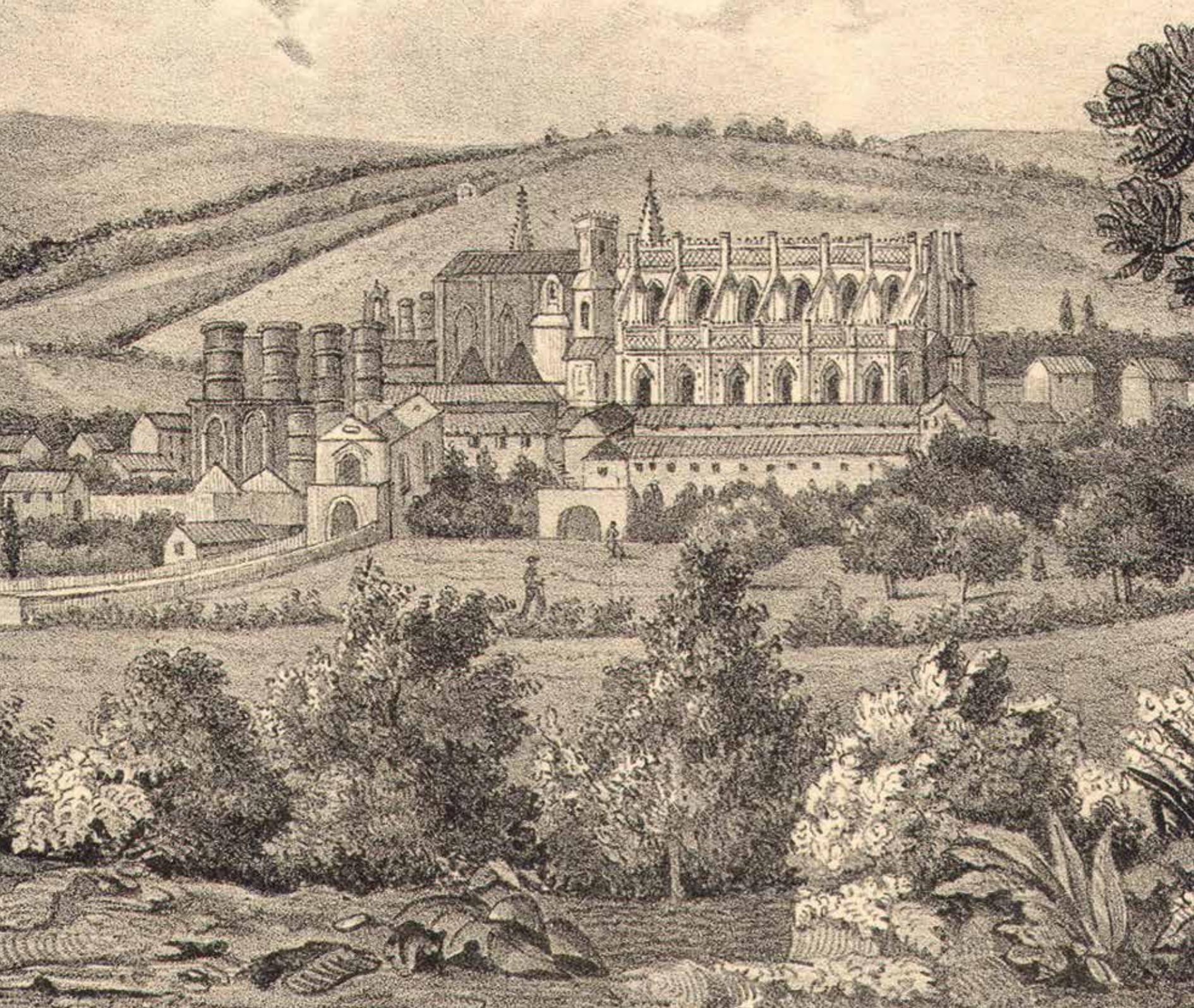
Within the Dominican Order, it became imperative to adjust the impositions of the canonical rite to scholastic requirements. The Dominicans thus shortened both the musical and textual components of the Divine Office. The adoption of a shorter office fitted the Order's need to find a balance in terms of the time dedicated to academic study. The main canonical hours were the Vigils, Matins, Vespers and Compline. The friars fulfilled their daily office by following a pre-established calendar by the Dominican Order.

As the fourth chapter of the Order's early laws notes, "all of the hours must be recited in church succinctly and accurately so that the friars complete their devotion without jeopardising their studies". In a Dominican convent, the precentor (a priest) was the choirmaster and responsible for preparing the members of the choir by teaching them to read music and sing. The choir was formed by priests and novices.

In the chapter concerning prayer and community, the Rule of St. Augustine (which was the Dominican Order's guiding principle) states the following: "When you pray to God in psalms and hymns, entertain your heart with what your lips are reciting, and chant only those things appointed to be chanted; but what is not written to be sung, sing not."

The Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória also followed a rigorous calendar of pious duties which consisted, annually, amongst other celebrations of 407 chanted Masses, 7 offices of 9 lessons, and 3 ceremonial funeral processions (S. A. GOMES, 1990: 274), involving the choir. “Alongside the temporal edifice of stone and lime, gold and silver, is that of the spirit of sacrifice and suffering, which the kings have forever established at this convent for the Glory of God and benefit of souls” (FR. L. SOUSA. I, 1977: 655).

III. The first church: Santa Maria-a-Velha



It is assumed that King João I had the Chapel of Santa Maria da Vitória (renamed much later the Church of Santa Maria-a-Velha) erected so that the liturgy and sacraments could be administered to the builders. It was built on the site when the monastery's foundations began to be laid and eventually became one of the structures on the edge of its eastern courtyard, where a side door allowed the friars access without having to leave the areas reserved for them (*O Couseiro*, 1868: 107) (fig.7). The high chapel was probably built at the end of the 14th century (1386-1388); the nave, rebuilt possibly in the second half of the 16th century or beginning of the following century, was used as a burial site for some of the craftsmen and master builders, a fact which explains why the temple was known as the "necropolis or pantheon of the artists of Batalha" (F. M. S. VITERBO, 1904, II: IX). It is known that the old church continued to function as a cemetery between 1838 and 1852 (S. R. C. VIEIRA, 2008: 100), when the new cemetery was built outside the town.

Excavations revealed layered burials inside the church, suggesting continued use over the centuries in line with the northeast-southeast orientation of the nave. The graves contained various rosaries, in bone and jet, and fragments of pottery.

The confraternity of Santa Maria da Vitória, which had its own chapel and ran a hospital annexed to the old church (*O Couseiro*, 1868: 94), whose establishment dates back to 1427, was a form of mutual assistance, in sickness and death, between the craftsmen and overseers of works on the monastery. Featured amongst its brethren were illustrious names from the 16th-century art world, such as the masters Mateus Fernandes II, Boytac and António Taca (S.A. GOMES, 2002: 22). It was above all at the altars in the monastery and old church where they focused their celebrations: the festive

and requiem Masses. In the 16th century, the brotherhood appears to have become more active, with many of its celebrations taking place in the old church, at the altars of Christ and the Holy Trinity. Various documentary records also mention the use of the old church as a burial place.

In the second half of the 16th century or start of the following, the polychrome stone altarpiece in the high chapel was made. The proto-Baroque lateral altarpieces are of a later date (fig.8).

Facing northeast, the Church of Santa Maria-a-Velha consisted of an extremely simple construction and bare interior, composed of two structures at different levels which were not completely parallel and covered by gable roofs: that of the high chapel, older and quadrangular in form, and that of the nave, rectangular in form. The main façade, only pierced by a rectangular stone portal, was surmounted by a simple cornice and a triangular frontispiece with a cross on the apex of the gable. A small bell tower stood out above the eastern end of the nave's roof, surmounted by another triangular frontispiece.

Three sober stone altarpieces and a late 16th-century triumphal arch are all that is known about the interior architecture. Some fragments survive of the main altarpiece with traces of high quality painting composed of geometric and plant motifs from the late 16th century.

In the early 16th century, Santa Maria-a-Velha was home to the Jesus altar (S.A. GOMES, 2004, III: 69-71). It is possible that the altarpiece of the Passion of Christ, dating from 1430, which is found today in the Church of Santo Antão, belonged to it. The side altars were dedicated to St. George and St. Dominic and display representations of their respective patron saints (*O Couseiro*,

1868: 107). Little is known of the history of the church during the 18th and 19th centuries, but it is known that it was largely unaffected by the earthquake of 1 November 1755, unlike the monastery and the main church, occasioning the more regular holding of liturgical acts there by the Dominican community (S. A. GOMES, 2005: 60-61).

After the dissolution of the convent, the subsequent detachment of the farm from the enclosure and its sale to José Maria Crespo, and the work undertaken on the building to disable Renaissance-era

monasteries, Santa Maria-a-Velha lost its *raison d'être* and, as such, was abandoned and forgotten.

In the 1930s, the nave was destroyed in order to build a road around the monastery. In 1940, what was left of the church was turned into a masonry workshop. In the 60s, its last remains vanished as part of a major redesign of the monastery environs by the architect Viana Barreto.

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Fig.7 – Ruins of the main chapel of the Church of Santa Maria-a-Velha, c. 1960.

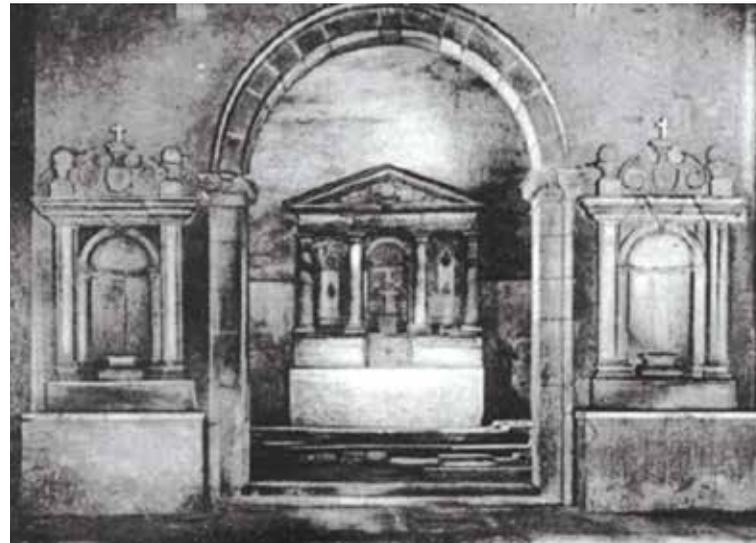


Fig.8 – The altars of Santa Maria-a-Velha.

IV. On the temple's threshold: imagery of the sacred

In the multiple spaces of the monastic complex in which one could – and the experience not only belongs to the past, but is still present – attest to God's inspiration, the western portal of the church is one of the places where the elucidation of the faithful on the *memoria sacra* of Christianity can be felt most strongly (fig.9). In other places in the monastery, altars and tabernacles relating to the life and death of Christ were erected. At this portal, all of the iconography is metaphysical in nature, showing the post-resurrection Christ, the eternal judge, to whose bosom converge both the linear history of man and the spiritual fundament of the *via salutaris nisi per Christum*.

The whole composition is allegorical and topical. On a frieze of small corbels on which the images of pagan fables congregate with the history of the Dominican Order, recorded by the male and female Dominicans who follow the Rule, and the heraldic narrative of the monastery's founders, there stand the apostles, the solid columns of the *Ecclesia*, of an apostolic and holy Roman Church, founded by the Jesus Christ who made Peter the cornerstone of that same mystical Jerusalem. On the apostles' heads emerge the radiant columns of the creators of the history of Christianity, the saints and martyrs, the virgins and confessors, the bishops and monks, the prophets and Biblical kings, the angels and burning seraphs, converging on a tympanum in which Christ, under a laced canopy, reveals himself in all of his majesty, the king of kings, sat on a throne like the omnipotent judge of creation, blessing with his right hand while holding the globe in his left, his four evangelists and biographers by his side.

Surmounting this authentic celestial mandorla, inscribed on the gablet above the portal, were sculpted the royal coats of arms of

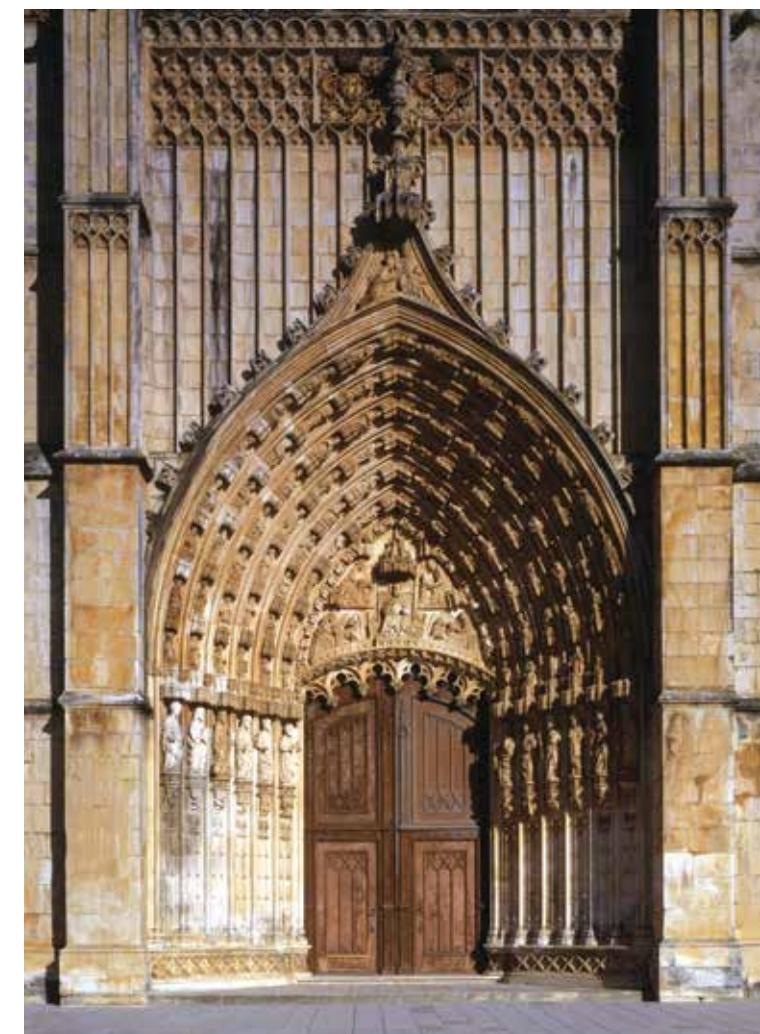


Fig.9 – Main portal of the church of the Monastery of Batalha. Photograph: ADF/Luís Pavão.



< Detail of the Dead Christ from the Chapel of Nossa Senhora da Piedade in the Monastery of Batalha. Portuguese workshop, 18th century.

King João and Philippa of Lancaster by the flourish at the top of the ogival arch, each within a quatrefoil and gently supported by four angels, one at each corner, below which can be seen the greatest mystery of the Marian cult: the coronation of the Virgin Mary by her Son. This composition does not tie in with the most common artistic tradition of this theme, in which the Virgin, sat to the right of the Son of God, receives the crown of the queen of the heavens from him with the slightest of bows. At Batalha, the Dominican *summa theologica* prevails, with the Virgin depicted genuflecting before the only begotten Son of God, from whom she solemnly receives the crown of celestial glory, not as a God, but as an *ancilla Dei*.

Only inside the church and convent are other mysteries of the Marian devotion glimpsed, chiefly that of the Annunciation and, as mentioned elsewhere, that of the Rosary. The profusion of seraphs and angels on the portal, continuing with the same sculptural imagery as inside the temple, equally filled with angels, musicians and messengers, creates a more complex and theological composition here, enacting the great *parousia*, that of the final apparition of Christ, the supreme king, passing judgment on the living and the dead on his majestic throne.

The craftsmen who worked on the ornamentation of this portal, respecting the distinctive iconographic tradition of triumphal Christian compositions, reconciled Portugal's royal hagiology, with its inclusion of saints particularly dear to the Avis dynasty kings, in particular King Duarte as can be seen in his extremely precious Book of Hours, with St. John the Baptist, St. Stephen, St. Lawrence,

Saint Mary Magdalene, St. Vincent of Saragossa, St. Catherine of Alexandria and St. Nicholas, and the symbolic association of the prophets and Biblical kings with the exaltation of the Portuguese royalty – as part of a dynastic ideological process clearly evident, for example, in the pages of the chronicler Fernão Lopes in which King João I is portrayed as a new Moses and the new Messiah of a chosen people – with the martyrology and hagiography proper to the late-medieval monastic culture, with a Dominican focus in the appearance of a Dominican saint, perhaps St. Dominic or St. Peter Martyr.

A complex picture of medieval Christology is depicted on this portal with all the pedagogical intent befitting the Dominican friars. Eternal glory is achieved through the Church, in its apostolic doctrine and its obedience to the successor of St. Peter and his bishops. All the *memoria christiana* is based on the desire for eternal communion and contemplation with Christ and with God within the framework of the construction of the temple of each Christian through sacrifice. There is a good reason why most of the icons are of martyrs, virgins, bishops and saints who sacrificed their lives for Christ. This theological vision of the salvation of the soul through sacrifice, *usque effusionem sanguinis*, had a particularly relevant meaning for the generations of men who were contemporaries of the building of the monastery, precisely those who led the resurgence of evangelical proselytism and even the neo-crusades of overseas expansion.

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V. Dominican devotion and spirituality

From its earliest days, the Order of the Friars Preachers paid particular attention to the historical memory of the exemplary lives of its professed members. St. Dominic, who died in 1221 and was canonised in 1234, represents the first model of spiritual life and holiness in the Order's origins. It is these origins which deserved an opusculum to the Blessed Jordanus of Saxony, St. Dominic's successor in the Order's generalship, who died in 1237. From 1235 to 1239, Pedro Fernando wrote the *Legenda prior or prima* of St. Dominic's life, which was followed by others such as that by Constantino di Orvieto, the so-called *Legenda secunda*, a more official version of the founder's life which was approved by the general chapter of the Order in 1248. From 1260 to 1270, approximately, Gerardo de Franchet – who was actually linked to the founding of the Monastery of S. Domingos in Lisbon in 1240 – wrote a more complete and comprehensive Dominican hagiology, the *Vidas dos Irmãos*, defining the identifying traits of exemplary and holy lives that would inspire successive generations of Dominican friars.

The primary model of holiness in the Order is St. Dominic, a facet evidenced in his very deep Marian piety. Through his prayer, the Virgin Mary appeared to Reginald, curing him and presenting him with the habit that the brothers should wear. St. Dominic's power of intercession was attributed with miracles like the resurrection of the dead, the curing of the sick, the expulsion of demons, the converting of heretics, the multiplying of loaves and wine, and prophecies. His example was used by the Order in its historic motto: *Laudare - Benedicere - Praedicare*. He is generally depicted in austere and reserved images in which he is seen praying or with a crucifix in hand.

Among the Order's major saints are St. Peter of Verona (canonised in 1253 and represented with a wound on his head and

a sword through his chest; or kneeling and writing "*Credo in Unum Deum*" on the ground with the blood from his wounds; or wearing the triple crown of virginity, science and martyrdom; or, finally, with a crucifix and lyre in his hand), St. Albertus Magnus, died in 1280, given immemorial veneration but only canonised in 1931 and depicted in his chair, St. Thomas Aquinas, died in 1274, and St. Vincent Ferrer, died in 1419 and canonised by Pope Callixtus III in 1455.

Amongst the most famous Portuguese Dominican saints who were venerated in the medieval era are St. Gil de Vouzela, of Santarém or Portugal, died in 1265, given immemorial veneration confirmed by Pope Benedict XIV in 1748; St. Gonçalo de Amarante, died in 1262, venerated since then but only beatified in 1561 and, since 1671, venerated throughout the Order both inside and outside Portugal; Blessed Joan of Portugal; and, more recently, St. Bartholomew of the Martyrs, who died in 1590.

The essential hagiographies of the Portuguese Dominican saints can be found in *História de S. Domingos* by Father Luís de Sousa (died 1632) published in Lisbon in three volumes in 1623, 1662 and 1678, respectively. At the Monastery of Batalha, some imagery of the Dominican saints still survives, in particular of St. Dominic, Blessed Joan of Portugal and St. Hyacinth, with other altar images having been lost, though recorded in the old inventories, mainly that of St. Gonçalo.

Blessed Joan of Portugal, the patron saint of the city and diocese of Aveiro, was born in 1452 and died, in the city, in 1490 at the age of 38. Associated with the institutional affirmation of the community of Dominican monks in the Convent of Jesus in Aveiro, she began to be venerated by the friars from that point on.

On 31 December 1692, Pope Innocent XII confirmed her cult. The daughter of King Afonso V and Queen Isabel, the sister of the “perfect prince”, João II, Blessed Joana of Portugal was seduced by the habit of St. Dominic at a time when the spiritual climate being cultivated amongst the preachers was one which valued an intimate and mystical experience with the Holy Name of Jesus. This was also much prized among the Portuguese aristocracy, whose Christological representation was expressed essentially through the iconography of the Crucified Christ or associated with the symbols of His martyrdom and passion. Blessed Joan of Portugal was represented in paintings, engravings and sculptures generally dressed in the habit of a professed Dominican friar, with a white scapular, black veil and cape, generally holding a crucifix in one hand at which she directs her mystical gaze.

In 1594, Pope Clement VIII canonised St. Hyacinth of Poland, a contemporary of St. Dominic’s, who took the habit in 1220 and died in Krakow in 1257, with a liturgical feast on 17 August. He was declared the patron saint of Lithuania by Pope Innocent XI in 1686. This “Apostle of the North”, as he is also known, became very popular in modern Spanish Catholicism, especially at the end of the 1500s, incorporated into the European imperialist ambitions of the Habsburgs. One of his best-known episodes relates to his time in Kiev, where, during an attack by the Mongols, while trying to remove the monstrance with the consecrated Host, the Virgin would have asked him to take her

image with him, a miraculous apparition which inspired his most common iconography.

However, we are well aware that the most substantial part of the Dominican’s devotional corpus was Christological, Marian and angelic. The large altar of Jesus and the various depictions of the Virgin Mary (Annunciation, Coronation and, above all, the Rosary), as well as the constant presence of the angelic figurations, the latter within a more distant temporal setting, the former more focused on the 1400s, are the most important testament of this.

The exclaustation of the friars in 1834 left the monastery abandoned and it was looted for many years. Much of the conventual accommodation, mainly in the north-eastern sector, was never rebuilt after the destruction left by the Peninsular War, and the church of Santa Maria-a-Velha was left abandoned and ruined. Moreover, part of the monastery’s library and archives were incorporated into the Torre do Tombo in Lisbon, where a substantial section of its artistic heritage was moved to. The renovation of the building, with restoration work led from 1840 onwards by Luís Mousinho de Albuquerque and his successors, ensured that its church became the seat of the parish of Batalha, drastically affecting the old main church dedicated to the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. The conventual church, since converted to secular usage, received furniture from the parish churches, namely a neo-Gothic baptistery which was later transferred to Reguengo do Fetal.

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VI. The church

In the high chapel, the area reserved for the presbytery and choir, once hierarchically differentiated by a *gradus* (a higher dais) and the stalls themselves, where the priests, novices and laybrothers sat during the *officium*, or where the prelate, presbyters, those leading the worship such as the cantor and sacristan, the deacons, sub-deacons and acolytes, thurifers and candle-bearers sat during Mass or altar celebrations, is large and was used to celebrate the conventual Mass, the *Corpus Domini* rite, and house the credences and ambo for the choir books and other liturgical objects with specific ritual purposes.

In Batalha's side chapels, *altaria minora* more suited to individual prayer, *missae privatae* and the friars' *orationes secretae* were erected. Altar prayer, day or night, was common for St. Dominic and his main methods are known, which included long vigils, slow genuflections and also prostration before the altar.

The naves perpendicular to the transept, the boundary between the areas reserved for the friars and that for the laity, in similarity to the Dominican Order's mother church that of the Basilica of San Domenico in Bologna, had adequate space for the major royal and courtly ceremonies. The very large chapter room was used more to store the royal tombs placed in it after 1481 than as a place for the convent's chapter functions. This explains why the documents only later and rarely make clear reference to it, while for the chapter offices the community met either at Santa Maria-a-Velha or, in the modern era, at another place in the building, marked on the drawings of the monument that Murphy left us.

The monastery's hagiology was diverse and not always the same over the centuries. We know, for example, that the funeral chapel donated by King João I to Lopo Dias de Sousa, a master of the Order

of Christ, and maintained by his descendants, had various patron saints over time: first the Martyrs, then St. Sebastian, St. Michael and, in 1911, St. Anthony... The high chapel, today dominated by a statue of Christ on the Cross, was dedicated to St. Mary of Victories – though it is mentioned in modern sources that it was once dedicated to the Ascension, certainly due to the iconography on the stained glass – with a related silver Gothic image long since vanished but described around 1700 by Father Agostinho de Santa Maria in his *Santuário Mariano* (tome III):

“Among them was one of Our Lady, the Lady of Batalha, which was all of silver, as the rest, the body and clothes, are gilded. This Holy Image is placed over the tabernacle on the high altar, as the Lady and Patroness that she is of this royal house. It is of great beauty and expertly crafted; and this Lady is Holy Mary Queen of Batalha or Our Lady of Batalha of the Royal Convent, to whom the King dedicated it on the battlefield.”

During King Manuel I's reign (1495-1522), plans were made to undertake a major architectural reform of the back of the Gothic church, opening it and linking it to the so-called Unfinished Chapels, an idea which was never however consummated. The high chapel received, by way of compensation, a remarkable set of dignifying stained glass windows. These gave it a spiritual depth as the primary place of Eucharistic celebration due to the rhetorical composition of the major theological themes of Catholicism, in an exalting symbiosis between the history of the royal family, depicted in prayer and protected by saints from the western monastic tradition, with an emphasis on the Dominicans, and the personal devotion of the monarchs (King Manuel I and Queen Maria), with

the divine history of the life of Jesus and His Mother, culminating in the luminous revelation of His Ascension and the narrative of the Virgin's Assumption as the Lady of the Rosary.

It dates, we believe, to the end of the 1500s, during the artwork added to the convent under Fr. João da Cruz (c. 1588), the erecting of the first carved wooden altarpiece in this high chapel. This required a change to the layout of the monastic choir and the position of the altar, both of which overlapped the conjugal tomb of King Duarte and Queen Leonor of Aragon, on which work was also undertaken at the same time.

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VI.1. The high chapel

What is thought to be the first carved wooden altarpiece in the high chapel, from the late 16th century, as well as another from the contiguous Chapel of Nossa Senhora do Rosário, probably of the same era, inspired Fr. Luís de Sousa to write the following words in the 1620s: "... in the bigger chapel, and that of the Rosary, we see altarpieces today, but they are both of such small size and so poorly made that they clearly do not fit with the rest of the Convent, or with the founder's intention." He continues: "and so it would seem to me that it was his ever grandiose intention and spirit to make silver altarpieces, and movable ones at that, with so many silver statues of the saints that the altars would have been covered in them for the feasts" (FR. L. SOUSA. I, 1977: 635).

Any doubts concerning the aesthetic judgment of Father Luís de Sousa relating to the altarpieces vanish when we read that at the northern top of the transept, where the altar of Jesus stood, was "a large and beautiful stone altarpiece carved in the modern style" (FR. L. SOUSA. I, 1977: 635), whose merits are still clear to see today (Cat.6).

In his chronicle of King João II, Garcia de Resende notes, on the subject of the ceremonies for the removal of the king's body to Batalha in 1499, that "in the main altar [there stood] a very ornate silver altarpiece and frontal" (G. RESENDE, 1698: 294), which reinforces the idea suggested by Father Luís de Sousa that besides the images of saints, there were originally wooden altarpieces decorated in silver, identical to those in Nossa Senhora da Oliveira in Guimarães, which were also given by King João I and are now exhibited at the Museu Alberto Sampaio in what was once the old collegiate church.

The author of *História de S. Domingos* also adds that "in all of the five Chapels, the place of the altarpieces has been taken by large and high window slits which are decorated and sealed with stained glass in fine colours and with devotional images" (FR. L. SOUSA. I, 1977: 636). In the high chapel, it is still possible today to appreciate

the set of stained glass windows as an authentic altarpiece, despite the major restoration it was subject to in the 1930s.

The restoration work on the stained glass windows in the 20th century was an attempt to return them to their original state as an altarpiece. The work was undertaken between 1933 and 1940 by the prestigious Ricardo Leone workshop in Lisbon and ordered by the Directorate General of National Buildings and Monuments (Direcção Geral dos Edifícios e Monumentos Nacionais - DGEMN). Several of the panels were missing and others revealed large gaps. The work of recreating the iconography in the style of the era was given to the painter Mário Costa, who employed examples from ancient Portuguese paintings for his cartoons. The process involved reordering the whole set in a way that differed from the original.

The set in the high chapel was commissioned by King Manuel, confirmed by the inclusion of his portrait at the bottom left as the donor and by the date of 1514 on the "Angel of Portugal" stained glass. The same date is associated with the set in the chapter house, which were made in the same year. However, the work in the high chapel dragged on for over a decade and a half due to setbacks connected to the death, in 1518, of its presumed artistic director, the famous Francisco Henriques, artist to the royal court. For this reason, the work was not executed by a single artist, although it was certainly to his design. Henriques is also thought to have overseen the work in the chapter house, alongside the provisioner of works and chapel ornaments, a friar appointed by the convent, and the inspector of works at Batalha, or the king's representative, in other words.

The original order of the scenes and figures represented in the stained glass altarpiece in the high chapel is not easy to reconstruct since seven sets of figurative panels were lost. However, no doubts consist relating to the position of the royal portraits or the heraldic figures associated with them. As was usual on the large painted wooden altarpieces of this era, the portraits of the donors occupy the far sides at the bottom: to the left, King Manuel, kneeling in prayer with his sons and accompanied by St. Dominic; to the right, Queen Maria de Castela, Manuel's second wife, with her daughters in the same position under the protection of St. Peter Martyr. The inclusion of

the saints was an exception to the rule, which placed the respective guardian saints beside the donors as can be seen on the portal axial of the church of the Monastery of Jerónimos: St. Jerome with King Manuel and St. John the Baptist with Queen Maria. This is the clearest confirmation of the proximity of the Dominican community to the royal family, by intercession of course of the aforementioned provisioner of works and chapel ornaments.

Above the royal portraits and to the left can be seen an angel clutching the standard of the Order of Christ and to the left a warrior with an armillary sphere, the enshrined symbols of Manueline heraldry. The choice is identical to that in the western facade of the church of the Convent of Christ, commissioned by King Manuel just a few years earlier than that of Batalha, in which angels and kings of arms, associated with the divine and terrestrial side of royalty, appear in the same relative positions. The angel of Batalha is particularly interesting in its page costume. Included on this stained glass, and not by chance, are two pieces painted with the Dominican shield and the date 1514.

The other stained glass windows depict scenes from the life of Jesus and Mary, with special note for Christ's existence in glory, portraying the events between Christ's Resurrection and Ascension. They include two other saints – *St. Anthony* and *St. John the Baptist* – and two other devotional images – *Our Lady of the Rosary* and *The Virgin and Child Enthroned*. Bearing in mind the size of the stained glass and the openings, as well as the more common arrangement of the scenes and images on the altarpieces of the time, it is possible to suggest by *fig. 10* how it might have looked. The openings at the higher far ends were occupied like today by the *St. Anthony* to the left and the *St. John the Baptist* to the right; the former as founder of monastic life and the latter as the precursor of Christ. The composition would have certainly culminated with the *Ascension*, of which only the lower panel with the apostles and the Virgin survives, positioned centrally at the top, above the *Resurrection*, which has also been highly restored. This is the arrangement that Ricardo Leone maintained. Besides the axes defined by donors and heraldic figures, as well as by devotional images (saints and images of the Virgin with

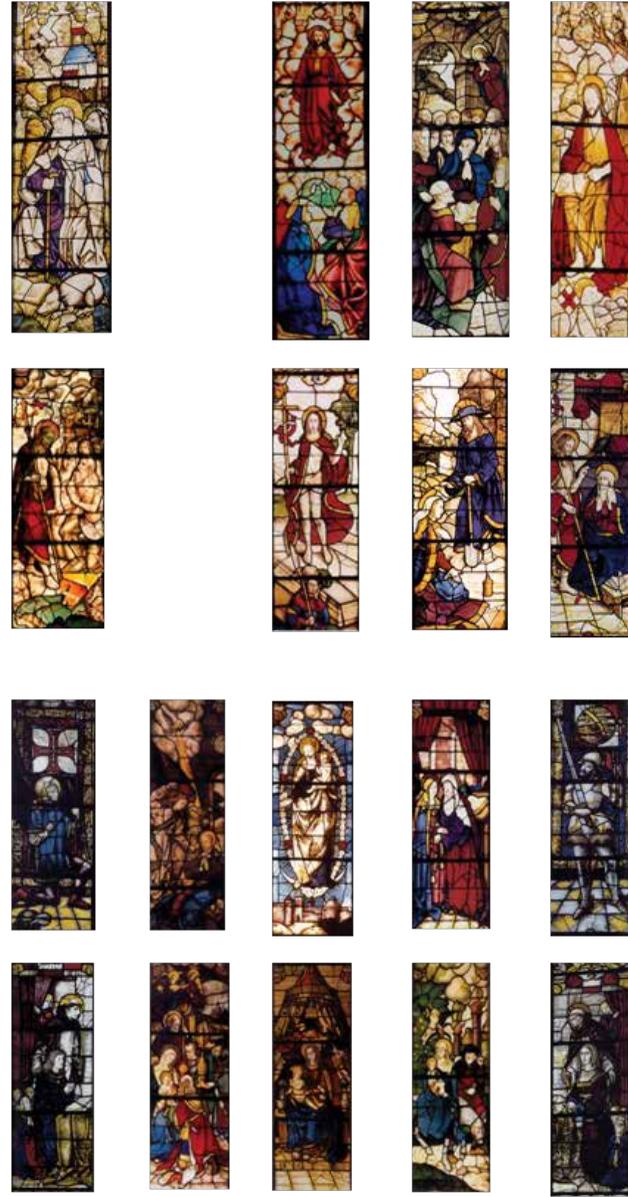


Fig.10 – Retable composition of the old stained glass windows in the high chapel.
Reconstruction: Pedro Redol

the Child) and the ascending sequence of *Resurrection – Ascension*, the themes were invariably arranged in holy historical order, from a Biblical or other source, in rows from left to right. Thus *Pentecost* had to be on the right of *Ascension*. On the left, a depiction of the supper at Emmaus was possible.

In 1584, we learn, by an account of the visit of Giambattista Confalonieri, secretary of the Patriarch of Jerusalem, to the monastery, that “the choir is small, next to the large altar, before which are buried King Duarte and his wife” and that “the high altar is presently empty, both in the case of the tabernacle and the structure of the altar, which is just a block of stone” (S. A. GOMES, 2005: 16). Some years later, around 1588, as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the high altar received its first carved wooden altarpiece, the one that Father Luís de Sousa certainly saw. The images of St. Dominic (Cat.16) and St. Francis (Cat.17), large in scale and bigger than the niches of the Baroque altarpiece which they can be seen in front of in one of the photographs by Casa Biel, though later in date, may have been commissioned for this altarpiece.

The high chapel, of course, required stalls for the friars’ choir from the very beginning, which would have coincided with the placing of the tomb of King Duarte, who died in 1438 when the church was close to completion. Some photographs from the early 20th century show the tomb in the centre of the chapel and two stairways providing access to a large carved wooden Baroque altarpiece. The stairs were clearly added during the restoration in the 1800s as access would originally have been via the stalls, removed during the first phase of restoration.

Our oldest reference to the choir is from 1540 and included in an exact copy of the inventory of the monastery’s treasure, with a view to its sale, and mentions that, at the time, the church “had no altarpieces and the choir was broken and damaged in many places” (S. A. GOMES, IV. 2004: 348). The inventory of 1823 records that the stalls were “magnificently carved” (S. A. GOMES, 1997: 239), from which it can be deduced that the earlier ones had been replaced.

Taking the description by Mousinho de Albuquerque (L. S. M. ALBUQUERQUE, 1881: 25-26) as authentic, the stalls, moved to the

sides of the high chapel, consisted of two rows of benches with a space to allow passage to the side chapels, with wooden transoms.

The only visual record we have of this is the engraving of a corbel published by James Murphy as fig. 11 of the print “*Ornaments, Mottos & appertaining to the Royal Monastery of Batalha*”, with the caption: “A Corbel supporting the Precentor’s seat in the Choir” (fig.11). Another engraving, “Elevation of the Chancel – Batalha” (fig.14), shows that both the space of the high chapel and the side chapels was fenced in by chancels.

After the high altarpiece had been dismantled (see next sub-chapter), the time came, in 1940, for the tomb of King Duarte and his wife to be moved to the Unfinished Chapels. The act was marked by the opening of the tomb, for which a notice was drawn up signed by the Director of National Monuments, Chair of the Municipal Council of Batalha and Chair of the Council Committee for the National Union (CCUN). Thus was removed the last and oldest element from a context crystallised over centuries in the high chapel to a place which was never consecrated and in which the tomb was placed in a position opposite to that imposed canonically, certainly for aesthetic convenience.

PR and RQ



Fig.11 – James Murphy, “A Corbel supporting the Precentor’s seat in the Choir”, 1792-95.

VI.1.1. Wood carvings

Details about the wood carvings once present in the high chapel of the Monastery of Batalha come to us essentially from photographic and bibliographical records. Their dismantling, which occurred between 1928 and 1935 by order of the DGEMN, left no trace of their whereabouts. Today all that is left to us is to try and reconstruct their features through the sources available and to understand the diverse and opposing motives for their execution and placing in the monastery's high chapel and those, centuries later, which led to their dismantlement and removal from their original location.

Concerning the date they were executed, who commissioned them and the craftsmen who carved and gilded them, to date no information exists that allows us to trace their historical fortunes. Naturally, since the wood carvings in question related to an altarpiece intended for the high chapel of the Dominican Monastery of Batalha, those who commissioned it must have belonged to the Order, but it would be interesting to know who they were exactly, whether they were just the Dominican fathers or if there was any financial assistance and involvement from the parishioners of Batalha.

Since we cannot answer these specific questions, all we can do, through a comparative analysis of similar situations in contemporary holy places, is to try and clarify the importance and sense of construction of a carved wooden altarpiece in the high chapel of this old Dominican convent.

At the time of its construction, in the second half of the 18th century, the need for places of worship to endow their high chapels with an altar structure in which to insert a Eucharistic throne was paramount. This fitted into the continuation of the 17th-century tradition of the affirmation of the fixed Eucharistic throne as an essential component of all high altars of the churches of the realm (F. MARTINS: 1991). This genuinely Portuguese tradition reserved the highest point in the throne's triangular structure for the Holy Sacrament on special occasions in the liturgical calendar.

Besides the need to exhibit the Holy Sacrament in a very visible and central place in the high chapel, justifying the construction of an altar of suitable size for the architectural space, the era in which this altarpiece was executed continued to favour the decoration of the insides of churches with carved wooden altarpieces. In more reserved and less detailed and ostentatious fashion than those built between the late 17th century and the mid-18th, these structures favour a return to sober classicism. Despite noting the adoption of the criteria of greater sobriety and visual simplicity in this high altar, some of the aesthetic style of Rococo structures can still be spotted. We refer, for example, to the use of a baldachin with a lambrequin, surmounted by an escutcheon flanked by figures of angels.

The importance of the decoration of the churches' chapels with carved wooden altarpieces, even if pretending to be made of something else, continued to make itself felt up to the early 20th century. The Portuguese wood carving tradition extended to various items intended for religious use. Altarpieces were not the only objects given precedence inside churches. The organs, choir stalls, frames, pelmets and transoms all contributed to create a single unit in terms of the symbolic and decorative discourse.

Through the research of the historians and art historians who have occupied themselves with the Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória da Batalha, we know that, besides the altarpiece documented by Emílio Biel (*figs.12 e 13*), the high chapel also had a choir which was conserved and restored from 1830 to 1834. According to documents stored at the national archives (Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo), an expenses book belonging to the Dominican friars of Batalha to be more precise, during that period various pieces of work were undertaken, amongst which the repair, painting and gilding of carved wooden altarpieces and the painting of the choir (C. M. SOARES, 2001: 63-64).

The high chapel's altarpiece, as mentioned above, would have been built in the second half of the 18th century. It comprised a base and three sections. The first of these was designed around smooth fine wood columns decorated on the lower third, opening onto a central carved panel depicting the figure of a pelican. At the

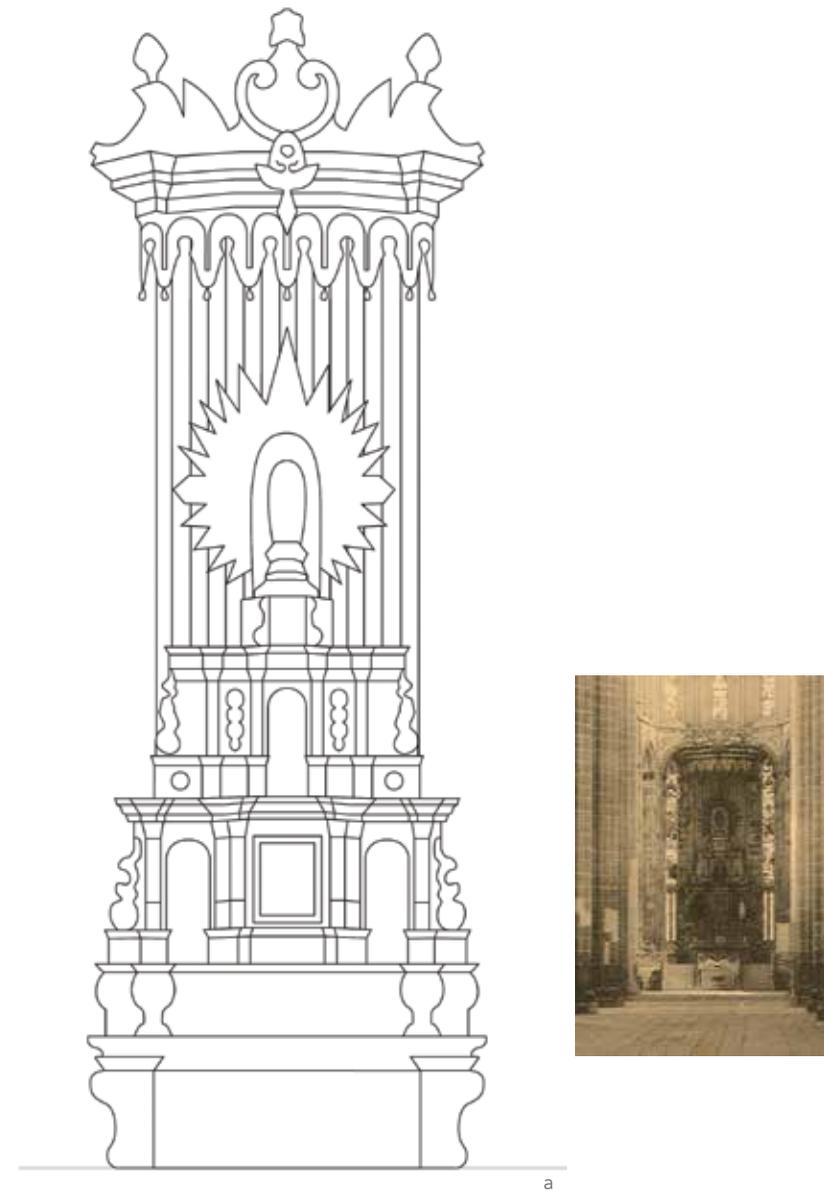


Fig.12 – High altarpiece from the 18th century in the Monastery of Batalha.
a – Reconstruction (Nídia Vieira)
b – Detail of a photograph by Casa Biel



Fig.13 – Detail of the high chapel, in early 20th century, showing part of the ancient altarpiece.
Photograph: Casa Biel.

sides, were niches filled with statues. The attic was of particular note due to a canopy with a lambrequin, crowned by an escutcheon flanked by adult angels (S. R. C. VIEIRA, 2008: 155).

Mousinho de Albuquerque, responsible for the building work at the monastery between 1836 and 1843, set out his criteria for the building's restoration, which would be completed in phases. One of the first aims was to return the original artistic spirit to the church: "... in the temple, the effect does not come from the variety of the forms, the multiplicity of the decoration, or the variation of the details. Everything is generally smooth, simple, grandiose and elegant ... and it extends to the high altarpiece. ... the high chapel up to the height of the second tier of windows has been mutilated; ... a wooden tabernacle of the most common structure is covered in light and insignificant gilding ... and the mutilation of the columns to introduce painted and gilt wood backs for two types of leather chair can only be seen with equal indignation ..." (L. M. DE ALBUQUERQUE, 1881: 25-26). This same sentiment was shared at more or less the same time by other academics who advocated purging those elements which ruined the appearance of the monastery's architecture. This included Rafael Barreiros Calado and even Virgílio Correia, who sang the praises of Batalha's Gothic architecture, as opposed to the later decorative elements that disturbed its overall effect (R. CALADO, 1941: 9 e V. CORREIA, 1929: 23). Although Luís Mousinho de Albuquerque was only in charge of the restoration and improvement work on the monastery for a few short years, his fundamental principles were subsequently followed by his successor, Lucas Pereira, who oversaw the work from 1852 to 1882.

As far as the wood carvings in the high chapel were concerned, we believe that the "painted and gilt wood backs for two types of leather chair" and "the wooden screens which convert into semicircular arches reducing the slender and pointed apertures of the high chapel with the side chapels" (L. M. DE ALBUQUERQUE, 1881: 25-26) were removed.

In fact, as the historians note, the carved altarpiece in the high chapel was not removed during this phase of the restoration work

on the monastery. Its fate was sealed only years later during the involvement of the old DGEMN. From 1928-1935, what remained of the wood carvings of the high chapel of the old Dominican convent were removed, thus giving it back the longed for original purity and style based on the majestic columns and vaulted ceilings and the well-judged distribution of light, filtered by the colours of the stained glass.

As Maria João Baptista Neto notes, the involvement of the old DGEMN was guided in its early years by the aim of perpetuating the purity of style of the monuments symbolic of the Portuguese nation. Architecture, like one of the branches of the fine arts, if not the most powerful in this historical context, overshadowed all other artistic manifestations, particularly the decorative ones (M. J. BAPTISTA NETO. I, 1995: 439).

This approach, which extended to numerous churches in national monuments whose original style had been deemed distorted by the addition of decorative elements at various times in their past, was based on the ideals of returning them to their founding spirit. By virtue of pursuing this guiding line in the conservation and restoration of national monuments, many carved wooden altarpieces were removed and had very diverse fates. From simple dismantling and destruction to removal and relocation in other churches or even the sale of individual items at public auction or storage in inadequate conditions, none of the options took into account the historical and artistic context in which they were produced, with no joined-up policy concerning what best to do with each particular case.

While we know that this was the hardest line within the old DGEMN, it is also true that other discordant views could be heard, such as that of the architect Raul Lino, who worked for the DGEMN from 1936 to 1949. On the subject of the restoration work on the Cathedral of Funchal, this well-known architect defends his arguments against the dominant theories of recreating the original spirit at the country's historical monuments. Raul Lino considers that, by virtue of these actions, many of these buildings irremediably lost the atmosphere created over the centuries. The artistic testimonies

of the various eras which express the specific spirituality underlying their construction formed a single entity with the building they were part of. For Lino, the soul of the monument was not only present in the initial spirit underpinning its construction, but also in that which was developed and constructed over the centuries with the inclusion of new, chiefly decorative, additions (R. LINO, 1941: 7-10).

Years later, this was the line taken by the national bodies responsible for the conservation and restoration of the country's monuments. The renovation of the so-called decorative arts, included amongst which, for example, are wood carvings, tiles, textiles and embedded marble, by Portuguese and international art historians was decisive in creating awareness of their value. Today, we must continue to follow the path of those who came before us, studying and disseminating this heritage so that the demeaning of its value, as occurred in the past, remains just a memory.

SF

VI.1.2. Sculptures

The strong pietistic religiosity practised by Dominican spirituality and sustained through uninterrupted acts of royal patronage, initially by King João I and then continued by his descendants, including King Afonso V and King Manuel I, and the "Illustrious Generation", the *infantes* D. Henrique and D. Fernando, resulted in a heritage of unparalleled value which unfortunately we know very little about.

Besides an excellent and valuable set of devotional images and 15th-century liturgical ornaments and vestments, only recorded in old documentary sources, various sculpted figures were provided for public worship and inner devotion at the myriad altars of the chapels throughout the monastic church.

Responsible for the continuous material and spiritual enrichment of the monastery, the resident friars developed the practices of veneration around the saints and the blessed dear to or actually belonging to the Dominican Order itself, with greater intensity and ostentation on the days of their proper feasts indicated in the Official Church Calendar.

In the first category are The Good Jesus and the Virgin of the Rosary, both with their own altars. However, the most famous devotional image in Batalha is the aforementioned St. Mary of Victories, a "very beautiful & excellently detailed" piece of silverware donated by King João I" (Fr. A. SANTA MARIA, t III. 1711: 301).

The second category would include St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Peter, the martyr of Verona, depicted in the now vanished 15th-century Gothic argentine images, the Castilian St. Dominic (Cat.16), the founding patron saint of the Ordo Praedicatorum, the Polish St. Hyacinth (Cat.19) and the Blessed Joan of Portugal (Cat.18), present through the Baroque sculptures executed between the late 17th and 18th centuries.

However, though not documented, it would have been no surprise to find other saints and the blessed of the Dominican Order venerated in many of the other communities of the realm, such as St. Paio, St. Gil, St. Pedro Gonçalves, St. Lourenço Mendes,

the martyr Nicolau do Rosário and the Blessed Bartholomew of the Martyrs, the archbishop from Braga with links to the monastery.

According to those responsible for the inventories of February 1823, after the invading French troops had passed through the high chapel, “only one gilt wood crucifix was left because all the others decorating the same altar had been destroyed” (S. A. GOMES, 1997: 237-239). However, six new candlesticks and three gilt wood canons were acquired and, in a photograph from Casa Biel, from around 1900, St. Dominic (Cat.16) and St. Francis (Cat.17) can be seen standing in front of the niches which flanked the tabernacle of the high altarpiece. In 1911, the same sculptures stood on the Jesus altar, erected by the wall of the transept, between the sculptures of Our Lord of the Afflicted, the Sacred Heart of Jesus and St. Gonçalo.⁵

The theatrical Baroque compositions embodied in the imagery of the founding saints of two important 13th-century religious movements, St. Dominic and St. Francis of Assisi, in which their holiness is materialised (A. F. PIMENTEL, 2011: 15) and brought closer to the believer, sought to facilitate and enable the evangelical message through a catechismal and moralising discourse explored during the liturgical and festive ceremonies.

MP

VI.2. The side chapels

Flanking the high chapel, on the Gospel side, was the Chapel of Nossa Senhora do Rosário and, on the Epistle side, the Chapel of Nossa Senhora da Piedade or Pranto. Of the two last side chapels, one, at the north end, was dedicated to St. Barbara, in which there stood an altar dedicated to St. Gonçalo in the 1500s, and the other, the Sousas of Arronches family chapel at the south end, was dedicated to the Martyrs and later St. Michael (fig. 14).

Distributed between the high chapel and side chapels, administered by the Crown, in the first half of the 1500s were the fifteen silver images (of which we know some were of St. John the Baptist, the largest of them, and also of St. Peter, St. John the Evangelist, St. Thomas, St. Bartholomew, St. Peter Martyr, St. Barbara, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Anthony, St. Mary Magdalene and an Our Lady with St. John at the foot of the Cross) commissioned by King João I from good silver and goldsmiths for the respective altars. The adornments of these included 28 silver chalices, 2 large gilt candlesticks, 4 large torch holders, 16 altar candlesticks, 8 thuribles, 6 incense holders, 3 processional crosses, 9 altar crosses, 2 bells, 2 boats, 28 cruets and 2 jars, 5 paintings of crosses, 7 lamps, 1 lantern, 5 holy water jugs, 1 plain cross, 5 ciboria, 10 vestments, one of gold leaf and silver, dalmatics, coloured vestment bands, cappas, frontals, albs, stoles, manipules and cappellos, amongst other rich ornaments. All of the pieces in silver and silver-gilt were melted down to make use of the respective silver during the reign of King João III.

The altarpiece in the altar of Jesus, transferred to Lisbon in the mid-20th century and whose architectural component was possibly attributable to the Taca altarpiece workshop in Batalha (Cat.6), dated from the last third of the 16th century. In the 1820s, this altar contained a large image of Jesus and two panels at the sides, one of St. John the Evangelist and the other of St. Mary Magdalene. It also had several other wooden panels with paintings of the Steps of the Passion. We have less information about the other altars and respective altarpieces.

5 – Central Archive of the Ministry of Finances [Digital Archive], Inventory of Cultural Property by the Comissão Jurisdicional dos Bens Culturais. Leiria – Ministry of Justice, 26 June 1911, fls. 4-7 v.



Fig.14 – James Murphy, elevation of the chapels, 1792-95.

G - High chapel; H - Chapel of Santa Bárbara; I - Chapel of Nossa Senhora do Rosário; J - Chapel of Nossa Senhora da Piedade; K - Chapel of S. Miguel

In 1823, the altar in the Chapel of Nossa Senhora da Piedade had an image of Our Lady with the dead Christ in her arms (*Cat. 10*), and a further two images, one of St. Gonçalo, in wood with an ivory head, and the other of St. Albertus Maximus, also in wood. At the Chapel of Nossa Senhora do Rosário, where the tabernacle stood at this time, could be seen the images of Our Lady of the Rosary and those of St. Joseph, St. Joachim (*Cat.20*) and St. Anne (*Cat.21*), all in wood, to which was also added a gilt wood crucifix.

In the Chapel of S. Miguel, and also in 1823, the marbled altarpiece with inlaid mosaics (*Cat.8*) held the images of the Blessed Joan of Portugal (*Cat.18*) and St. Hyacinth (*Cat.19*). In the Chapel of Santa Bárbara, where the tabernacle is kept today, there used to be an altar to Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception which was totally destroyed by the French troops.

The memory of Batalha's Dominican spirituality inspires the archaeology of vanished and forgotten places today. One of them, we could say first and foremost, is the defunct Church of Santa Maria-a-Velha, which stood beside the portal of the monastery and was also dedicated to Our Lady of Victories, the patron saint of the respective *altare maius*. In the sole nave of what was a conventual church and chapel stood the *altaria minor*, dedicated to St. George and the Divine Holy Spirit, on the Gospel side, and St. Dominic and the Name of Jesus, on the Epistle side, late medieval devotions and distinctive to the mendicants.

In the Unfinished Chapels, other altar structures existed, such as that of St. Anthony, a popular figure of veneration in the early 1800s, but of which little is known. Two small images, one of St. John the Baptist and the other, we believe, of St. Peter Martyr, decorated the inner front of its magnificent portal.

An image of the Dead Christ (*Cat.22*), without its own altar, was still being used in the final years of the Dominican friars' occupation of the monastery on Good Friday processions.

But sacred imagery also appeared at other places in the Gothic edifice, in the various naves, porticos and spans of the conventual rooms, at the ends of vaults, capitals and corbels. These included devotional figures, numerous angels, virgins of the Annunciation,

alongside human portraits (builders, Dominican friars carrying books, a couple sharing a bowl) and themes of a zoomorphic (eagles and wild pigs), floral and mythological (centaurs and forest people, for example) nature, without forgetting all the representations of evil and sin, also a theme of discourse and rhetoric amongst the religious, exhibited in the gargoyles on the outer walls of the whole building.

The restoration which the monument underwent contemporaneously contributed to the erasure of the memory of the places of liturgy and devotion in the old monastery. The Baroque carved wooden altarpiece of the Chapel of Nossa Senhora do Rosário (*Cat.7*) was dismantled and removed to a church in Covilhã in the 20th century. Pieces of the old altarpiece of the high chapel, saved from the destruction of the invading French forces, were found more recently in the conventual sacristy; others were sent, after 1834, to different churches in the region.

In 1911, according to the inventory of the property of the Parish of Batalha, established by the republican law definitively separating the Church from the State, the Monastery of Batalha had the following altars, some of which were renamed, and respective images:

1) altar of S. António [the former Sousa family's Chapel of S. Miguel] with images of St. Anthony, St. Martial and St. Lucia and a black wooden crucifix with an ivory Christ, all approximately 80 cm in height;

2) altar of Senhora da Piedade with images of St. Peter of Alcantara with an ivory head, a stone Our Lady of Sorrows with the dead Christ in her arms, a wooden Blessed Joan of Portugal, St. Gonçalo and a tall wooden cross;

3) high altar (six candlesticks and a gilt wood crucifix);

4) altar of the Holy Sacrament [formerly the Chapel of Nossa Senhora do Rosário] with images of St. Joachim, St. Sebastian (with a silver nimbus stored in the sacristy) in wood, Our Lady of the Rosary, St. Anne, six candlesticks and a gilt wood crucifix;

5) altar of Santa Bárbara with images of St. Joseph, the Child Jesus in a glass dome with a silver crown;

6) altar of Jesus with images of Our Lord of the Afflicted on

a 140-cm wooden cross, a 185-cm Sacred Heart of Jesus with a silver nimbus, St. Francis and a 150-cm wooden St. Dominic, six candlesticks and a gilt wood crucifix. Next to this altar stand two movable wooden pulpits and two confessionals.

According to the inventory of 1911, the sacristy contained a small silver image of Our Lady of the Rosary, with the respective plinth and silver nimbus and crown, a large image of the Dead Christ and respective coffin, a very old credence shaped like a lion, two oleographs, one of the Heart of Jesus and the other of the Heart of Mary, an old damask pallium and another gilded with alpaca silk, one metal and another wooden parish crucifix, and several painted wooden crosses, amongst other adornments of note of which is a large silver monstrance with the coat of arms of King Manuel at its base and a silver true cross.

In the Chapel of Senhora do Caminho stood a small stone statue of Our Lady inside a glass dome, flanked by two paintings, a Heart of Jesus and a Heart of Mary. All of this property, and much more, was officially presented by the state to the Parish of Batalha on 8 February 1944.

In the 1943 inventory of property of the monastery church, the parish seat, besides the altar images mentioned above, other new ones appear: an Our Lady of Solemnity, a wooden Our Lady of Fátima, a Blessed Nuno, also in wood, a Holy Family in a small display case, an Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception and seven paintings of Our Lady of the Rosary alluding to the respective mysteries.

No reference is made in these inventories to the image of St. Hyacinth, which already existed in 1823, either because it escaped the attention of the inventory experts, or because it was entered under another name. Whilst most of the holy images continued to remain at the old conventual church, alongside some new ones, others had been removed.

SAG

The monument's collections include some stone images with traces of polychromy which certainly belonged to the side altars: St. Sebastian (*Cat.12*) and St. Barbara (*Cat.13*) in the chapels named after them. Like the image of Our Lady of Sorrows (*Cat.10*) from the 1400s, the only one which still resides in the respective chapel, these sculptures would have been permanent features of the altars almost from the time of their consecration. They were eventually moved, either because the altarpieces were modified or due to their violent destruction, probably during the third French invasion in the Peninsular War. Of these, of note are the Our Lady of Piety for its more coarse execution. Of the others, it is possible to detect the work of local artists trained in the workshop by the main portal, of whom only the name of Gil Eanes is certainly known for having joined the Infante D. Pedro's troops in 1449 after working for him in 1447 (P. DIAS, 2003: 47-48). This observation is especially valid as far as the St. Michael (*Cat.11*) is concerned, which was certainly commissioned by the Duke of Coimbra himself for his altar in the Founder's Chapel. The serene elegance of the figure combines in these works with the increasing complexity of the poses and the interest in anatomy.

The painting which is today on the sacristy altar (*Cat.29*) would have stood on the first 16th-century altarpiece in the Chapel of Nossa Senhora do Rosário.

PR

VI.2.1. Wood carvings

Concerning the wood carvings in the side chapels, the information available only refers in more detail to those dedicated to Nossa Senhora do Rosário, located in the second side chapel on the Gospel side of the monastery church (*Cat.* 7). It is known that the veneration of this Marian cult was deep rooted in the Dominican Order and that it was cultivated and emphasised by the Order's priests. In fact, a prosperous brotherhood dedicated to the Virgin of the Rosary had its chapel in the monastery and many of its members belonged to the local nobility. Faithful to the spirit of renewal of the places of worship that was observed in the late 17th century, a new altarpiece was commissioned for this chapel and a master wood carver from Lisbon called Bartolomeu de Sá hired (S. GOMES, 1991: 278-280 e S. GOMES, 1997: 295-296). According to the text of the contract, dated 15 April 1697, João de Sá Sotto Mayor, as judge and representative of the brotherhood, hired the master wood carver to create an altarpiece for the Chapel of the Virgem do Rosário. The contents of the contract do not allow any conclusions regarding the authorship of the design to be drawn, but it is very specific as to the exclusion of a tabernacle and a second bench which the design should include. The altarpiece had to be ready and in position in October of the year of its commissioning, 1697, for a price of 270,000 réis. The brotherhood was responsible for supplying the wood and for paying the transport of the altarpiece from Lisbon to Batalha.

This master wood carver from Lisbon, a resident of the parish of Madalena, is not wholly unknown. We know that, besides this commission for the Monastery of Batalha, he was hired six years later, on 8 October 1703 to be precise, by the congregation of São João Evangelista de Arraiolos (commonly known as Lóios) to make two altarpieces for the two side chapels in the church of its Convent of Nossa Senhora da Assunção, the current church of the luxury hotel in the same town (S. FERREIRA. II, 2009: 353-356). These altarpieces, just like the altarpiece at Nossa Senhora do Rosário, no longer exist.

The fact that the brotherhood of Nossa Senhora do Rosário of the Monastery of Batalha hired a master wood carver with a workshop at the Court reflects not only its financial resources but also its knowledge of current trends. It would have been aware of the latest designs of the era, what were normally referred to as being "in the modern style", and it would certainly have been something of that order that it would have wished to fill its chapel.

Although this altarpiece no longer exists, we can almost certainly identify its general characteristics by looking at others from the same era carved in the Lisbon workshops (R. SMITH, 1963: 69-94, S. FERREIRA. I, 2009: 444-447). It would definitely have been distinguished by its use of twisted columns framing a larger or smaller central space, called a tribune or niche, in which a canvas with the iconography of the Lady of the Rosary, or simply a statue, would have been placed. Its top would have followed the style in vogue and certainly would have adopted the perfect round arch, and possibly twisted archivolt with radial staves and perhaps a central escutcheon. As for the decoration, the ornamental elements used at the time for this type of altarpiece were generally bunches of grapes, ears of wheat, birds and children, acanthus leaves, volutes and various species of flora. Of course, within the scope of the wood carving described as belonging to a "national style", several types exist, but in general these were the basic elements used to make an altarpiece at this time.

The second altarpiece made for the same chapel, and which we also know about via the contract and quite a few images dating from the early 20th century, must have been planned as a refurbishment piece. The first altar, dating from the late 17th century, may not have been in the best state of conservation and its restoration would have implied an expense which the brotherhood deemed better applied to a totally new piece. Probably, the commissioning of a new altarpiece for the Chapel of Nossa Senhora do Rosário took these details into account and perhaps it also wanted to demonstrate the need for a more modern style than the old one. In fact, the new contract dates from 6 February 1775 and was signed between the brotherhood of Nossa Senhora do Rosário and the master wood

carver António Pereira da Silva from Batalha (S. GOMES, 1997: 305-306). A special condition of this contract was the requirement by the brotherhood that this altarpiece be similar to that of Nossa Senhora da Piedade, located in the same monastery in the side chapel on the Epistle side. While no visual record of the carved altarpiece in the Chapel of Nossa Senhora da Piedade is known of, by reading the contract we get a more accurate idea of the decorative panorama of the side chapels in the monastery church. It is likely that the Chapel of Nossa Senhora da Piedade would have been the work of the same master wood carver, who would then have copied the style for the altar of Senhora do Rosário. This penchant for mimicry between altars in the same church, or even of different churches, was in no way exceptional; many similar cases exist in contracts for altarpieces from the Baroque era (S. FERREIRA. I, 2009: 151-153).

The distinctive characteristics of this altar mentioned in the contract are the inclusion of a tabernacle, something absent from the altarpiece of Senhora da Piedade, and a decorative carved wooden urn, intended to house the image of the Dead Christ.

The deadline for delivery of the finished piece and placing in position was the month of October of the same year it was commissioned, 1775. Its total cost was 212,000 réis, not including materials, such as wood, iron fittings and glue, which the brotherhood would have been responsible for.

From what we can ascertain, via a photograph belonging to the defunct DGEMN, the Nossa Senhora do Rosário altarpiece was Rococo in style, concave in structure and had two pairs of smooth columns interspersed by pilasters with niches for imagery. The imposing top would have stood out, set off by an intensely vertical and resplendent rocaille structure, to which were added architectural fragments, images, flames, and C-shaped and S-shaped shell-like ornamentation.

As far as its whereabouts are concerned, it is known that despite the intentions of Mousinho de Albuquerque, as part of the restoration undertaken in the late 19th century, to remove all of the carved wooden altarpieces and other objects he considered

spurious and contrary to the spirit of the monument, this altarpiece remained in place until the second half of the 20th century. Mousinho explains: "The two chapels adjacent to the high chapel were also darkened, disfigured and obstructed at their base, deprived of their glazing and natural light due to two large wooden altarpieces of the most vulgar taste" (L. MOUSINHO DE ALBUQUERQUE, 1854: 25-26). This intention was only, however, implemented after their definitive removal by the old DGEMN between 1935 and 1939.⁶ Photographs of the early decades of the 20th century still attest to its presence, as well as the wood carving in the high altar. After removal, the Nossa Senhora do Rosário altarpiece would have been taken to the church of S. Martinho, the parish church of Covilhã (R. VIEIRA, 2008: 157), whereby it would have been modified in the main aim of adapting it for the church's high chapel. These consisted above all of alterations to the attic and base to reduce its height and lateral additions, in order to fill the chapel space.

SF

⁶ – Taken from the page of the website of the Instituto da Habitação e da Reabilitação Urbana (IHRU) on the Monastery of Santa Maria da Batalha: http://www.monumentos.pt/Site/APP_PagesUser/SIPA.aspx?id=4061, accessed on 24 May 2013.

VI.3. The altar of Jesus

Amongst the places of prayer in the Monastery of Batalha, the eradication of the altar of Jesus from the location it was created for has left its “scar” for today’s observer, the vestige of the vicissitudes of its history, who immediately notes the absence of an altarpiece. The marks on the northern wall of the transept of the monastery’s church clearly reveal the outline of the Mannerist ensemble which, at the end of the 1500s or following century, were commissioned for the mystical veneration of Christ’s example.

The origin of this dedication and its representation in the altar and confraternities of Jesus is referred to in chapter XXII of “*Primeira Parte da Historia de S. Domingos*” (FR. L. SOUSA. I, 1977: 344-345). Based on the notes of Father Luís de Cácegas, Father Luís de Sousa recalls that it was Pope Gregory X who passed a decree on an adoration of the highest order and antiquity within Christianity which was that of Lord Jesus Christ, Saviour of the World. Thus, the brief *Nuper in Concilio* (1274), given to the Master General of the Order of St. Dominic, Fr. João de Vercellis, created doctrine by ordering and exhorting the veneration of Jesus as he who came “to redeem his people and free them from sin”, orienting the activities of the Preachers to be persuasive and effective in spreading these principles. Brotherhoods, sermons, altars/chapels and representations were to comply with the pontifical duty. But, in matters of faith, nothing creates stronger belief and specific ritualised devotion, stemming from the human need for the concrete and palpable, than a strong experience with visible results. Father Luís de Sousa describes, in a light-hearted and brief account, how useful such a strong moment to the memory of an affliction which enlarged the number of “unconscious and fallen souls under the weight of tribulation” could be. The moment was one of the fearful plagues that scythed unstopably through the population around the early 1430s during the reign of King João I. The preaching and exhortation of the power of Christ and the conviction of His divine intervention was an exercise carried through by Father André

Dias of Lisboa with eloquence and great spirit, “the music of the language being pleasant to the ears ...”, in which he employed “all of his learning to find the means by which to raise the unconscious and fallen souls”.

Sermons, water blessed on the altar of Jesus, the frequent invocation of the name of the Son of God, spoken and written, the showing of a book of the miracles in parchment which “was stolen by a crook” created a veneration of the “Good Jesus” which made it imperative that a confraternity be created, sought after by one and all, a dedicated chapel, a solemn feast at the dedicated altar, the conversion of the first day of the year into His day, and an ordinary Mass, the Mass of Jesus, on Fridays in the church of the Convent of S. Domingos in Lisbon (FR. L. SOUSA, 1977: 350-351).

At the Monastery of Batalha, the altar is briefly referred to by this chronicler at various times. In the description of the temple, he records that “from the outside of the church, there are two entrances, one of which is the main door and another at the side, which opens onto the crossing before the altar of Jesus”; “passing” by the sacristy and Chapel of Santa Bárbara, he notes that it “reaches the altar of Jesus at the top of the crossing”; and once again he mentions that, “At one top of the crossing, there is a side door on the Epistle side and, at the other top, the altar of Jesus with a large and beautiful stone altarpiece in the modern style” (FR. L. SOUSA. I, 1977: 635, 643-645).

The information in *O Couseiro* is very brief and appears almost as if secondary: “Beside ... the door to the sacristy, there is another chapel, one dedicated to Santa Barbara ... Right next to is the Chapel of S. Gonçalo, whose altar is dedicated to Jesus, which is filled with statues of the saint, and another of St. Hyacinth; this chapel belongs to the Order” (*O Couseiro*, 1868: 105).

Two centuries later, when the prior was Father Francisco Henriques de Faria, in the inventory of property and assets of 17 February 1823, taken by the notary José Maria Belo dos Reis, it is recorded that in the altar “by the name of Lord Jesus, there is a large image of Our Lord, and at the side two panels: one of St. John the Evangelist, another of Mary Magdalene, in wood; it has various

panels with some of the Stations of the Passion. This altar has neither an urn nor a stool because everything was destroyed by the French” (S.A. GOMES, 1997: 239).

A great deal of the history of the unsettled life and break up of an immense swathe of Portugal’s artistic heritage, mainly that which belonged to the religious orders, is largely untold. This human agitation was expressed in laws, individual decisions taken on behalf of the ideas of various tendencies, tastes and choices of the time which decontextualised and ensured the tracelessness of countless pieces of great, average and poor quality of the various forms of artistic expression.

Included here is the altar of Jesus, which, however, can be enjoyed in artistic and devotional terms in a worthy and open home in Lisbon – the church of Nossa Senhora da Conceição. In truth, the history of this altar, and of the Monastery of Batalha too, is interwoven with that of the church – Trinas do Rato – of one of the convents of the Order of the Most Holy Trinity for the Redemption of the Captives whose patroness is Our Lady of the Good Remedy. The saga of this convent is similar to that of many others, but all that concerns us here is the reason and the time that its fortunes intertwined with those of the Monastery of Batalha. In 1944-45, the Superior of the Nossa Senhora da Conceição day boarding school, Júlia Ferreira, made a series of urgent requests to the DGEMN to open its church for worship, since restored. The process involved a long drawn-out “struggle” between requests and the lack of replies and promises from, besides the DGEMN, the Directorate General of Public Welfare (DGAP) and the respective ministers. Sister Ferreira asked for the return of the altarpieces removed in 1910 (the de-activated church had been used as a refectory) and some pews. On 28 August 1945, the Ministry of Public Works empowered the engineer and director of the DGEMN to intervene in order to ensure the transfer of the altar from Batalha to the church of the day boarding school, hence it was this piece which was chosen for the recommencement of worship at the church. In its turn, the DGAP, faced with the need to budget for the work to restore the building, declared the impossibility of doing so due to the fact that it was

awaiting the outcome of the process to loan “a stone altar from the King João III era in the Church of the Monastery of Batalha, on the Gospel side of the nave of the transept, as a high altar. This altar was suggested by the director of the DGEMN who considered it usable for the aforementioned church and intended to remove it from the monastery church. It had been inspected by architect Moreira Santos who verified whether it was suitable for the Church of the Nossa Senhora da Conceição day boarding school ..., 28 August 1945.”

Following this show of wills and decisions, a description of the altar was written by architect, 3rd class, João Vaz Mael (DGEMN), dated 2 July 1946, whose contents are not necessary to state here, but a few points are worthy of mentioning: “... it is made from the stone of the region and in a Renaissance style. The composition is based on an overlapping of orders.... The backgrounds are decorated with paintings, depicting St. Veronica and the Way to Calvary on the pediment; those on the higher tier consist of the Agony in the Garden, Flagellation and the Crowning of Thorns; and those at the lower level are Mother of Sorrows, Mary Magdalene at the foot of the Cross and St. John the Baptist, altogether seven in total.”⁷

The *corpus* of Platonic and Neo-Platonic doctrine draws a comparison between the temple and the human body. The former gathers the assembly of the faithful and servers, the mystical body of Christ, and the latter the soul. Inside the temple, its nucleus, the holiest place, where the Sacrifice is constantly recreated, is the altar, upon which the architectural directives and other artistic and ritual expressions focus. According to an anonymous writer, “The Holy Sacrament of the altar is the centre on earth of the Catholic religion, the origin, the summit of God’s blessings for us, and it is only by celebrating the high mysteries of this wonderful Sacrament that bishops are consecrated, priests ordained, ceremonies established and altars created” (*Tratado do Santissimo Sacramento*

⁷ – Taken from the page of the website of the Instituto da Habitação e da Reabilitação Urbana (IHRU) on the Monastery of Santa Maria da Batalha: http://www.monumentos.pt/Site/APP_PagesUser/SIPAArchives.aspx?id=092910cf-8eaa-4aa2-96d9-994cc361eaf1&nipa=IPA.00004043, accessed on 16 October 2013.

do altar, & execução para a Comunhão, undated – BGUC, ms. 344). As an extension and complement of altars, altarpieces of stone and wood were created. They fulfilled a key catechismal purpose during the Counter-Reformation, a time when the Catholic Church was recovering its dignity and power after being severely questioned, ridiculed and challenged by its reformers. Added to this function was that of catalysts of the discipline then imposed, of powerful centres which appealed to the senses, and which also mobilised the liturgy. In fact, they provided the “clothes” for hard and bare spaces enclosed by walls, not to mention the fact that they were and are the “signature” and pride of the masters and commissioners involved in their creation.

The structure of altarpieces was made more systematic during the Mannerist era by focusing on their architectural and planimetric appearance, with the sober and imposing frame for the pictorial and sculptural discourse which remain the chief components. These are some of the defining lines of the Jesus altarpiece, which therefore include it in the Mannerist style. Added to this are also its proportions, which are not classical as applied during the Renaissance, the structure of its coiving, the interplay of profiles, and its analytical and divided nature.

The full history of this altar/altarpiece is yet to be known, but it would definitely have had a different appearance when it was housed in the place of prayer in the monumental complex it once belonged to, and was possibly the product of a strong desire on the part of the prior of the time or of some suggestion regarding the creation of an altar dedicated to Jesus, a much earlier decision by the Order. The dissolution of the religious orders in 1834, anti-clerical movements after 1910 and work to cleanse the monuments removed thousands of artworks from their context, which were shared, sold or radically eliminated through destruction. As mentioned at the beginning, this altar was deemed “usable” as a replacement for the altarpiece dismantled and disappeared from the church of the Convent of Trinas, a fact which does not connect it to Baltasar Álvares (V. SERRÃO, 1988:72), the royal architect who drew up the first designs for the convent. Therefore,

its space was devoid of the devotional and aesthetic element that was intended and ostensibly reveals its absence. The fact that the structures of the altarpiece were moved is revealed by the different colouring between them and the remains of the almost faded painting of three darkly coloured sections in the form of a border with fleur-de-lis decoration and dots on the curvatures. The almost invisible outline can also be made out of a head with a now colourless covering and a red line bordering the depiction. All of this suggests the movement of life, in this case in terms of devotion and the aesthetic composition of the places destined for that purpose.

Of the author(s) of this work nothing is known, but influential centres of masonry such as Coimbra and Lisbon skirted the region of Leiria with workshops as important as Alcobaça and Batalha and in the city itself, creating a crossroads of influences in which Flemish and Italian work was the chief reference. It could have been made by one of the master craftsmen from the area or one from outside relocated for a long or short period of time.

The Jesus altarpiece, made from local limestone (V. SERRÃO, 1988: 72-73; S. A. GOMES, 1997: 284-285; S. R. C. VIEIRA, 2008: 160-161), is the expression of a magnificence of architectural and decorative erudition, articulated in the way the separate parts are subordinated to the central core and developed through a height which seems out of proportion to its width. This appearance of breaking with classical proportions is redolent of all Mannerist artworks and is an expression of a uniform movement within European art experienced from the 1520s onwards, and above all after the 1550s. It is characterised by the deconstruction and deliberate movement away from order and the Renaissance canons and the use of a lexicon of various ambiguities exposed in frantic expressivity, the *non finito*, and restlessness and melancholy. It was a time of metaphysics, the mirror of a dramatic and traumatic political and social world in great ideological, political and religious upheaval.

The façade-type architectural structure, lack of proportion, organised partition and compartmentalisation, as well as the severity softened by the decoration, are the first and most impressive points

of impact of this altarpiece, which includes the models of triumphal arches and facades presented in Italian architectural treatises, namely the *Fourth Book on Architecture* by Sebastiano Serlio. The structure of the altarpiece, like other Mannerist examples, is built from basic architectural elements, such as columns, pedestals, an entablature, corbel and attic.

This altarpiece can be analysed by tiers and so, in the first, which has a dual element, we see a predella, surmounting the bench, in which the dynamics and interplay of light and shadow are created by the projecting pedestals and the concave form of the bench panels. However, *in situ*, it has clearly been adapted due to the noticeable difference in the colouring of the stone between the two parts of the lower section. The second tier is the largest and the one which provided balance to the two upper tiers. The third tier replicates the previous one on a smaller scale and the fourth, with an elegant and sober attic, caps the whole ensemble. As noted above, the altar was vandalised by Napoleon’s troops and therefore desacralised.

The pedestals are adorned with an extremely pure decoration consisting of concave and straight frames. In the central section, the opening that is visible today is not original. In the middle of this section, a polygonal corbel projects outwards in which the central section and volutes spiralling in the opposite direction to those decorating the columns stand out. This denotes that the central niche was once occupied by an image, very probably a Crucified Christ (Cat.15), the devotional and doctrinal motto behind the Dominicans’ desire to erect the altar of Jesus. On the predella panels, the predominant ornamental feature is the rectangular design, revealing a distinct reinterpretation of the engravings from Antwerp that were so popular throughout Europe and also Portugal. These were the product of the main centres of artistic production such as Lisbon, Évora, Oporto and Coimbra and royal and conventual commissioning centres, which were responsible for the most expensive orders. Flemish engravings, by amongst others Hieronymus Cock (the most important publisher of imprints of his time), Cornelis Bos, Cornelis Floris, Vredeman de Vries and

others, were followed and greatly copied as a sign of modernity and erudition. Even in later periods, they remained popular via the replication of their styles, especially in places where new trends were slow to catch on and artists less up to date. The entire northern European ornamental “catalogue” recreated the discourse of Italian *groteschi* and developed another replete with fantasy, anthropomorphic and plant themes, cartouches, “leathers” and ironwork, known as *ferronerie*, providing an air of robustness.

Cartouche-type elements fill almost the entire area of the two panels framing the *arma Christi* (the three nails and breastplate, associated with the symbology of the sacrifice, the Trinity, victory, brambles, the crown of thorns, a whip, a lantern, a moon in its fourth quarter, three seven-pointed stars which partake of the symbolism surrounding the number seven, but also the reference to Revelation 1: 16-20, where it mentions the seven stars Christ holds in his hands – the Vision of John at Patmos). We see frames, retainers, scrolls, nailwork-type elements, perfectly defined rings which support the sections of the composition, delicate phylacteries, cinctures, pendants with fruit bowls, stylised flowers, whimsical twists and scrolls in a full yet very delicate piece of work. The Flemish influence is clear in the detail of the entire composition, a “manual” of erudition and technical and artistic excellence. In this ornamental framework, there is a very great resemblance to the engravings of Pieter Coeck, specifically in that of the frontispiece of *Moeurs et fachons de faire de Turcz* (M. T. DESTERRO, 2000: 58-74). The interplay of the columns, of different sizes on the second and third tiers, defines the intercolumniation, filled with a painting, and the central niche, also decorated with a painting. Besides this function, it is the support of the sober entablatures of denticulated cornice which inserts the dynamic dialogue between the horizontal and the vertical. These are differentiated by height, volume and order, with those on the main tier being the largest, imposing an aesthetic and symbolic reading. These latter are Ionic in style and those above Corinthian, or, in other words, the most powerful tier was reserved for the “main pages” of the dedication. The shafts of some are striated and the lower thirds decorated very similarly to the predella panels,

closely resembling the aforementioned engravings by Pieter Coeck – delicately crafted with symbols from the Passion standing out as a result of ovoid cartouche-like details. The central niche is defined by an ensemble formed by the two tall vertical spans and by the framed and projecting cornices on which the arch sits.

The ornamentation of the columns on the upper tier is somewhat different and this difference is visible above all in the decoration of the lower third, but it can also be seen in the fluting on the shaft. The work is more simplified and has carving of inferior quality that conveys different ornamental information, less erudite in this case, which is probably connected to the fact that it is less visible. It uses plant elements and curtains which open to expose various *arma Christi* related to the different moments of the Passion. Depicted on one of these thirds is the cross on Golgotha. In fact, the cross is a “message” repeated in the central sculpture, which appears on the corbel, on the cross of the column and on the cross which crowns the attic, as if breathing life into the symbology of this representation.

Finally, in the attic, the extension of the central span, pilasters and smooth entablature, which follow those below in more simplified form, frame the pictorial section. Acroteria in the form of ovoid urns with spherical endings, finishing in ferrules and wings, add composition. At the top, and in the language of the *ferroneries*, a decorative detail of scrolls, retainers and volutes is used. This crowning element is in the form of a hill – Golgotha – and the cross, today split into sections to adapt it to the space at its new “home”, fits behind the retainer and sits on a two-headed eagle whose meaning is twofold: the triumph over the ignorance of Christ’s persecutors, the resulting exercise of evil and violence, and the glorious outcome represented by the Resurrection. This, as mentioned above, was a dogma to which the Dominicans adhered, but so did other religious congregations such as the Augustinians, Jesuits, Franciscans, Carmelites, Benedictines, Cistercians, etc.

It is a symbolic expression of Christianity as union and unity. In the imperial project of the kingdom of God, the eagle represents the power of Christ and the Church created in His name, to which

everything must submit. The Mysteries of faith, or the equivalent Rosary of the Virgin, provide support for this symbolism.⁸

The architectural composition and its “adornments and styles” rival each other in impact for their quality and erudition, particularly in the *Mater Dolorosa* and *St. John* paintings, but they also frame it as the major narrative and the focus of closer attention. There are seven paintings executed on boards by different artists but all of them in the Mannerist style.

However, several questions immediately arise. The corbel assumes the existence of a piece related to the liturgical rite. Bearing in mind the dedication of this altarpiece and, chiefly, the specific exhortation contained in the Order’s guidelines, according to which veneration of the Saviour of the World was of the highest order and antiquity, it is not unlikely that the Crucified Christ in the high chapel of the monastery’s church (Cat.15) was originally housed in the altarpiece we are discussing, given its quality. In truth, this, in sculptural form, seems plausible, since it would determine the entire message revealed through the central axis. From the redemptive Sacrifice and the story of the experiences connected to Him, one arrives in an upwards movement to an empty surmounting cross, the culmination of the great Christian message – there is a greater life after death and all of us, through Him, can attain it. Well we know that at that time these details were taken very seriously.

The sculpture depicts the crucified Christ at a stage in which he still has his strength, given the taut pose of His body and arms. It is an emotive and impressive image for the message it gives – a tortured body deeply and calmly turning inwards at a moment of pain and effort expressed in the definition of the muscles, ribs, abdomen marked by the “eye” (of energy) of the navel and in the overlapping feet, recalling Juan de Juni (J. NAVARRO TALEGÓN et al., 2006: 313-314). This piece is of high quality and Mannerist in inspiration, marked by Tridentine restraint – the power in the drama. The defining

8 – See Jaelson Bitran Trindade, *O império dos mil anos e a arte do “tempo barroco”: a águia bicéfala como emblema da Cristandade*, at http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?pid=S0101-47142010000200002&script=sci_arttext. Page accessed on 18 October 2013.

axis is the inverted serpentine “s” which snakes from the head past the left ankle to the opposite side via the pleat of the sendal robe and right knee until reaching the moving right foot, in clear transgression of the Renaissance order. Added to these details are the excessive elongation, above all of the legs, and the way in which details are compensated/distorted. One of the most successful parts of the sculpture is the face of Christ. Removal and closer analysis underlined the quality of the work and it was possible to verify that the crown of thorns, which was visible, did not match the rest of the work. In fact, in the area around the back of the neck, there is a part of the original crown of thorns, which is delicate and excellently executed, and around the head a smooth area set out in detail was prepared for the crown to sit on. The sendal robe is executed with an unsteadiness of volume and a dialogue between light and dark. The way in which the jointing and connecting pins are executed suggest a well-made piece of work.

The pictorial narrative raises three questions, one of which is immediately evident and a third which only arises when in very close proximity to the painting. One has to do with the “hands” of different painters; the second relates to the reason why the figure of Mary Magdalene is Christ’s sole companion in the Crucifixion; and the third concerns the “arrangement” which this painting has been given, thus determining its historical fate.

The first visual impression links the *Mater Dolorosa* and *St. John the Evangelist*, to the left and right of the painting in the central niche, respectively, to a painter highly skilled in creating almost three-dimensional figures which project towards the observer. This “sculptural” work is not so clear in the picture of Mary Magdalene. The paintings on the higher tier and attic, however, are less skilfully executed and more restless. They are overlaid, theatrically gestural and affected, with almost chaotic scenographic effects and a more diverse and brighter chromatic palette.

Nevertheless, they all fit into the Mannerist style already greatly contaminated by Tridentine moulding and with a very repetitive set of ingredients, distancing them from the creative and innovative streak of earlier decades.

The attribution of artworks to painters via comparison with already identified work is a recurring procedure due to the absence of a signature, very common at that time. It is therefore incumbent on the researchers to recognise another “signature” by analysing the artist’s style, or “hand” at work.

The persistent and in-depth research of the last three decades has created a huge document archive on Mannerist artwork and revealed a large number that have been the subject of Portuguese and international study. These have brought a body of predominantly unsigned work out of the shadows, a fact which has also created new lines of research.

The master craftsmen and part of their team of builders, apprentices and other workers travelled to places where their skills were appreciated and, as time passed, the memory of this was lost. On other occasions, at the workshop, they offered isolated paintings for sale to whoever liked them or had the means to purchase them and the record of these journeys on the most part failed to accompany the piece. Apprenticeships took many boys away from their home villages and towns and afterwards, once they had become master craftsmen, they did not go back, whether for family, work or other reasons. All of this coming and going raises questions when attempts are made to link an artwork to an artist. Certain attributions therefore need to be revised and the fact acknowledged that this is not always the most essential aspect, because the artwork speaks for itself in a legible language and with communicative power.

Saul António Gomes mentions that “the figuration in *Mater Dolorosa* and *St. John the Evangelist* resemble the panels painted by Amaro do Vale for the Chapel of the Santíssimo Sacramento at the Cathedral of Leiria in 1605-1606, in particular the figures of *St. Paul* and *St. Peter*, so the possibility that he, or one of his close collaborators, was responsible for the paintings should not be put aside” (S. A. GOMES, 1997: 285), and he refers to the study by Vítor Serrão (V. SERRÃO, 1986: 80). This researcher, whose work has been vital for understanding Mannerism in Portugal, when studying the paintings in the Cathedral of Leiria, or those

stemming from it and now part of the collection of the Museum of the Diocese of Leiria-Fátima, based his work on the information contained in *O Couseiro* and hence attributed them to Simão Rodrigues and Amaro do Vale (V. SERRÃO, 2005: 172). These were two of the most striking painters of that time in Portugal, the former working in a long partnership with the royal artist Domingos Vieira Serrão. If, on the one hand, the two paintings on the lower tier – *Mater Dolorosa* and *St. John the Evangelist* – reveal similar vigour and organisation to work by Amaro do Vale, above all in the sculptural treatment of the figures and drapery, on the other the painting *Meditation of Magdalene on the example of Christ* (which gains an entirely different quality when seen *in situ* and close up) closely resembles the work by the partnership of Simão Rodrigues and Domingos Vieira Serrão. Particularly interesting is the similarity of this composition with another by the same name, but penitent, belonging to the Municipal Council of Tomar (A. P. B. A. GARCIA, 1996: 136-138; 308-310). It should also be noted that the paintings on the upper tier and attic are somewhat similar to the pair's work in Coimbra for the sacristy of the Old Cathedral, a city where they also worked on the Monastery of Santa Cruz and the University, as well as other local institutions. Their characteristic style also appeared in other places. In fact, in 1612, as a partnership they were considered good enough for these projects, an esteem already created by their joint work in Lisbon. Simão Rodrigues painted for the Church of S. Domingos of Elvas and exhibited in the city's museum are some large paintings in which the apostles are so similar to those in the Museum of the Diocese of Leiria-Fátima that it is possible to suggest the hypothesis that they may be linked. He also painted for the Franciscan convent in Campo Maior, which seems to signify that his name and the regard for his work passed between members of these two Orders.

If we recall the altarpiece by Domingos Vieira Serrão for the Church of Misericórdia of Tancos (1600), we realise that there is a certain similarity with the paintings of the Passion of Christ.

Saul António Gomes notes that there is another artist's "hand" at

work in this altarpiece belonging to a generation of master glaziers of the artworks at Santa Maria da Vitória by royal appointment. The family in question is the Taquas, or Tacas in Portuguese. The historian mentions possible Spanish-Levantine or even Italian roots behind the name. In the third generation of the family, António occupied the same position as his father and grandfather, while Pedro was a wood carver and Francisco a painter. It is known that the Taca workshop specialised in altarpieces and that it was active between 1595 and 1605 (S. A. GOMES, 1996: 253; 1997: 285; 2001: 93-104), and that the Confraternity of the Hospital de Nossa Senhora da Vitória in Batalha commissioned one from it.

These and other clues can help to guide more in-depth research and thus uncover who was the artist responsible.

The second question has to do with the figuration of Mary Magdalene and the fact that only she is close to the Crucified Christ. However, this theme fits into the doctrinal line surrounding the altarpiece. The Preachers recognised Mary Magdalene as one of their saints and her depiction is rarely absent from the Order's temples. On the one hand, the Counter Reformation recommended this veneration because it celebrated the Sacrament of Penance and the exercise of prayer, while, on the other, the vision of a friar from the Dominican Convent of Soriano, in the south of Italy, in which the Virgin appeared to him in the company of Saint Mary Magdalene and St. Catherine confirmed the benevolence, good intentions and special Marian protection of the founder and, by association, the whole Order. Besides this, it is in the Dominican Church of Saint-Maximin in Provence that the tomb and relics of Mary Magdalene are kept, according to Provençal legend, and the fact that the House of Anjou chose the Dominicans to maintain this Christian veneration definitively linked them to it. It was they who spread amongst the Italian painters from the beginning of the 14th century the legend of Mary Magdalene's dearness to the Dominican heart (E. MALE, 2001: 436-447). At Batalha there existed a chapel dedicated to her which belonged to the monastery (S. A. GOMES, 2005:69).

This painting, with characteristic Mannerist traits subject to Tridentine guidelines, is very similar to another – *Calvary (Meditation*

on Christ alive on the Cross) – attributed by Vítor Serrão to Simão Rodrigues, dating from 1594-1595 and belonging to the old altarpiece of São Domingos de Elvas, currently on display at the city's museum.

At the violent and dramatic, but also restrained, moment of Jesus's death, Mary Magdalene shows the source of his pain with her hand and, almost beseechingly, confronts all those who should understand and feel the message of the Passions. This theme of "sensitive sorrow" was developed by Brother Luís de Granada in *Audio Filia* (1554) (V. SERRÃO, 1998: 45-70). The style of Simão Rodrigues, or his partnership with Vieira Serrão, on this board is very similar, and there is no reason to think that it was an imitation given, within the context of his followers, its qualities and physiognomic details.

The characteristics of Italianate Mannerism under Trentian guidelines, such as the purity of the scene limited to the essence of the message, the reserved expression and idealised features in contrast to the sculptural, almost cubic, volume of the body, particularly in the hieratic bottom section and drapery, are clear to see here. The palette consists of vivid colours and the drama of the scene is accentuated by the tones of grey and violet. The ample dimensions of the Magdalene figure should also be mentioned. She seems removed from the human movement depicted in the buildings in the background that occupy the whole right side of the painting, where the referents to engravings, drawings or other types of information refer us to Roman or Florentine-style buildings, some of which included by Francisco de Holanda in his work.

This aspect gives rise to a contemplative reflection and also a physical proximity to the painting, since, at first sight, it may seem odd that the painter pulled the main figure to one side, leaving the other side empty. But that does not actually happen, and this use of background architecture replete with centralised buildings with symbolic connections to the Cosmos, God and Christ, and buildings moving heavenwards ties in closely with the saint's mystical purpose. The tones themselves provoke the same effect of uniting Heaven and Earth, in which Magdalene only stands out through the

vibration of her reddish skin, the carmine tone of her fleshy lips, the copper-coloured shade of her hair and the rose-coloured tunic in shades ranging from white to carmine which "sculpt" her.

The third question that arises has to do with the strange connection between the Mannerist discourse and the Crucified Christ, who is depicted in a more modern style in a very different pictorial patch. This is a curious episode and one with an uncommon solution. In truth, beside Mary Magdalene, in an advanced position as the primary figure, is the depiction of the Crucified Christ giving the mystical moment of meditation its ultimate and most profound meaning. For some reason, the sculpture was moved elsewhere, but the void created had to be filled. The solution found was to cut a piece from another board on the same theme and to stick it over the architectural scenario, with its appearance clearly around 0.5cm above the underlying picture. The composition is in the form of a clearly defined "Y". Jesus is depicted in a feeble state and almost only in outline and patch. Of note is the head which is practically filled with hair, whose curls are painted with great detail and cover half of the face in a certain Spanish style, perhaps denoting some difficulty by the painter in portraying the face, dominated by a long beard and hair.

We might also ask whether the *Mary Magdalene's Meditation on the Example of Christ* was part of the original composition or whether it was an adaptation of a painting from somewhere else. We are unable to find any documentary reference, but we can link the Dominican doctrinal spirit to the stylistic inclusion of a painting closely connected to the workshop of Simão Rodrigues, who was active in the Leiria area in the early 1600s, through the description of the aforementioned inventory of 1823 and from it consider the possibility that it might have been part of the altarpiece at the time it was made, or thereabouts.

The use of light is also a specific characteristic of Mannerist art, in which the focus on the theme highlighted establishes a dialogue with areas of tension and drama caused by a tenebrist composition of the light. The illumination comes from above (symbolically from the Source and physically from the point of light) and Mary

Magdalene receives it and emanates it towards the background and the observer. With regard to its conservation, various crudely repainted areas can be seen.

The paintings flanking this one are those which, alongside the stone work, are most erudite and of the highest quality. Indeed, *Mater Dolorosa* and *St. John* stand out for this and for their greater grandeur, not just because of the well-proportioned figures and highly sculptural character, but also for the way they project themselves with great impact towards the observer, drawing all of his attention towards the message they transmit.

The possibility of them having been made by Amaro do Vale is getting closer to the truth. This painter stood out within a generation linked to the final waning of the Mannerist style, which was heavily informed by post-Tridentine theorists but had run out of ideas, and the emergence of Anti-Mannerism, which was the notorious precursor of the Baroque style. Within the Portuguese panorama, he was amongst the most recognised and travelled of artists. In Rome, Milan, Madrid, Cuenca and Saragosa (Simão Rodrigues and Vieira Serrão also spent time in Italy and Spain), he enriched and developed his vision, knowledge and, of course, his potential as an artist. He was a royal painter to the court of King Filipe II of Portugal from 1612 to 1619. The Roman influence is visible in his grandiose figures, voluminous and imposing, to which can be added the sculptural way in which he creates the clothes, which have a three-dimensional quality.

These two images are a clear example of the discipline which followed after the violent attack unleashed against the Church and the intention to put into practice the idea that a painting needs to be created in a way that establishes a dialogue with the believer and shows him something emotive, “illuminating” the message and making it credible. It was incumbent upon the painter, therefore to create something majestic and show his ability to ordain a painting with doctrine, but also to make it attractive enough to “appeal” from afar. In these figures, which isolate themselves and remit the natural environment to the shadows, which fills the entire painting, we can see references to Marcello Venusti.

Both images reflect the objectivity and rarefied nature of

the narrative, a kind of timeless art, not fully divorced from the serpentine theatricality of Mannerism. The two figures assert themselves, silently and in a mystical position, amid an atmosphere of accentuated darkness and dense and dramatic nebulous masses painted with rapid and unusual brushstrokes.

In the hands clasped together and sorrowful eyes, the *Mater Dolorosa* reflects restrained pain, a pain experienced within and not exteriorised. *St. John*, with less idealised features than the Virgin, adopts an affected, contemplative and delicate pose. In both, the position of one leg in front of the other (ample form) is improbable and unnatural, but very common in the art of the time. The chromatic palette is vibrant, related to the use of a fine and silky primer, and its restoration would undoubtedly endow it with new life. The light source comes from above as if it were a message. In the background of both is a patch of earthy and violet tones, which dominates and suggests indefinite structures and hills. Very characteristic of the aesthetic current to which they belong is the tenebrist and restless, almost moonlit, depiction of the sky. The way the hands and feet of the favoured disciple are crafted reveal the finely-tuned and refined capacity for outline. These were uneasy, troubled and unpleasant times and painting, like all artistic expression, reflected the uncertainty, restlessness, violence and rebelliousness.

The four paintings above reflect a highly creative discourse and different characteristics from the ones we have so far looked at. But the work allows us familiarity with yet another set of paintings which follow the Mannerist style, in which Italianate, Flemish, Spanish and Portuguese references are all mixed, and which also reveal the influence of the Tridentine principles, primarily those issued by the final session of the Council of Trent on 3 and 4 December 1563. The principles in question are those of religious propaganda, which were to prevail over aesthetics; the purpose of painting was to explain directly and unequivocally to the believer without *invenzione*, which could disturb and lead him astray.

Of this group, *Flagellation* is the central work and, in the way the whole is constructed, the focus around which the others “circulate”, the core theme which is developed in the other three paintings.

In fact, examining the compositions, we notice two diagonal lines which begin in the paintings on either side, *The Prayer in the Garden (the Comfort of the Angel)* and *Coronation of Thorns*, and, in the latter case, cuts across the arm of the cross being carried by Christ and ends at the top of the painting above, *Road to Calvary*, forming a wide triangle with the three paintings as its base, which delimits the centre occupied by *Flagellation*. This, in turn, leads the observer’s gaze to the scene being enacted above, thus reinforcing the drama. In other words, the believer’s attention is first caught by the more evident sacrifice and then guided by the narrative through sequential moments (the three mentioned) which show how everything took place and reinforce the experience of torture. It is an educational work, along the lines of the *biblia pauperum*.

The features of the Mannerist style are evident not only in the elongation of the figures of Jesus and the executioners, but also in the solid construction of the sleeping disciples, the torsos of the bodies, and the ambiguous and fantasy scenographic effects. Notice the “pine comb” formed by the figures in the garden, an interplay between the deconstruction of planes and ambiguity. The break with Renaissance conventions on perspective that brought legibility, clarity and order is what defines the strength of this movement, so easily identified by today’s observer who can interpret and sense the restlessness, the excess of strong contrasts and overloaded spaces, and the almost violent and disturbing agitation. This is what *Flagellation* gives us, through the polyphony of positions and gestures contrasting with a slightly reticent Christ who experiences the moment as a beacon of calmness amidst the chaos.

In *Road to Calvary* and in the episodic reference connected to it of Jesus’s meeting with Veronica, we notice the same excess of figures, in an evident fear of emptiness and a clear imbalance between the two sides of the painting. To the right of the condemned, there is an accumulation of people, while, in counterpoint, to the left, there is calm. The middle of the painting is marked by a corner and, on the other side of it, by a style of serene acceptance in the figure of Jesus and an affected and unusually relaxed air in the figure announcing the procession. The only section of background is also on this

side, where, in the distance, three crosses can be seen. The figure of Veronica is very idealised and it is in the dialogue established between her, the Holy Face and Jesus, recognised by the woman’s compassion, that the painting’s most profound message lies. Josef de Valdivielso, a celebrated poet and Spanish cleric, in a discussion with Vicente Carducho in around 1630, created the image of a Christ the painter who portrays himself with his own blood by touching his face against the material (the Shroud of Turin), a genuine painting within a painting. This is a theme common in Catholic painting since the 15th century (J. GALLEGO, 1991: 77-78). One of the soldiers has a shield in the shape of a cartouche decorated with the two-headed eagle found at the top of the altarpiece.

In *Coronation of Thorns*, much of the stylistic repertoire of the era can be seen: elongated figures, in the images of Jesus and the executioner, agitation created using diagonals, prolixity, torsos and a characteristic feature of the strict conventions to which painting was subject – the evil of the executioners had to be expressed through their ugliness and grimacing in a way which very clearly caused revulsion as a counterpoint to the idealised kindness, serenity and beauty of Christ. In *Flagellation*, the style is a little more open, as if allowing Jesus to breathe and to feel the natural emotion at the moment of His supreme sacrifice. An interesting detail is the contrast with the executioner on the right, dressed in the clothes of the era, a contemporary detail used by the painter which indicates the time, around 1600, when the work was painted. The Christ figure has a weak complexion and reveals the artist’s difficulty in depicting anatomical detail, above all nudes. However, he shows a good understanding of the difference between delicate drawing and colour work in the depiction of the faces.

There is a predominance of warm colours in the chromatic palette, such as vivid reds and yellows, but blues and sharp and cold pinks can be seen in some details. There is also a manifest use of black to emphasise forms such as pleats, outlines, anatomical details and landscapes.



VII. The sacristy

Built between the Chapel of Santa Bárbara and the chapter room, the sacristy, the least damaged of the outbuildings of the Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória as far as the architectural organisation and original ornamental concept are concerned, even though affected by the changes made in the late 18th century, is still used today as a room where the preparations are made for the holy rites of the liturgy; where the priests, in their vestments, perform their ablutions, take their first prayers before the altar of Nossa Senhora do Rosário, and begin the processions.

Retaining its Rococo splendour, the monastic sacristy, measuring 113.36 m², provides visitors with a view of early Gothic architectural elements – such as the windows in the eastern wall above the lavabo and the spectacular ribbed vault, decorated with an interesting mural of an angelic choir (S. A. GOMES, 1997: 97-132) – which were probably completed still in the 14th century under the supervision of Afonso Domingues. At the back, at the foot of the unconquerable clock tower, and accessible from one of the 18th-century wood frames, is the old “Casa da Prata”, that is, the room where the silver, relics, etc. were kept” (J. MURPHY, 1792-1795: 59), measuring 11.21 m², which finally lost its purpose in 1957 when it was converted into a toilet.

Transformed into a venerated sanctuary by the “microcosmic atmosphere of divine holiness” – a para-liturgical place where the Sacramental bread was kept – and by the proximity to the temple of the cult, this outbuilding stored the various liturgical objects, holy books and vestments required for the regular holding of divine worship in appropriate receptacles. Given the material, and spiritual, value of the precious holy treasures entrusted to the Dominican friars, they were kept temporarily in the contiguous store until required for the ordinary celebration of the Divine Office, and/or commemoration of the festive dates in the royal funeral calendar

in memory of the royal founders, King João I and Queen Philippa, and all of their descendants.

Although its original internal organisation is unknown, it is likely that the place where the liturgical objects and devotional vases were stored was equipped with a reliquary cupboard designed to house the relics given by its many benefactors over the following centuries, in line with the common practice cultivated in the main Dominican convents in Portugal.

In the early 1400s, from King João I the Monastery of Batalha received a famous “holy treasure of relics, gold, silver and brocade, canvas and silk ornaments of all sorts which the founder had collected with truly regal munificence” (FR. L. SOUSA. I, 1977: 645). The gold reliquary cross, containing the relics of Saints Peter, Paul, Blaise and George – the patron saint of the Portuguese during the Battle of Aljubarrota – and a small fragment of the vinegary sponge used to soften Christ’s pain on the cross, as well as a second relic of gold and crystal with a piece of clothing from the Crucified Christ, had been given to the Portuguese king during the Byzantine emperor’s embassy in Paris in 1401 (FR. L. SOUSA. I, 1977: 646-647). The veneration of relics at Batalha grew exponentially meanwhile with the arrival, in 1451, of the first of the mortal remains of *infante* Fernando, who died in North Africa in the name of God and who bequeathed some of his relics in his will in 1437.⁹

Alongside the reliquaries, the Dominican monastery, as mentioned elsewhere, also received fifteen “silver bodies” of blessed saints, of extraordinary craftsmanship and value and short in height, depicting

⁹ – In the early 20th century, the sole relic known of was a fragment of the True Cross, embedded in a silver reliquary. Central Archive of the Ministry of Finances [Digital Archive], Inventory of Cultural Property by the Comissão Jurisdicional dos Bens Culturais. Leiria – Ministry of Justice, 26 June 1911, fls. 4-7 v. This was certainly the relic left to the monastery in the will of the *infante* D. Fernando (S. A. GOMES, Vol. I. 2002: 211).

the aforementioned St. Mary of Victories, St. John the Baptist, St. Peter, St. John the Evangelist, St. Bartolomew, the Dominican saints St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Peter Martyr, St. Anthony, St. Barbara, St. Catherine of Alexandria and St. Mary Magdalene. Did the remaining ones depict the Virgin of the Rosary, St. Dominic or St. Francis of Assisi?

Also included in the sacristy treasure was a large collection calculated at over 18 arrobas of silver, 28 goblets, 14 pairs of cruets, 5 basins of holy water with an aspergillum, 8 thuribles and 6 incense holders, 13 altar and processional crosses, 14 candlesticks, 6 heavy torch holders, 7 chandeliers, 1 single lantern, 5 pyxes, 5 paintings of crosses, 2 jars and their basins, and 2 bells. Like the many objects listed, the monastic house, in similarity with the collection organised in the private chapels established in the Founder's Chapel, also had a rich collection of vestments and liturgical ornamental textiles, including chasubles, dalmatics, copes (*pluviale*) or frontals, velvets, silk and brocatelle decorated with silver and gold thread (FR. L. SOUSA. I, 1977: 647).

During the first inventories in the 1800s, the drastic reduction in all of its movable heritage was striking (S. A. GOMES, 1997: 239-242). Unfortunately, with the exception of the altarpiece and the chest of drawers in the sacristy, renovated in 1778 through the talents of the master woodcarver António Pereira da Silva, nothing remains or is known about the above objects, which attested to the devotional commitment of a generous and determined pleiad of Portuguese rulers and revealed their artistic tastes. Those which were saved from being sold by King João III to finance his wars in Africa between 1538 and 1541 did not escape the looting and fires during the fighting against the French troops in 1810, nor the contemptible disregard cultivated after the monastery was closed in May 1834.¹⁰

MP

VII.1. Wood carving and furniture

The contract to build the carved wooden chests of drawers and backs in the sacristy of the Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória da Batalha dates from 1778 (Cat.9). Signed by the friars of the Order of St. Dominic and the master wood carver António Pereira da Silva, a native of the town of Batalha, the contract stipulated the making of ten chests with four drawers each with the respective backs (S. A. GOMES, 1997: 307-308). The work would have to be finished and the pieces in place within one year from the date of the signing of the contract. Important clauses in the contract stressed that the design of the chests of drawers and backs had been delivered by the friars to the wood carver, that the supply of the wood and all other materials necessary was also the responsibility of the friars, and that the end product could be seen and assessed by an expert master in the field. The total cost to the Dominicans was 180,000 réis paid over three instalments. The first at the time the contract was signed, the second half-way through the work and the third when the end product was installed at its site. Also interesting, in terms of the contract, is the fact that the friars mentioned that the wood to be used was to be locally sourced and that the wood from the old chests of drawers and cupboards in the sacristy should be exploited for the structure and drawers.

The choice of this master wood carver to renovate the design of the sacristy of the Monastery of Batalha was not random. In fact, three years earlier, the same António Pereira da Silva had been hired by the brotherhood of Nossa Senhora do Rosário at the same monastery to produce the altarpiece in its chapel (S. A. GOMES, 1997: 305-306). This brotherhood also included several Dominican fathers and the work and the way in which it was executed must

¹⁰ – In early August 1915, four years after the republican government had conducted an inventory, it was reported that various objects of worship had been stolen from the monastery's church. Central Archive of the Ministry of Finances [Digital Archive], "Theft of objects of worship from the Monastery of Batalha", Monastery of Batalha, 19 August 1915, bk. 8, fl. 246.

have been to their satisfaction since they decided to place their trust once again in the local craftsman to create the chests of drawers for their sacristy and carve the backs surmounting them.

Concerning the artistic features of the old sacristy chests of drawers, little or nothing is known, only that they must have been burnt during the French invasions. The current furniture was made during the restoration work on the sacristy in 1880 (C. M. SOARES, 2001: 108). The chests of drawers are square cut and simple and, just like their predecessors, have four drawers each. They are located along the two side walls of the sacristy and are surmounted by the backs carved in 1778.

Besides the chests of drawers and backs, the sacristy also contains an altarpiece which was made at the same time as the rest of the carved wooden furniture. Although the contract with António Pereira da Silva makes no mention of an altarpiece, we presume, given the stylistic coherence between all of the pieces, that this altar may have been commissioned from the craftsman either during or immediately following the work on the chests and backs. Representative of a style influenced artistically by French and German designs in the decorative arts, the backs in the sacristy are stylised and elegant and employ the material and aesthetic practices in fashion in Portuguese wood carving at the time. Visible, therefore,

is the use of painting which mimics marble to fill the frames on the backs, while the rest of the decoration consists of carved and gilded wood, incorporating a structure which revolves aesthetically around large festoons of flowers, flames and asymmetric shells arranged in a refined and harmonious manner.

As far as the altarpiece which bridges the two styles of chests of drawers and backs is concerned, it fits perfectly into the same artistic language. Dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary, in the middle there is a canvas depicting Her (Cat.29). Flanking the painting are smooth double columns on a base of panels lightly decorated with shell motifs. At the top of the altarpiece a grand nimbus draws the observer's gaze to the symbol of the Holy Trinity hidden behind clouds. Crowning it sits a large plume, around which is spread the decoration. Festoons of flowers appear to cascade down, while architectural details ending in volutes decorate the entablature of the outer columns. Vases of flowers lend their vivacity and elegance to the inner columns, which coexist with scrolls of volutes, combining with the other decorative motifs to create a fluid and elegant visual lightness that lends the entire space a sense of harmony and continuity.

SF

VIII. The cloister, chapter, refectory, dormitories and the retreat at Várzea

Prayer is present at practically every moment and every place of conventual life, namely those codified in the *Constitutiones Primaevae* (1216-1236).

Added to the celebration of the office of Lauds in the choir of Batalha, at around 3 am,¹¹ was the simultaneous and perpetual celebration of a chanted Mass at Batalha and four other prayer sessions in the Founder's Chapel, for the soul, respectively, of King João I and his wife, and his four children buried there (FR. L. SOUSA. I, 1977: 655).

After a short rest followed the minor office of Prime, around 6 am, and, shortly afterwards, chapter, which might however be omitted by decision of the superior so as not to jeopardise study. It consisted of prayer, the reading of a chapter of the Rule or the Gospel of the day and of the martyrology, with obituary, followed by comments by the prior, the confession of sins (*capitulum culparum*) and financial and administrative matters.

As mentioned earlier, from the moment it was built, the chapter house was used as a pantheon for King Afonso V and his wife, as well as Prince Afonso. The chapter itself continued to meet mostly in Santa Maria-a-Velha, even in around 1517, as had occurred since the convent's founding (S. A. GOMES, 1990: 284). From that date onwards, regular references are made to the holding of chapter meetings in a place specifically created for that purpose, with all probability in what is termed the "Capítulo Velho" (Old Chapter) in

Murphy's notebook,¹² later renamed in the drawings he published as "the room where the teachers give their lessons". Recalling again what has already been mentioned, after the last reform of Batalha, in the mid-16th century, this room, located between the cloister reserved for the priests and the rest of the convent, was a place where everyone could meet, including those who had come from the outside to sign or witness notarial acts that took place at chapter meetings, or simply day students who attended the *Studium generale*. Prior to this reform, it was undoubtedly the monumental Manueline portal which created the grand entrance to what, at the beginning of the 16th century, must have been a space reclaimed from the wine cellar via a thick wall, which no longer exists today due to its demolition. Even though no sign of this work is mentioned in the documentation, it is assumed that the creation of a separate space and the construction of the magnificent portal were connected to the need for an outbuilding intended exclusively as a chapter. The first bell of the chapter that we have any information about is from the same time – 1501 – and was given to the convent by King Manuel I (ver. *Cat.*4). Suggestively, the "old chapter" seems to correspond to a specific prior use to that of "the room where the teachers give their lessons", during a period of approximately fifty years, when the only entrance possible to this outbuilding was via the Royal Cloister, before a door was opened in the northeast corner to the portal cloister. A photograph by Charles Thurston Thompson from 1868 (*fig. 15*) (C. T. THOMPSON: *fig. 10*) also reveals a niche edged with dogs, birds, vine leaves and plant scrolls in relief which contained an image of St. Dominic (*Cat.*14), with the shield of his

11 – This time reference and those following refer, by way of an example, to the period extending from Easter to the feats of Holy Cross on 14th September.

12 – Society of Antiquaries of London, Sketches of Batalha, ms. 260 (1789).

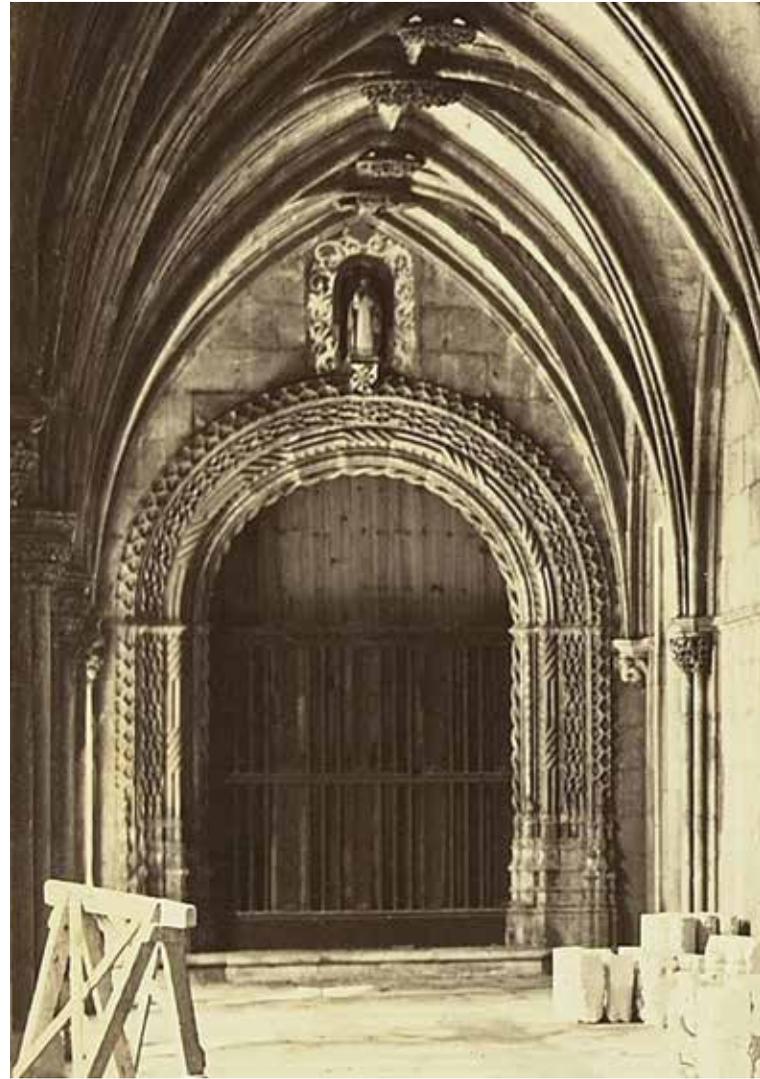


Fig.15 – “Old Chapter” gate (currently part of the “Adega dos Frades”), in 1868.
 Photograph: Charles Thurston Thompson

order at his feet, at the top of the Manueline portal. The decoration of the niche resembles the so-called national-style wood carving which allows this very stylistically cohesive set of objects to be dated to the last quarter of the 17th century. While this is the only example of devotional stone sculpture context from the 17th century that we know of, it can be confirmed that images continued to be made in this material locally, other examples of which are stored in the monastery’s museological deposit.

The location of the “old chapter” at the top of the wing intended for the chapter house maintained the traditional relationship of this outbuilding with the burial of friars in the corresponding nave of the cloister. Between epitaphs, erased according to legend by order King Sebastião, and truncated and moved headstones, due to the excavation of a rainwater drainage channel along the entire length of the nave during the restoration work in the 1800s, little of the friars’ cemetery now remains.

The building work on the “old chapter” was included in a number of other interventions to enhance the aesthetic and functional aspects of the Royal Cloister during the reign of King Manuel I. The most ostentatious of them all was the filling of the fanlights of the galleries and the pavilion where the lavabo was then built, a project attributed to Mateus Fernandes. A fresco now much damaged representing the Calvary and the *Arma Christi* (Cat.23) marked the eastern top of the wing dedicated to reading, originally featuring two pairs of friars preachers exhibiting open codices on one of the inner capitals and, later, a niche where an image of Our Lady was obligatorily kept.

Two other frescoes, near the refectory and equally coarse in execution, also belong to the same project, certainly produced by an itinerant artist of whom nothing is now known. St. Paul, an example of a convert (Cat.24), and St. John the Evangelist, a favourite disciple in whose care Christ left His Mother (Cat.25), are the paintings which illuminate the vaults adjacent to the lavabo pavilion, marking the perimeter of benches where, after the washing ritual, the friars awaited the ringing of the bell to enter the refectory: “The fountain is useful in this place because it is in front of a corner of the corridor

of the cloister by the door of the refectory: and provides those who enter with a basin in which to wash their hands, and relaxation for the eyes, while awaiting mealtime on the bench, which is in the same corridor and built against one or other side of the door with high seats and wooden backs” (FR. L. SOUSA. I, 1977: 649).

Other rituals associated with meals, which were common to all the convents, were recorded by James Murphy in the caption to the drawings of the monastery he published in 1792, namely the “Procession of the Choir to the Refectory and vice versa in thanksgiving before and after dinner” and the use of the “Pulpit where the Novices read the Holy Scriptures while the Friars take their meals”. William Beckford was invited to join one of these processions on 9 June 1794, at midday, after dinner had been served (*prandium*) in the old chapter (W. BECKFORD, 1835: 81).

According to the testimony of Giuseppe Gorani, who stayed at the monastery between 1764 and 1767, the refectory possessed “frescoes depicting the supper in Canaan and other holy motifs” (J. GORANI, 1945: 119-120). While his historical observations are not always accurate, this one can be trusted. As in other conventual refectories, the area reserved for the depiction of holy themes, which was significantly higher than it was wide, was located between the two big windows of the inner south facade. It is bordered by a stone frame and has a 17th-century pelmet at the top, also of stone, on which, from top to bottom, are visible a cincture, plant scrolls, another cincture and a fringe. Inside, above the pelmet, is a projected ceiling on which can be seen the same plant decoration, though far more in relief. Both on the pelmet and the ceiling there are still traces of bole and gold leaf. The base of the masonry on this quasi-niche is very degraded, but not to the extent that Gorani’s observations are inaccurate.

As was customary at other male convents, the dormitory of the priests and the novitiate had their own oratories. In the case of the former, the so-called Chapel of Hours was made known to us not only by way of Murphy’s drawings but also via *O Couseiro*, dating to the mid-17th century: “At the entrance to the dormitory is a very big and beautiful house and a statue of Our Lady standing in an

arched niche in the wall, while below it is a stone frieze with the appearance of an altar; and there is another niche on the other side which projects from the wall in which St. Dominic stands; this place is called the house of hours of Our Lady, because at midnight the hours of Our Lady are prayed there” (*O Couseiro*, 1868: 99). The location of the chapel of the professed friars at the far end of the respective dormitory, on the way to the Royal Cloister and church, is immediately similar to that of the same chapel at the Convent of Christ, also the product of an identical reform to that of Batalha, though preceding it. The chapel was intended not only for prayer during Vigil, but also for all those who, due to age or sickness, were unable to reach the church.

Of the novices’ chapel, which was also designed according to other similar convent complexes, of which an eloquent example is once again the Convent of Christ, the only knowledge we have comes from the drawings of the upper floor in Murphy’s notebook. In them, we can see that they followed convention: the house of the novices was completely separate from the rest of the convent by means of walls which compartmentalised the entire west wing of the Cloister of King Afonso V. Contained within it was the chapel which occupied the upper part of the passageway between the said quadrangle and the Royal Cloister. For lighting purposes, a circular window was inserted at the southern end of this passageway in the 16th century. The 1823 inventory reveals that, at that time, a small wooden altarpiece with a crucifix statue stood there (S. A. GOMES, 1997: 240).

Besides the walled farm, the whole monastery enclosure is a metaphor for the “Enclosed Garden” referred to in the Song of Songs and the lost paradise in Genesis. It is a place of elevation but also a place to deter the psychological tiredness that can stem from the rigour and routine of conventual life, that evil known amongst monks for centuries by the name of *acedia*. About the enclosure at Batalha, Father Luís de Sousa says that “a large stream runs through it with lots of water and deep pools which at times help to alleviate the Fathers’ work of reclusion and study through fishing with rods and nets” (FR. L. SOUSA. I, 1977: 650). Walking in the enclosure

also corresponded to the exercise of moral virtue called *Eutropelia* by theologians, which allowed honest and modest recreation, returning the body to a state of balance that the soul inhabiting it requires (G. J. A. C. DIAS, 2008: 62-64).

As mentioned in another chapter, the convent of Batalha possessed a *brévia*, or rest house, at Quinta da Várzea, located a short distance to the northeast. *O Couseiro* mentions that “this is where [the friars] have holidays and moments of calm, during the weeks or days ordained by the prelate; for that purpose, it has cells and other houses ... and on the farm there is a chapel dedicated

to St. Gonçalo; a statue of the saint stands in a wooden niche and there is also a panel of St. Joseph, but no altarpiece, niche or sacristy” (*O Couseiro*, 1868: 107-108). Little of the chapel, to which Mousinho de Albuquerque, the owner from 1837, added a Gothic *afonsino galilee*, is left. However, the magnificent tile frontal of the altar (*Cat.30*) was carefully removed to the Museum of the Diocese of Leiria-Fátima in 1992 when successive acts of theft and vandalism began to threaten the farm’s heritage.

PR

IX. The Mass for the Dead

By the tombs and in the respective funeral chapels, to which they generally headed in solemn procession, chanting antiphons and litanies, the friars prayed, eliciting prayers and versicles, sprinkling holy water, praying or chanting the Masses at the altars of each chapel richly decorated and adorned with precious liturgical objects. On anniversaries, the tombs were unveiled, by rule hidden by silk cloth and highly decorated covers of fabrics with gold and silver thread, as the description of the gifts donated in 1416 by King João I for the chapel of his deceased consort reveals: "seventy entire new pieces of grand and decorated gold cloth and raw silk."

The royal burial rites were always presided by a bishop, by the head prior of Santa Cruz of Coimbra or by another of the kingdom's major prelates, and included the celebration of various Masses, the largest of which was always the Pontifical Mass. Until the mid-15th century, it was customary for the clergy of the Priorate of Leiria, in the jurisdiction of the Convent of Santa Cruz of Coimbra and exempt from diocesan control, at whose limit the monastery was founded, as well as the community of Friars Minor of the Convent of S. Francisco of Leiria and, also, a delegation of Cistercian monks from Alcobaça to attend the anniversary celebrations at the Dominican church.

The friars of the Monastery of Batalha also celebrated the offices, response, processions and Masses agreed by those who endowed the chapels. King João I indicated in 1426 that the Dominicans were obliged to pray for his and the queen's souls every day – with two spoken Masses, one Mass of the Holy Spirit and one Mass of St. Mary, while on Thursdays the Holy Spirit was to be sung and the St. Mary spoken, and on Saturdays the St. Mary sung and the Holy Spirit spoken. On Mondays, they were to hold the Office of

the Dead for them and a chanted Requiem Mass, besides the two spoken Masses. "And everyday when they finish the offices, before going to eat, everyone shall come and pray for the queen with cross and holy water and chant a versicle." On the anniversaries of the funerals of these kings, as on All Souls' Day, and on the eighth days, the Dominicans would say "every hour, at Vespers, Matins and all the other Offices of the Dead and two Requiem Masses and the responses, along with the two Masses they must always hold". On the anniversaries of their deaths, the friars of Batalha, the monks of Alcobaça and the others who came to the monastery would recite a Month's Mind for each deceased person besides the Masses and offices they had to celebrate.

In 1499, King Manuel I concluded that the ceremonies for the kings and *infantes* at the monastery would be organised in the following manner:

- 1.º – By order of King João II, a daily sung Mass for all the kings before Prime at the altar of the Chapel of King João I, "and all of the friars of the house are to go there in ordered procession from the sacristy, and after the Mass has been celebrated with suitable solemnity, they shall go in procession to the choir where they shall stay until they have finished Prime, Terce and the daily Mass."
- 2.º – Thirteen funeral processions shall be held every year, two for King João I and his wife, on St. Mary's Day in August and another on All Saints' Day, plus two Month's Minds for their souls; two Month's Minds for the soul of King Duarte, one on St. Mary's Day in September and another on All Saints' Day; two Month's Minds and two funeral processions for King Afonso V and his wife Queen Isabel,

one on St. Augustine's Day and another on All Saints' Day; two Month's Minds and two funeral processions for King João II, one on the day of his death and another on All Saints' Day; one funeral procession for the infante Pedro and a Month's Mind on All Saints' Day; a funeral procession and half a Month's Mind for the *infante* Henrique on All Saints' Day; a funeral procession and half a Month's Mind for the *infante* João on All Saints' Day; a funeral procession and half a Month's Mind for the *infante* Fernando on All Saints' Day.

3.º – During the funeral processions for the kings, four thuribles shall be used at Vespers and the Mass; during those for the princes and *infantes*, two thuribles shall be used.

4.º – During the funeral procession, Vespers and Mass for the kings, 24 torches must be lit; during those for the princes and *infants*, 12 must be lit around the bodies and 2 on the altar.

5.º – Before the altar of the chapter room, where lie King Afonso V and Prince Afonso, six oil lamps, three for each, shall burn continuously.

King Manuel I also stipulated that the friars of Batalha should, by personal intention, recite at all Matins and Compline a specific Marian prayer (“Deus qui de beate Marie virginis vtero verbum tum angelum nunciantem carnem suscipere voluiste presta supplicibus tuis vt qui vere eam geratricem Dey credimus eius apud te intercessionibus adjuvemus”), plus hold a special commemoration for the king on St. Michael's Day and St. Jerome's Day and, also,

at the start of every month, celebrate a sung and officiated Mass accompanied by “organs of the angels”.

An inventory of 1823 mentioned that the Monastery of Batalha had the following pious liturgical duties towards the souls of the kings and royal *infantes* buried there:

Solemnly sung Masses – 419

Spoken Masses – 3 062

Offices with full pomp – 13

Nine-lesson offices with pomp – 7

Funeral processions with pomp and sermon – 4

Versicles – 502

Added to the duties with royal celebrations were the pious commitments assumed by Batalha's friars with private individuals by virtue of the need for money, which was a constant and growing theme for the community from the 1500s onwards in particular and due to the delays in the payment of pensions and stipends by the Crown. In 1823, these contracted liturgical obligations with private individuals were as follows:

Sung Masses – 10

Nine-lesson offices – 3

One-nocturnal offices – 1

Spoken Masses – 1 535

Versicles – 4

SAG

IX.1. The Founder's Chapel

It is at the Founder's Chapel, however, which was already under construction in 1426, and in line with an architectural plan in which the mystical symbology, at this monastery, attains one of its most glorifying and spectacular moments, that the regal memory of the Avis dynasty was most solemnly exalted, with the erecting of the conjugal mausoleum to King João I and Philippa of Lancaster at whose feet was built an altar with a Gothic portable altarpiece which, according to the somewhat excessively mentioned inventory of 1823, contained the images of the apostolate and an altarpiece to the death of Our Lady (Cat.27), all in wood. It cannot, however, be confused with the Gothic altarpiece of the Passion of Christ, obviously, which fortunately is still standing today in the Chapel of Santo Antão of Faniqueira in the vicinities of Batalha, and where it has been since prior to 1650. On this old altarpiece in the King João I and Queen Philippa altar, an image can still be made out, if only partially, on Holland's engraving (fig.16).

Corresponding to the four funeral arcosolia in this chapel, reserved for each of the *infantes* of the Illustrious Generation (Fernando, João and his wife, Beatriz, Henrique and Pedro and his wife, Isabel de Urgel) were stone altars in the eastern wall of the chapel, dedicated, in order, to the Assumption of Our Lady, St. John the Baptist, the *infante* martyr of Fez and St. Michael, respectively. In 1823, one of these altars, though in an extremely ruined state, had a panel of the Cross being taken down. Another altar contained the remains of a wooden altarpiece and a painting of St. Thomas (Cat.28), while another had an altarpiece of the *Infante* Fernando (Cat.26). Still today it is possible to observe various revealing signs on the paving and walls of the edicules: a long platform, at a level just slightly lower than their threshold, allowed access to the altars, above whose negatives can be seen the drilled holes intended for the altarpieces. In its first arrangement (later harmonised with that of the other chapels, which are only known to have had paintings) the chapel of the *infante* Pedro was given different treatment,

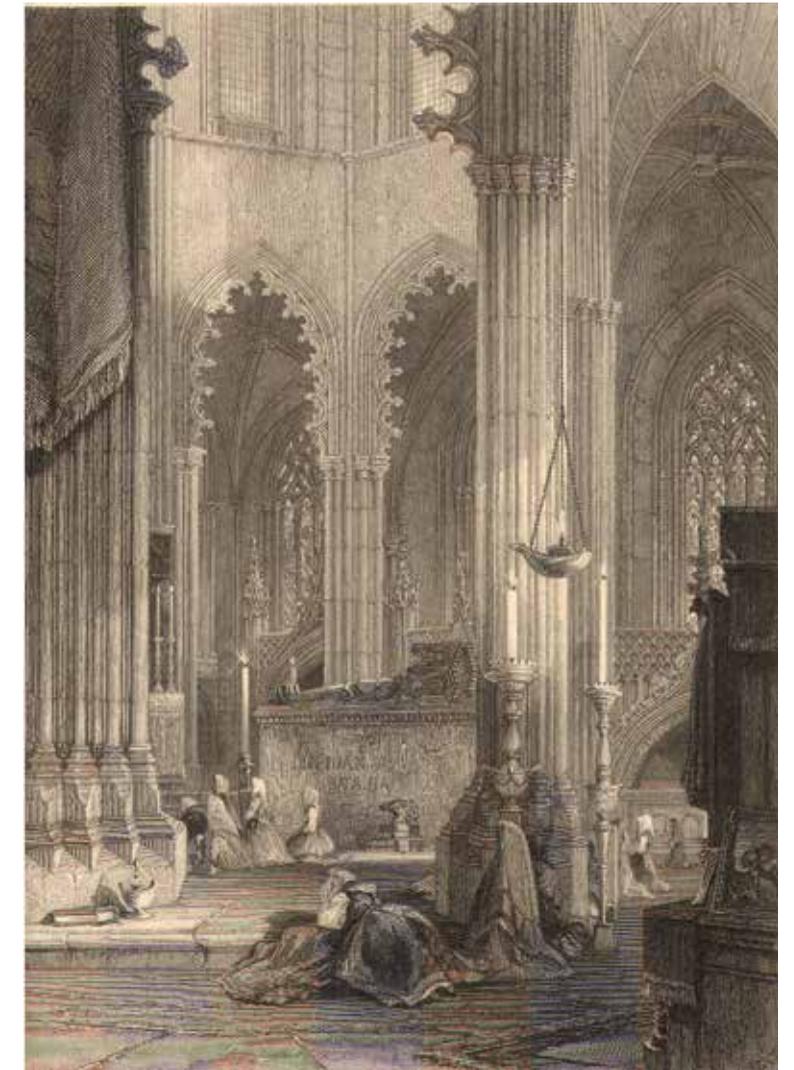


Fig.16 – Women praying the Founder's Chapel, after James Holland, 1839.

probably inspired by the first solutions for the church altars: against a background of decorative mural painting, in the fashion of a textile piece, in whose remains can be seen the infante's heraldic shield, an excellent image of the Archangel Michael stood out, perfectly framed in the Duke of Coimbra's duly documented commission to the artist Gil Eanes (P. DIAS, 1979).

The painting of St. Thomas mentioned above, today in the National Museum of Ancient Art (MNAA), was executed in the 1500s, which is an assumed admission that, at that time, some of the altars and the respective chapel altarpieces were renovated and enhanced. And, in fact, the surviving documentation confirms that that was indeed the case: Leonor, the widow of King João II, commissioned Cristóvão de Figueiredo to produce an altarpiece alluding to the *infante* D. Fernando for his altar, whose central panel depicted, according to father Luís de Sousa's description, the Assumption of Our Lady (FR. L. SOUSA. I 1977: 642) and was surrounded by another nine panels related to the martyrdom, captivation and death of the *infante*. The work, only completed in 1539, 14 years after the death of the queen, was assessed for the high sum of 80,000 reais (D. MARKL, 1995: 274). An engraving published in the *Acta Sanctorum* (T. 23, June 1-5) in 1690 provides an idea of its composition, certainly inspired by the 15th-century triptych, of which it reproduces the central image (instead of the Assumption), but developed over more scenes. In one of the paintings, the *infante* being judged could be seen, while in another he is being chained by his executioner. Two others showed the *infante* performing heavy manual labour beneath his dignity (cleaning the stables and palace). In a further two paintings, the arrival of a nuncio at Court could be observed with letters proposing negotiations for the release of the *infante* and, in yet another, the *infante* kneeling before the apparition of the image of the Virgin sitting on the throne with the Child Jesus. The final three small paintings depicted the *infante's* death, watched by some of his servants, the preparation of his body for burial, and the exhibition of his body at the gates of Fez, despicably and outrageously strung up by his feet. It is possible that the engraving altered the size of

the panels to accommodate captions which did not exist in the painting, resulting in a format taller than it is wide, inappropriate for the space left over by the altar.

The helmets, swords and, respectively, machete and halberd of King João I and II were kept as precious relics in one of the cupboards that existed there, the visual memory of which has come down to us via the drawings of James Murphy from 1789 and Domingos Sequeira from around 1808 (fig.17).

The chapel was given three new entombment arcosolia into which the mortal remains of King Afonso V and his wife, Queen Isabel (plus a child with whom the queen was always associated), King João II and Prince Afonso were placed in 1901 on the initiative of King Carlos I.

We know that other panels and altarpieces existed in this chapel "to King João I" and that various people, in particular members of the royal family, contributed to enriching its artistic contents and liturgical ornaments. It was to this chapel founded by King João I that his daughter, Isabel, the Duchess of Burgundy, sent a Flemish painting in around 1445 (P. FLOR, 2010: 172), which was still to be found there in the early 19th century when the painter Domingos Sequeira made a drawing of it (fig.18). The panel, which measured 1m high by 1.75m wide, was a composition focused on the Virgin enthroned with the Child and flanked by the easily identifiable donors at prayer: Isabella of Portugal, with the "coiffure à cornes" recognised in other depictions, and Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, her husband, on whose chest stands the lamb bent double, hanging from the collar of the Order of the Golden Fleece, seconded by the couple's only surviving son, the future Charles the Bold. Some details are also worthy of note: an illegible shield in the top right quadrant; a small pet dog behind the duchess; two indistinct figures of children who appear beside the hanging strips of the baldachin. By the composition and iconography, as well as the status of the person who commissioned the artwork, this was certainly produced by one of the last painters of the first generation of early Flemish artists, Rogier Van der Weyden

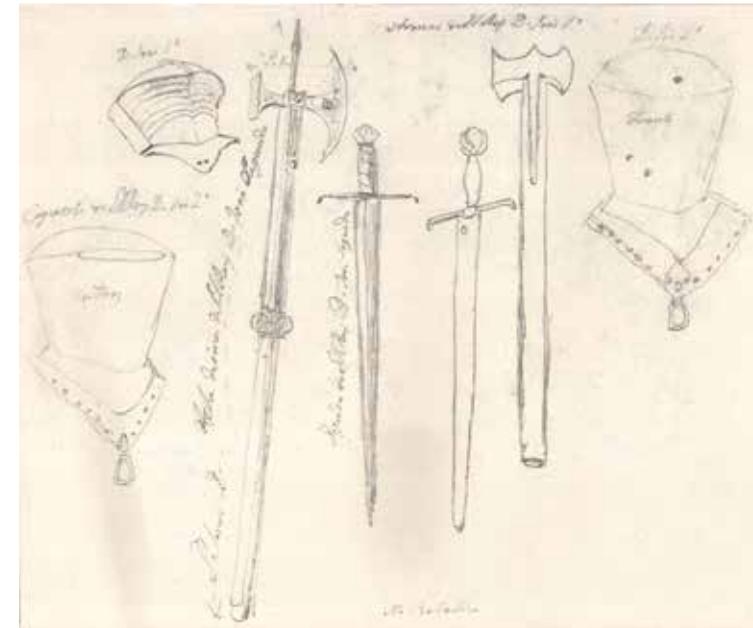


Fig.17 – Domingos António de Sequeira, drawing album, MNAA 3125 Des. Helmets and Arms of King D. João I and King D. João II, c. 1808.
Photograph: ADF/José Pessoa



Fig.18 – Domingos António de Sequeira, drawing album, MNAA, 3125 Des. Sketch of a 15th century altarpiece for Batalha seen by the painter around 1808.
Photograph: ADF/José Pessoa

(D. DE VOS, 1999: 364; L. CAMPBELL and Y. SZAFRAN, 2004: 152) or Petrus Christus.

All of the altars in the Founder's Chapel were very well decorated and endowed with rich objects, sometimes originating from the private chapels of the kings and *infantes* or even given by their descendants and relatives. The sketch book by Domingos António de Sequeira, kept at the National Museum of Ancient Art (MNAA) (MNAA 3125 Des), contains three drawings (fls. 41, verso, 42 and 42, verso) depicting liturgical objects which, on first examination, once belonged to the Monastery of Batalha. On folio 42, however, there appear two goblets with the captions "goblet given by the Queen / D. Dulcia to serve the wife of Sanjo Primeiro at the / High Chapel" and "for use in the private altars". One can immediately see by the date that the items drawn were not intended for Batalha. Despite the fact that at the bottom left of the page the caption "Batalha" can be seen, these Romanesque goblets came from the Monastery of Alcobaça, and are currently kept at the MNAA (MNAA 91 Our and MNAA 89 Our, respectively). As for the provenance of the "Cross [fl. 41, verso] and two candlesticks [fl. 42] / which King João I / took at Aljubarrota / from King João I of Castile" there are fewer initial doubts. N. V. SILVA (1995: 155) considers the manufacture of the cross to be identical to the candlesticks. H. HAHNLOSER and S. BRUGGER-KOCH (1985: 102), however, referred only to the cross, which they considered to be of Catalan manufacture and stonework, dating it to the later 13th century. While it is easy to accept that the late-Gothic crook top which appears in fl. 42 is from Alcobaça, due to its chiefly abbatial connotations, the same cannot be said for the "cruet from the time of the foundation of Batalha" in fl. 42, verso, a sophisticated ornamental item possibly given, as we shall see, under private circumstances for use for the aforementioned purposes. The drawing clearly shows a jug with a lid, with a multi-lobed base and repoussé decoration: a griffin which acts both as a spout and surmounts the shrimp net inscribed on a pearl-like medallion; an eagle and a naked man clutching a staff, on the inner side of strips defined by vertical reliefs. The heraldry indicates that it was a gift from Queen Leonor, the wife

of King João II. The eagle may represent the evangelical and the man (in a simplified version in the drawing, but eloquent in its violent pose), a depiction of wild men, associated with disorder, excess and perversion, that was very common in objects of this nature in the late 15th and early 16th century (J. O. CAETANO, 1995: 152-155). This motif appears on various silver servers from this era using an identical decorative technique. Although bigger and more ostentatious, the jar in the Machado de Castro National Museum (MNMC) (MNMC 6092) is very similar to the type of piece referred to here.

On 27 November 1461, an iron stand belonging to the *infante* Henrique's private chapel was given to Father João Martins, the provisioner of works at the Monastery Batalha, almost certainly to be used for liturgical ceremonies at his chapel in the monastery (*Monumenta Henricina*, 14, doc. 127). Isabel de Urgel also donated three silver goblets to the chapel she decided to found at the monastery in 1466, one of which was contained in her private chapel and the other two probably of similar weight and style as this one. She also gave three silk cloth vestments, with albs and appurtenances, and three silk frontals for the altars (*Monumenta Henricina*, 19, doc. 148).

In memory of his father, the Duke of Coimbra, the *Condestable* Pedro, King of Aragon, left a bequest to the Monastery of Batalha in 1466 of a gold goblet decorated with precious stones and with ampullas or pyxes: "*calicem aureum preciosis lapidibus adornatum, et quasdam etiam canadellas illi similes, quos nos habemus in bonis nostris, adeo ut voluntati Serenissimi infantis et domini domini Petri recolende memorie patris nostri carissimi satisfiat, cuius anima in pace requiescat: quosquidem calicem et canadellas illico eo deferri volumus*" (C. M. VASCONCELOS, 1922: 150-151).

At the funeral of King João I at this monastery a large number of Masses were held, and at the Pontifical Mass, taken by the Bishop of Évora, "many more precious things were given, and with good reason, than had ever been offered before, according to the treasure held by the monastery today" (Rui de Pina, *Crónica de D. Duarte*, Ch. 6).

At the solemn funeral of Prince Afonso in 1491, Rui de Pina notes (*Crónica de D. João II*, Ch. 52) that at the High Mass "the King, Queen, Princess and Duke gave many precious objects of gold and silver, and brocade and silk ornaments for the chapel, as an offering to his soul". When the body of King João II was moved there in 1499, the king, according to Garcia de Resende, gave "a large silver gilt and finely enamelled cross covered in many gems that was said to be worth one thousand cruzados, and a very big silver thurible, and a large basin with its hysopo, all silver gilt, and a cappa with richly brocaded dalmatics, which was the pontifical of the Holy King, all of which together was said to be worth ten thousand cruzados" (*Crónica de D. João II e Miscelânea*, Ch. 234).

The Dominican friar Jerónimo Ramos (*Cronica dos Feitos, Vida e Morte no Iffante Sancto*, Ch. 42 and 43), in reference in 1577 to the liturgy followed in the Masses for the soul of the *infante* St. Fernando, says that "at this his altar and that of his sibling *infantes* and his mother and father, at any of the altars everyday is said Prime, a spoken Mass and, at his father's, the king's, altar a sung Mass with a response at the end, besides the offices celebrated on All Soul's Day, and others with great solemnity. And those of the *infante* St. Fernando are celebrated by the friars of the Monastery of Batalha with brocaded capes in bright colours, decorated with many rich ornaments, which these lords and other princes leave when they die".

SAG and PR

IX.2. Proceeds from the chapels and the administering of worship

Whether because of its royal status or due to the adoption of the conventual regime by the friars of Santa Maria da Vitória, who, despite attempts during the reign of King Manuel I, were never forced to adopt the Dominican reform of observance, kings and *infantes* richly endowed the chapels they founded at the monastery.

King João I, in around 1419, endowed the funeral chapel of his deceased queen, Philippa of Lancaster, with objects worth 1,500 gold ducats, even though Pope Martin V had determined that the value of the objects in the chapel should not exceed 800 florins. In 1443, Isabel de Barcelos, the widow of the *infante* João, master of the Order of St. James, who had died the year before, endowed his chapel with objects valued at 1,000 escudos of gold, or around 140,000 reais. In 1444, the regent, *infante* Pedro, endowed the chapel dedicated to his brother, the *infante* Fernando, the martyr of Fez, with objects worth up to 60,000 reais brancos and, in 1446, the *infantas* Beatriz and Filipa, daughters of the *infante* João, master of St. James, mentioned above, added more assets to their father's chapel worth 2,000 gold escudos, equivalent to approximately 520,000 reais.

In 1451, King Afonso V established a pension at the Monastery of Batalha worth 72,851 reais for expenses on the chapels of his ancestors entombed there. In 1460, the *infante* Henrique endowed his private chapel, where three daily Masses were supposed to be chanted every day, with 16 silver marks, which in 1462 were calculated to be worth 1,200 reais per mark, taken from the rents on his Tarouca and Valdigem properties, which provided a net income of approximately 19,200 to 20,000 reais (*Monumenta Henricina*, 14, doc. 88). King Afonso V, "the African", considering the amount insufficient, added another 4,000 reais in 1474, raising it again in 1499 to 36,180 reais. King João II, in turn, endowed his father's chapel in 1484 with an annual pension of 5,500 reais and that of his grandfather, the *infante* Pedro, the old regent, of 4,774 reais

in 1485. In 1499, King Manuel I, after assessing all of the pensions and stipends established until then for the royal chapels founded therein, decided on the payment of an annual pension to the monastery of 243,432 reais.

The administration of the patrimony of some of these chapels was confided to laymen. King João I, in his will of 1426, decided that since the patrimony belonged to the friars, they should bring two lay men, born in the kingdom and residents in the then town of Leiria, of “good repute and conscience”, one to act as provisioner and the other as notary, to administer it, so that the resulting proceeds should sustain the members of the community.

In 1466, the Duchess of Coimbra, *infanta* Isabel de Urgel, the widow of the *infante* Pedro, who wished to be buried in Batalha alongside her husband dressed in the habit of St. Francis as a shroud, decided that on the day of her death 366 Masses should be celebrated for her soul. Three daily Masses were to be held at the monastery, two for the soul of her husband and one for her children, and these were to be paid for from the income of assets to be acquired in Lisbon which would produce annual proceeds of 20,000 reais. The pious duchess also decided that the provisioner of this chapel – namely Diogo Afonso, a servant of the *infante* Pedro,

followed by Pêro Botelho and then the canons of the Monastery of Santo Elói de Lisboa – should pay a poor man to live by the monastery and attend the daily Masses requested and verify whether the friars were diligent in their respective celebrations (*Monumenta Henricina*, 14, doc. 148).

There is no record, however, of the presence of laymen as procurators or administrators of the patrimony of the monastery and its chapels. On the contrary, what has come down to us from the convent’s archive provides evidence that the friars themselves assumed the management of all of the patrimony and took constant measures to collect the royal stipends and pensions allocated to them, and which they managed to do so amidst difficulty and delay, causing great upset to the house’s upkeep. This was a constant feature in the history of the community, which, at any moment, could be deprived of part of its treasure, as occurred in the 1540s when King João III melted down most of its silverware to mint new coins in exchange for a financial stipend which only started to be paid properly during the reign of King Filipe I.

SAG

X. Popular devotion: St. Anthony, the *infante* Fernando and King João II

The map of the altars and chapels of the Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória evolved over time and in terms of locations. The information preserved about these places of worship has, however, revealed itself to be incomplete and frequently insufficient. Little do we truly know of the reasons for the commissioning of the large altarpiece and altar of Jesus, which stood for centuries by the northern wall of the transept.

Nineteenth-century engravings show the lower social classes praying at the altars of the Founder's Chapel and, also, in one case, at an old altarpiece and altar dedicated to St. Anthony. The tomb and altar of the *infante* Fernando, the holy martyr of Fez, was first the focus of cult adoration by the conventual community. His remains, venerated as sacred relics, arrived at the monastery at two different times. The first, in 1451, when the *infante* Henrique brought several canopic jars to the Founder's Chapel with some of the unfortunate *infante's* entrails; the second, more solemn and definitive, in 1472 when his bones were transferred there. While efforts were being made in Rome in the 1400s to have the *infante* officially canonised, an unofficial cult was begun at Batalha, whereby the offices and a Mass in his honour with the Church martyrs ritual was celebrated, complete with an altarpiece with his portrait on the respective altar.

His life and example were established, in Portuguese and Latin, by pious hagiographers, mainly the biography written by his secretary, the Benedictine monk João Álvares, later re-edited by the Dominican friar Jerónimo Ramos and emphasising the miraculous popular sentiment surrounding his remains, venerated, as we have noted, as relics. His cult was, however, forbidden by the Bishop of

Leiria, Martim Afonso Mexia, in the early 17th century, though this would not seem to have affected his popularity, since then, essentially amongst the common people.

The cult of the "Holy Body" of King João II had some success, though more amongst civilians and politicians than the religious and for a relatively short period of time. Something similar would have been expected with regard to the *infante* Fernando, but it does not seem to have occurred, or at least there does not appear to be any objective archive material to support it. Of this underlying veneration of the monarchs buried here, however, only the *infante* Fernando managed to resist the passing of time. Not even the supposed wax miracles, such as that in the Masses for the soul of King João I in Lisbon, recorded in a document from 1437, were powerful enough to induce altar veneration around other royal figures at Batalha.

The devotion of St. Anthony, though little documented, has old rural roots around Leiria. In 1211, St. Anthony was already the patron saint of a chapel on the outskirts of this medieval town. A new chapel, still of late-medieval origins, was dedicated to him near Faniqueira, and a private chapel by the entrance to the Unfinished Chapels (*fig.19*). An epigraphed inscription from the early 16th century alludes, we believe, to the same saint, a sign that at this time he was already venerated there. He is an important saint for the institutional and spiritual identities of the monastic movements. He carries a Tau-shaped shepherds' crook and frequently features at mendicant monasteries such as Batalha, where a stained glass window was dedicated to him in the high altar in around 1514 .



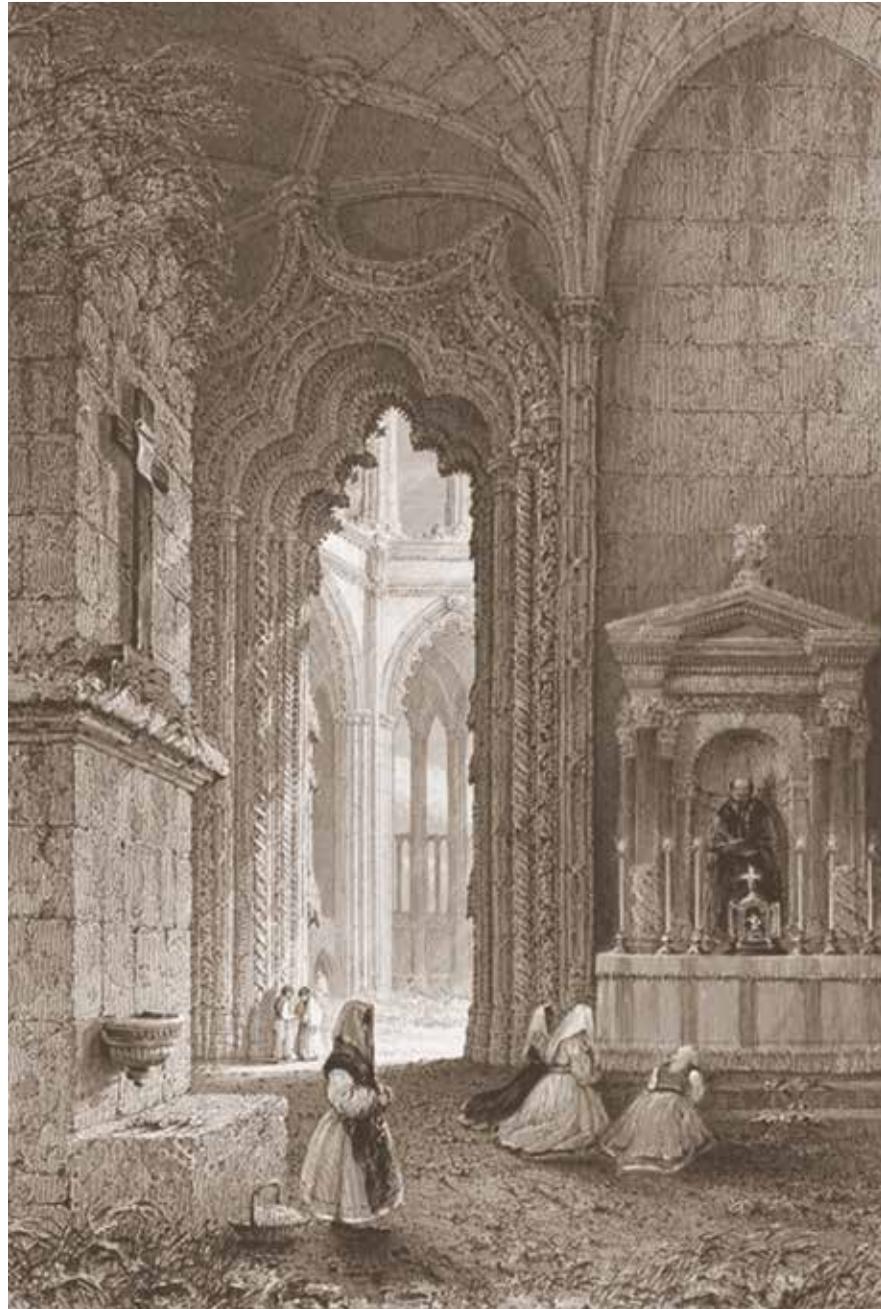


Fig.19 – Former Santo Antão altar and altarpiece, in the vestibule of the Imperfect Chapels, after James Holland, 1839.

A target of popular devotion, in the past and still today, is the small chapel or oratory of Nossa Senhora do Caminho (fig.20), incorporated into a section of the old monastic enclosure closest to the disappeared Church of Santa Maria-a-Velha and the convent portal.

But it was the devotion and all of the Marian spirituality around the title of Our Lady of Rosary, depicted on the stained glass windows in the high chapel, sacristy and other points around the monastery, since vanished as we have seen, that managed to achieve the greatest reach and impact outside the convent walls, decisively influencing the manifestations of piety amongst the common people and also amongst the secular and regular ecclesiastical hierarchy throughout the region surrounding Batalha. This resulted in the multiplication in the 16th and 17th centuries of, above all,

churches, altars, confraternities and celebrations dedicated to this Marian cult.

The Dominican friars propagated the veneration of Our Lady of the Rosary by, as we mentioned above, hosting the confraternity by the same name at the monastery. The monastery was also home to another confraternity dedicated to Jesus. In the parish church of Santa Cruz da Batalha, the Confraternities of Fiéis Defuntos, S. Sebastião and the Santíssima Trindade, were established after 1512. These were later joined by that of the Santíssimo Sacramento. The Confraternity of the Hospital de Nossa Senhora da Vitória, founded in 1427, evolved into the Confraternity of Misericórdia in 1714. On the outskirts of the town there were others, above all that of Defuntos, of which the following were of note: Santa Iria da Torre de Magueixa, Santo Hilário de Alcanada, Santo Antão da



Fig.20 – Chapel of Nossa Senhora do Caminho, in 2009.
Photograph: ADF/José Paulo Ruas

Faniqueira, S. Bento da Cidade, S. João Batista da Canoeira, S. Sebastião do Freixo, Nossa Senhora do Rosário and Nossa Senhora do Fetal, in Reguengo, and Nossa Senhora da Conceição, in Brancas.

In 1677, the Dominican friars erected a chapel dedicated to Our Lady of the Angels of Good Success in Quinta do Pinheiro, while in Quinta da Várzea one was erected to St. Gonçalo. Besides these, and certainly out of inspiration for the spirituality of the Dominican friars, in the near vicinity of the monastery chapels were founded dedicated to patron saints such as The Good Jesus (Golpilheira), Our Lady of Conception, in Brancas, in 1572, The Pregnant Virgin, in Bico dos Sachos, in 1623, Our Lady of Hope, in Canoeira, in around 1550, St. Anthony, in Rebolaria, erected around 1630, St. Sebastian, in Casal do Freixo, St. Mary Magdalene, in Olivais (today the town's cemetery), belonging to the convent, St. John, in the Quinta de Sebastião Soares Evangelho, not to mention the older St. Benedict of Cidade and St. Anthony of Faniqueira.

In 1721, several important processions took place in Batalha involving the community of friars. That of St. Sebastian, on 14 August, that dedicated to King João I, which snaked from the parish church to the convent on 23 April, that dedicated to St. George, in memory of the victory over the Castilians, that of the Custodian Angel, on 20 July, which headed from the parish church towards the Founder's Chapel, and also a procession in memory of the acclamation of King João IV.

On the day of the Holy Trinity, a great celebration took place with the giving of alms, in which, as the notary of the Procuratorship of Leiria, Cristóvão de Sá Nogueira, notes in the same year of 1721, the Dominicans took part: "the pious headed in procession to the foot of an oak tree with a raised cross outside the town, where a table was placed and much bread and cooked meat served to all those who desired it and a man climbed the tree with a sack of food parcels and threw them to the people down below. This procession has been held for many years in these parts to protect against the insects which destroy the vines and when, one year, it was not, a large number walked from the entrance of the convent to the oak tree."

While Batalha was predominantly an exercise in royal worship, associated with the culture of celebrating the funerals of monarchs of the first generations of the Avis dynasty, it must be recognised that other legacies are also a part of the monument's history. The Chapel of Mártires/S. Miguel, the pantheon of several members of the Sousas de Arronches family, is the most obvious example, for its monumentality, of the presence of other patrons responsible for sponsoring the monastery's artwork. The contribution of other members of Portugal's courtly nobility, chiefly the Coutinho and Albuquerque families or servants of the houses of the *infantes*, such as Diogo Gonçalves de Travaços, entombed in the naves and chapels of the Dominican church, still remains unclear.

The conventual community of friars preachers itself was the sponsor or responsible for much of the artwork produced as a result of its liturgical norms and principles and its monastic culture, which favoured a modern approach to spiritual horizons incorporated into the new movements of pious practices of *devotio moderna* – preaching, Christ centism and intense Eucharistic devotion, the Marian devotion of the rosary, biblical study and preaching of the Gospel – and, later, of the Counter Reformation.

These choices extended to the architecture, which, as we have written, assumed a mental and spiritual dimension, and not just physical or material, that covered the fields of liturgy (bearing in mind the importance of chanting and music in the friars' daily life), handwritten and printed books and engraving, sculpture, painting, stained glass, jewellery, tapestries, tiles and, finally, other artisanal and mechanical arts and crafts such as the casting of bells and the manufacture of mechanical clocks, furniture, garments, cutlery and crockery and religious artefacts (beads, amulets and small stone saints made above all of high quality jet from the mines in Batalha).

Most of this heritage has been lost or scattered out of an official policy to erase the memory of the convent and to glorify exclusively its Gothic legacy, in favour of a renewed formula for the collective imagination: that of the nation's civic altar. For this reason, the Monastery of Batalha, as an architectural organism which created a distinct realm of its own, was until very recently practically unknown.

If we explore the meandering course of this lack of knowledge more deeply, we see that historical research itself was affected, at least in terms of the lack of initiatives, by ideological constraints dating back to the end of the *Ancien Régime*, liberalism, Portugal's first republic and the New State. It is our belief that a new approach can

be achieved through awareness of this fact and by rediscovering Batalha's religious memory. Its signs, as this exhibition shows, are still numerous.

SAG and PR

Cat. 1

SUN DIAL

Date/period: undetermined

Technique: engraved and painted limestone

*Dimensions
(height x radius):*

Owner: Portuguese government / Direção-Geral do Património Cultural

Location: Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, Batalha; south portal of the church; south face of the eastern buttress

Description and commentary:

The face of the sun dial comprises 2 concentric semi-circles and 11 radii carved directly onto the building's limestone ashlar and surmounted by a painted band of red ochre. The figures denoting the hours, in Roman numerals, are painted in black and there is another set of presumed numbers, apparently Arabic, painted in red ochre outside the former and now largely illegible. In place of the *gnomon* there is now an iron rod.

SAG e PR



Photograph: Sérgio Barroso

Cat.2

SUN DIAL

Date/period: undetermined

Technique: lowered and engraved limestone

*Dimensions
(height x radius):*

Owner: Portuguese government / Direção-Geral do Património Cultural

Location: Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, Batalha; refectory; south face of the southern buttress

Description and commentary:

The dial comprises 1 sunken semi-circle and 13 radii carved directly onto the building's limestone ashlar. There are no traces of the numerals. On the same ashlar on the right can be seen the identical semi-circle of an unfinished dial. As the existence of more than 12 radii is an anomaly, it is possible that the unfinished dial was intended to be carved with the correct number and therefore was never used.

PR



Photograph: Sérgio Barroso

Cat.3

CHAPTER HOUSE BELL

Date/period: 1645

Technique: cast bronze

*Dimensões
(alt. x diâmetro):* 108 x 114 cm

Weight: 840 kg

Owner: Portuguese government / Direção-Geral do Património Cultural

Location: Mosteiro de Santa Maria da Vitória, Batalha; chapter house bell tower

Description and commentary:

Roman-type bell, with a bent crown, iron clapper and holder tuned to F.¹³. The bell has two bands of inscriptions and decoration on its north and south sides. This decoration is based on squares with phytomorphic elements in low relief, used individually to mark the separation between words in the inscriptions, or juxtaposed to form compositions. The inscription on the upper band reads as follows: ESTESYNO ◊ DEV ◊ EL REY DOM ◊ MANOEL ◊ NAERA DE ◊ 1501 (This bell was given by King Manuel in the year 1501 AD). On the lower band it reads: DENOVOSEFVNDYV ◊ ◊ NA ERA DE 1645 (It was recast in the year 1645). On the south-facing side it reads: AVEMARIA. The north side shows a Cross of Calvary with two nails corresponding to the hands and another to the feet of Christ depicted in an almond-like form with a decoration identical to the other motifs. The bell shows extensive cracks from the rim to the shoulder on the south-facing side.

PR

13 – This information and the one referring to weight was obtained from the relationship between height to the crown and diameter of the bottom. Cf. <http://www.jeronimo braga.com.pt/>. Accessed on September 20 2013.



Photograph: Sérgio Barroso

Cat.4

CLOCK TOWER BELL

<i>Date/period:</i>	1784
<i>Technique:</i>	cast bronze
<i>Dimensões</i> <i>(alt. x diâmetro):</i>	80 X 103 cm
<i>Weight:</i>	540 kg
<i>Owner:</i>	Portuguese government / Direção-Geral do Património Cultural
<i>Location:</i>	Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, Batalha; clock tower

Description and commentary:

Roman-type bell, with a bent crown, tuned to A sharp.¹⁴ The bell has two bands of inscriptions and decoration on its north and south sides. This decoration is based on squares and triangles with stars in low relief, used individually as the background for the characters and to mark the separation between words in the inscriptions, or juxtaposed to form compositions. The bell has three bands. The upper and lower ones contain inscriptions; the upper and middle ones present lace decoration, which in the case of the former is particularly developed. The inscription on the upper band reads as follows: NOSSA □ SENHORA □ □ DA UITORIA □ □ DA BATALHA □ □ □ (Our Lady of the Victory of Batalha). That of the lower band reads: ESTE □ SYNO □ MANDOU □ FAZER □ OMT □ R P PRIOR □ FREY □ JOZE □ DE S □ THOMAZ □ VASCONCELLOS □ ANNO DE 1784 □ □ (This bell was commissioned by the very reverend prior Frey Joze de S. Thomaz Vasconcellos in 1784). One of the sides of the body of the bell shows a Cross of Calvary with a nimbus and the other a monstrance with an

14 – This information and the one referring to weight was obtained from the relationship between height to the crown and diameter of the bottom. Cf. <http://www.jeronimo Braga.com.pt/>. Accessed on September 20 2013.

emblematic image of the Convent of Batalha, consisting of the royal coat of arms prior to the heraldic reform of 1485 above the cross of Avis supported by the assisting figure of a Dominican saint, enclosed by the inscription, in tiny gothic letters, : “hac : est : victoria : qui : vinc[it] / mundum : fides : nostra”.¹⁵ This is a quote from the 1st letter of St. John 5, 4 “ ... Et haec est victoria, quae vincit mundum, fides nostra” (And this is the victory which conquers the world, our faith). It is of extraordinary interest because it is a rare emblematic image of the Convent of Batalha produced from a moulding of the 15th-century bell and included in the mould of the new bell, as commissioned. The general state of conservation of the bell is good, despite the rusting of the iron rods introduced into the crown when the new clock was installed in the tower in 1889 at the same time as the system of support and bell ringing was reconfigured.

PR



Photograph: Sérgio Barroso

15 – Reading and identification by Saul António Gomes. Legibility was affected by successive moulding from a former 15th century bell.

Cat.5

MECHANISM OF THE CHURCH TOWER CLOCK

<i>Date/period:</i>	latter half of the 15 th century (?)
<i>Technique:</i>	cast iron
<i>Dimensões</i> <i>(height x width x depth):</i>	175 X 160 X 100,5 cm
<i>Owner:</i>	Portuguese government / Direção-Geral do Património Cultural
<i>Provenance:</i>	Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, Batalha; clock tower
<i>Location:</i>	Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, Batalha; D. Afonso V Cloister; north gallery of the upper floor

Description and commentary:

A cage clock of remarkable size already including hourly striking train pallets. The cage, a monumental work of iron forging, is made of four main sections 25 mm wide and trimmed upper arrows. It is aesthetically pleasing and markedly late medieval in style. By the upper pegs can be seen various chisel marks which appear at first sight to be artistic, but are in fact connected to its mounting. They are not uniform, which is an undeniable sign of various attempts at restoration and the re-use of materials over the centuries of its operation.

This was a simple clock with an hourly movement and a striking mechanism controlled by a count wheel that allowed the clock to make only one strike per hour of the day without repetition. It was not connected to a dial. The pallets worked vertically, activated by a fly on the second mechanism. The movement is extremely simple and very functional. It is controlled by an enormous escapement wheel measuring 325 mm in diameter and with 25 teeth. The escapement

wheel is controlled by a recoil, which was first documented in 1680. Attached to it is a 7-pin birdcage.

The loop wheel is 395 mm in diameter and has 56 teeth, moving in steps of 22 mm, and, coupled on the same side, is the 15-pin birdcage. The great wheel, with 120 teeth and steps of 22 mm, measures 875 mm in diameter. On the same axis as this wheel is the very decayed wooden barre for the weight. The weight was lifted manually via an auxiliary wheel measuring 780 mm in diameter.

The pendulum system – spring, a pendulum rod and a bob – no longer exists, nor does the escape wheel.

The hourly striking train – or mechanism controlling the ring of the bell, in other words – which has vanished but is easy to reconstruct, would have been fantastically functional and simple.

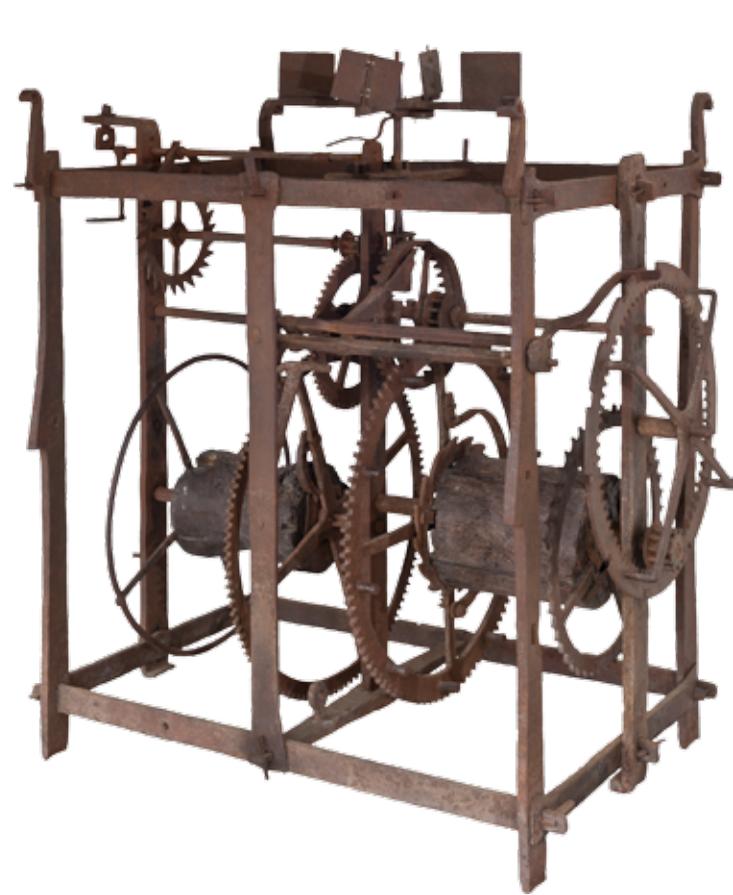
Activated by the striking pin on the great wheel of the going train, as the hour approached, a connecting arm would raise the lock on the fly and allow the striking train to prepare itself. At the precise moment, the lock would be raised to its highest point at the same time as the lock on the count wheel, outside the clock, and the weight would set the mechanism in motion. This would activate the lever attached to the clapper as many times as the count wheel required.

The set of gears in the hourly striking train is impressive, with the 100-tooth gear wheel attached to the main barre measuring a diameter of 890 mm, with huge steps of 27 mm and teeth with a thickness of 15 mm; it is a wheel fit to last a thousand years. Only the fly is larger, with a step of around 30 mm, despite its smaller diameter of 370 mm.

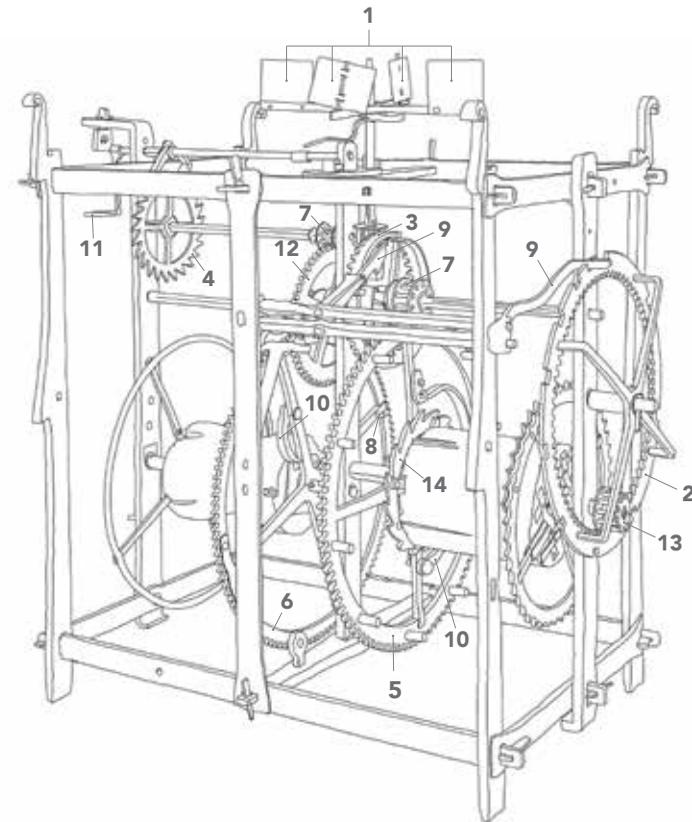
These two wheels bear the heaviest loads in a tower clock of this size: the great wheel bears the weight of the hours and the activation of the bell clapper. The fly connects the downward movement of the weight and all of the accelerating potential it has on the mechanism,

whose rapid braking is alleviated purely by means of the pallets and the fly in the middle of this mechanism, working as a genuine gearbox. There are unusual projections on the four main parts of the cage frame. Could the clock have been suspended on a wooden frame? And would it have been in the Torre da Cegonha (Stork Tower) like the current clock, installed in 1889? Or would it have been somewhere else in the monastery?

HN



Photograph: ADF/José Paulo Ruas



Drawing: Nidia Vieira

1 - Hourly striking train pallet; 2 - Count wheel; 3 - Fly wheel; 4 - Escapement wheel; 5 - Great wheel of the hourly striking train; 6 - Great wheel of the going train; 7 - Birdcage; 8 - Striking pin; 9 - Going train lock; 10 - Striking train lock; 11 - Pendulum rod hanger; 12 - Secondary wheel; 13 - Count wheel pinion; 14 - Lock wheel.

Cat.6

JESUS ALTARPIECE

Date/period: c. 1595-1610

Workshop: unknown

Technique: carved limestone; oil on wood

Owner: Diocese of Lisboa

Provenance: Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, Batalha; church; old altar of Jesus (top north of the transept)

Current location: church of Nossa Senhora da Conceição (former Convent of Trinas do Rato, in Lisboa); high chapel

Bibliography: S. A. GOMES, 1997: 239, 284-285; V. SERRÃO, 1988: 72-73; S. R. C. VIEIRA, 2008: 160-161. *Inventory record of the Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória da Batalha* at the Instituto da Habitação e Reabilitação Urbana (IHRU), consulted on 16 October 2013, at http://www.monumentos.pt/Site/APP_PagesUser/SIPAArchives.aspx?id=092910cf-8eaa-4aa2-96d9-994cc361eaf1&nipa=IPA.00004043

Description and commentary:

This altarpiece, which served as a place of prayer with one of the invocations of the Order of Preachers, occupied the north wall of the transept of the church in the Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória until 1946, when it was dismantled and moved to the high altar of the church of the former Convent of Trinas do Rato, which is now the church of Nossa Senhora da Conceição. The move was supervised

by the General Directorate of National Buildings and Monuments (DGEMN). The altarpiece is made from oolitic limestone from the region of Batalha and acts as a frame for all seven oil paintings on wood. The entire set fits within the Mannerist style, connected to the Italian and Flemish schools, and the doctrinal guidelines emanating from the Council of Trent.

The architectural and decorative erudition conveyed through treaties and prints of Italian-Flemish origin circulating as models reproduced in the taste and the interpretation of more or less erudite artists and customers is clear. A good example of this information is the architectural structure of the façade composed from basic elements such as columns, entablatures, corbel, pinnacle, pedestals and typical decorative compositions. The analytical and clear departure from the Renaissance canons, the disproportion and the ambiguity arising therefrom, the severity tempered with ornamental passages where the metallic aspect of *ferroneries* and the work on “hides” merge with delicate stylized windings and vegetable motifs and transmit unrest and disruption that pervade all Mannerist art and its time.

The altarpiece rises from a double bottom floor, consisting of a stool and the predella to the next floor, the most scaled and defining of the upper floors, the third and the pinnacle. The workmanship of the stone work is delicate and of noted mastery, especially the second row. The lower thirds of the columns of the Ionic and Corinthian order, the predella panels, panes, “fittings”, “leather” and volutes reveal the information that arrived in Portugal from Antwerpian prints and Italian treaties.

In seven paintings what mainly stands out is the difference in the “hands”. The confrontation of news relating to them, from the seventeenth to the twentieth, revealed that it could have been the original set. The Crucified in the painting of *Magdalene Meditation*

over Christ's example, a theme related to the *Sensitive Pain* and *aftermath* of Death as redeeming the soul, so loved by Father Luis of Granada, is a cutout affixed to the painting. The corbel stone in the centre of the base of the predella, housed at the time, a sculpture of Christ on the cross referred by Father Luís de Sousa. Also noteworthy are the best painting *Mater Dolorosa* and St. John the Evangelist. However, all of them (the aforementioned and also the *Prayer in the Garden (the Comfort of the Angel)*, *On the way to the Calvary*, the *Crowning with Thorns* and the *Flagellation*) show traces of Italian Mannerism under the disciplinary action of Trent through the clearance of the scenic construction of unnecessary notes for the message, completing the painting almost entirely with the "good example" (biblical figures or scenes) in impressive fashion, the ambiguous nature of the composition, the striking diagonal organization scheme transmitting a busy scene, of elongated and figures and in *contrapposto*, others almost cubic bulky, idealized features and a colour palette that ranges from warm colours to acidic blue, crimson and violet.

Amaro do Vale, a royal painter who worked on the altarpiece of the chapel of the Blessed Sacrament of the Cathedral of Leiria (c. 1605-6), at the request of Bishop Martim Afonso Mexia, drew powerful figures and drapery and created a vibrant modelling with light and shadow. Simão Rodrigues also painted the main altarpiece of the See and the churches of St. Dominic of Elvas and Lisbon and was one of the most popular painters of his time. His long-time, younger companion, Domingos Vieira Serrão, a noble knight of His Majesty's House, *familiar* of the Holy Office and royal painter, born in Tomar for whose convent he worked, was also involved in major contracts. They may all have shaped the paintings in question, although at different stages of their professional lives.

APA



Photograph: Hermano Noronha

Cat.7

NOSSA SENHORA DO ROSÁRIO ALTARPIECE

<i>Date/period:</i>	1775 (word carving)
<i>Artist:</i>	António Pereira da Silva
<i>Gilder:</i>	unknown
<i>Technique:</i>	carved and gilded wood
<i>Owner:</i>	Diocese of Guarda
<i>Provenance:</i>	Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, Batalha; church; Chapel of Nossa Senhora do Rosário
<i>Location:</i>	Church of S. Martinho, parish church of Covilhã; high chapel
<i>Bibliography:</i>	S. A. GOMES, 1997: 294-296, 303-306; S. R. C. VIEIRA, 2008: 157. <i>Inventory record of the Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória da Batalha</i> at the Instituto da Habitação e Reabilitação Urbana (IHRU), consulted on 16 October 2013, at http://www.monumentos.pt/Site/APP_PagesUser/SIPA.aspx?id=4061

Description and commentary:

According to a photograph from the former DGEMN, dated to the first decade of the twentieth century, the altarpiece in the Chapel of Nossa Senhora do Rosário was a large piece in the Rococo style, appropriate to the architectural space of the chapel. Its design is concave, with columns and pilasters placed on different planes, creating a vanishing point in the area of the tribune. This was sealed off by a curtain, certainly hiding the throne intended to display the Holy Sacrament. The base supporting the altarpiece is structurally



Photograph: IHRU

identical to the predella, thus following the recessed movement of columns and pilasters. Both the altar base and the predella bear rectangular panels, abundantly ornamented in the latter. The body of the altar is formed by two pairs of plain columns decorated with floral elements interspersed by pilasters with niches for statuary. These house freestanding sculptures on pedestals, covered by a small canopy. A well-dimensioned ornamented frieze highlights the entablature. On the outer boundaries of the entablature two bonfires were included to enliven the space. The attic imposes its grandeur, crowning the impressive altarpiece. The intensely vertical structure, pointing to the stony ceiling of the chapel, presents asymmetric and flaming decorative elements, to which architectural fragments were added, on which freestanding sculptures are supported.

The decor of the space is complemented by the recurrence of C- and S-shaped ornaments.

This altarpiece dedicated to Nossa Senhora do Rosário fits perfectly into the parameters of the Rococo style in Portuguese wood carving, which was popular in Portugal during the second half of the 18th century. The features described above include a slender, concave structure with plain columns interspersed with pilasters and the use of key ornamentation from this period, such as asymmetric shell-shaped forms, C- and S-shaped ornaments, the light and stylized floral species and human figures at the top.

SF

Cat.8

ALTARPIECE IN THE CHAPEL OF S. MIGUEL

<i>Date/period:</i>	1691/1692
<i>Artist:</i>	Royal architect João Antunes (1643-1712) – attribution of the general design
<i>Technique:</i>	polychrome stone inlay
<i>Owner:</i>	Diocese of Leiria-Fátima
<i>Provenance:</i>	Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, Batalha; church; chapel of S. Miguel
<i>Location:</i>	Church of Exaltação da Santa Cruz or parish church of Batalha
<i>Bibliography:</i>	<i>A Igreja Matriz da Batalha</i> , 1938; A. AYRES DE CARVALHO, 1962: 213-214; M. J. P. COUTINHO, 2001: 545-552; idem, 2002: 112-116; idem, 2006, 59-61; idem, 2010. Vol I: 329-330; idem, 2012: 93-103; <i>Resumo da Fundação do Real Mosteiro da Batalha e dos Túmulos Reaes e Particulares que alli existem</i> , 1869: 7-8. <i>Igreja Paroquial da Batalha / Igreja de Santa Cruz</i> (Architectural heritage Inventory record no. PT021004010002). Lisbon: Direcção-Geral dos Edifícios e Monumentos Nacionais / Instituto da Habitação e da Reabilitação Urbana, 2005, consulted on 27 May 2013, at http://www.monumentos.pt/Site/APP_PagesUser/SIPA.aspx?id=4060

Description and commentary:

The structure of the altarpiece present in the Church of Exaltação da Santa Cruz, Batalha, and which was formerly located in the Chapel of S. Miguel, in the Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, also in Batalha, derives from a straight plan. With a detached front from the pedestals, the first level of this structure features an altar stool and predella, the latter with a recently juxtaposed tabernacle, as well as four corbels that confer rhythm to the set and support four spiralled columns finished by Corinthian capitals. These columns give dynamics to the three niches with devotional imagery and which are distributed hierarchically, with the largest one at the centre and the smaller ones siding the above referred central niche. This set, characterising the second level of the altarpiece is surmounted by three cartouches also distributed hierarchically, divided by pinnacles.

Concerning the decoration, it presents a diversity of variations on the vegetal theme that runs along the front part, sides, stool and predella, along with other small areas, as well as geometric decorations, present at the base of the sides, the frames of the niches, inside the smaller two and at the top. The coat of arms of the Sousa family, also present in the front part, aligns the composition that, as mentioned earlier, is richly decorated with acanthus ornamentation.

As to its origins, the structure was probably commissioned around 1691 / 1692 to the chapel of S. Miguel in the Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, by D. Henrique de Sousa (1626-1706), 3rd Count of Miranda and 1st Marquis of Arronches, and/or by D. Luís de Sousa (1630-1702), Bishop of Lisbon and Cardinal of Portugal, both sons of D. Diogo Lopes de Sousa (c. 1595-1640), 2nd Count of Miranda, whose remains rest inside the tomb located in the same chapel. The relation between the commissioner and the artist that existed between Cardinal D. Luís

de Sousa and royal architect João Antunes (1643-1712), one of the most famous designers of works of this type, supports the attribution of this piece of art.

In the 1930's, the same structure was transferred to the church of Exaltação da Santa Cruz, the main church of Batalha, during a campaign by the former DGEMN, thus returning this altarpiece to worship and prayer.

MJPC



Photograph: ADF/José Paulo Ruas

Cat.9

SACRISTY WOOD CARVING AND FURNITURE

Date/period: wood carving and original chest of drawers – 1778;
restoration of the chest of drawers and floorboards – 1880

Artist: António Pereira da Silva (carving of the back panels and original chest of drawers now disappeared). Current chest of drawers and floorboards in the sacristy made by the master carpenters during the restoration work on the monastery from 1840-1900. The carpentry in the sacristy was carried out more precisely in 1880.

Technique: carved and gilded wood and cabinetmaking

Owner: Portuguese government / Direção-Geral do Património Cultural

Location: Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, Batalha; sacristy

Bibliography: S. A. G. GOMES, 1997: 303-312;
C. M. SOARES, 2001: 108

Description and commentary:

The current chests of drawers in the sacristy of the Monastery of Batalha were made as part of the furniture produced at the end of the 19th century. They are simple and square-cut in design and have four drawers each, emphasising their utilitarian function and dispensing with the artistry of marquetry or carving. These chests of drawers replaced the former ones made by the master carver Antonio Pereira da Silva, who also made the existing back panels and possibly also the altarpiece in the sacristy. The back panels crowning the chests of drawers follow the conventions of the rococo style. Their structure

is organised around large frames painted to imitate marble. These are adorned at the top by shell-like elements, with a feather at the centre. The structure of the back panel framing the borders includes decorative features mostly composed of flames, garlands of flowers and shell-like decorative elements. As for the altarpiece, it falls within the same chronological and stylistic parameters as the back-panels. The structure is convex with two smooth columns framing a screen of Our Lady of the Rosary. Noteworthy is the attic of the altarpiece with a well-sized nimbus in the centre. Laterally and on the entablature there are architectural fragments and flowers vases. At the top, and closing the altarpiece structure, is the recognised ornamental composition of a large plume in the centre, which seems to irradiate the whole decoration: shell-shaped forms, garlands of flowers and small scrolls.

SF



Photograph: Sérgio Barroso

Cat.10

NOSSA SENHORA DA PIEDADE (OUR LADY OF MERCY)

<i>Date/period:</i>	mid-15 th century
<i>Workshop:</i>	Monastery of Batalha workshop
<i>Technique:</i>	polychrome limestone sculpture
<i>Dimensions (height x width x depth):</i>	109 x 65 x 43 cm
<i>Owner:</i>	Diocese of Leiria-Fátima
<i>Location:</i>	Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, Batalha; church; chapel of Nossa Senhora da Piedade
<i>Inventory no.:</i>	DLF.Bata.16

Description and commentary:

With great solemnity and frontality, appropriate for a sculpture carved directly into a block of stone, the body of Christ rests in the lap of the Virgin, who holds His shoulders with her right hand. In her left, she holds her Son's right hand. Despite its hardness and archaism, the subtle tilt of the dead body cut into beautiful curves against the dress of Our Lady is remarkable in this image. The patent displeasure in the eyes of Mary is not distorted by the curves of the veil, completed at the bottom of the composition by the dress itself. The piece was fully re-polychromed at least during the seventeenth century, as evidenced by the dress decoration. It is probably one of the first images of devotion intended for altars from the workshops of Batalha, connected to names like Gil Eanes and João Afonso. In fact, we can compare it to the image of the same subject of João Afonso found in the Chapel of Nossa Senhora do Pranto in the village of Pereira, near Montemor-o-Velho (P. DAYS 2003: 180).

PR



Photograph: ADF/José Paulo Ruas

Cat.11

S. MIGUEL (ST. MICHAEL)

<i>Date/period:</i>	mid-15 th century
<i>Workshop:</i>	Monastery of Batalha workshop
<i>Technique:</i>	polychrome limestone sculpture
<i>Dimensions (height x width x depth):</i>	143,5 x 60 x 40 cm
<i>Owner:</i>	Portuguese government / Direção-Geral do Património Cultural
<i>Provenance:</i>	Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória; church; Founder's Chapel; Infante D. Pedro altar (in the first aedicule on the east wall, looking from the north)
<i>Location:</i>	Museu da Comunidade Concelhia da Batalha
<i>Inventory no.:</i>	MB29

Description and commentary:

Wearing armour, a cloak and a diadem, the archangel subdues the demon at his feet, jabbing a spear in one hand while from the other hand held the scales used to weigh the souls, elements that have disappeared today but which were common in the iconography of similar works. The piece is of remarkable quality, both in terms of the clothing and physiognomy. Presented in *contrapposto*, the bearing of the figure recalls other works from the Monastery of Batalha workshop, especially the St. Michael from the Church of S. Miguel do Castelo in Montemor-o-Velho, stored at Machado de Castro National Museum (inv. MNMC 4056; P. DIAS, 2003: 175), commissioned by the Duke of Coimbra for all of the churches in his domains. Judging by the scale, the relationship with the decorative mural painting of the first arrangement of the aedicule intended

for the altar of the infante Pedro, in the Founder's Chapel, and its quality, this image, in all probability, was intended for that altar. The presentation of the sculpture against a background of decorative painting representing the heraldic scales of D. Pedro, in the manner of a textile piece, is based on the same principle of a damasked background used in the triptych of the *infante* Fernando (Cat.26) Only traces of primer layers can be seen in the polychrome.

PR



Photograph: ADF/José Paulo Ruas

Cat.12

S. SEBASTIÃO (ST. SEBASTIAN)

<i>Date/period:</i>	second half of the 15 th century
<i>Workshop:</i>	Monastery of Batalha workshop
<i>Technique:</i>	limestone sculpture
<i>Dimensions</i> (height x width x depth):	57 x 33 x 25,5 cm
<i>Owner:</i>	Portuguese government / Direção-Geral do Património Cultural
<i>Provenance:</i>	Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, Batalha; church; chapel of S. Miguel (former chapel of S. Sebastião) (?)
<i>Location:</i>	museum reserve of the Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória
<i>Inventory no.:</i>	MB39

Description and commentary:

Three fragments of this image remain: two of them belonging to the torso of the figure and joined together; another with the feet and the base without a link to the others. The slenderness of the saint stands out in all of them, tied to a log and pierced by the arrows of his martyrdom which in this as in so many other cases were removable. Despite the limitation of only having fragments, one can observe formal parallels in some examples of the same iconography, including the St. Sebastian rediscovered during the archaeological excavations of 1992 at the Convent of S. Francisco de Santarem, which was produced in the late fifteenth century (M. M. B. M. RAMALHO, et al. 1997: 17).

PR



Photograph: ADF/José Paulo Ruas

Cat.13

SANTA BÁRBARA (ST. BARBARA)

<i>Date/period:</i>	mid-15 th century
<i>Workshop:</i>	Monastery of Batalha workshop
<i>Technique:</i>	polychrome limestone sculpture
<i>Dimensions</i> (height x width x depth):	128 x 52 x 38 cm
<i>Owner:</i>	Portuguese government / Direção-Geral do Património Cultural
<i>Provenance:</i>	Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, Batalha; church; chapel of Santa Bárbara
<i>Location:</i>	Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, Batalha; church; chapel of Santíssimo Sacramento (former chapel of Santa Bárbara)
<i>Inventory no.:</i>	MB17

Description and commentary:

Composed of three fragments currently joined, St. Barbara is shown in her most common iconography, holding the tower where she was imprisoned by her father in her left hand, and the plume of immortality, on the right. The tower has a circular base and two octagonal floors, a door and several holes to which, in what remains of the top floor, the three windows associated by Barbara with the Holy Trinity, for which she was murdered by her own father, later struck down by lightning, appear to join. Luxuriously adorned, she is wearing a dress and a double cloak: the front trimmed with lace; the back with seed-pearls. On the base, which has an irregular octagonal design, can be seen the shoe from her left foot. The quality of the sculpture manifests itself both in the grace of the figure and in the elaborate treatment of the clothing.

PR



Photograph: ADF/José Paulo Ruas

Cat. 14

S. DOMINGOS (ST. DOMINIC)

<i>Date/period:</i>	17 th century
<i>Workshop:</i>	Monastery of Batalha workshop
<i>Technique:</i>	limestone sculpture
<i>Dimensions</i> (height x width x depth):	78 x 27 x 21 cm
<i>Owner:</i>	Portuguese government / Direção-Geral do Património Cultural
<i>Provenance:</i>	Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, Batalha; old niche above the Manueline portal currently used as an entrance to the friars' wine cellar)
<i>Location:</i>	sculpture storage of the Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória
<i>Inventory no.:</i>	MB14

Description and commentary:

This sculpture, of great sobriety, was intended for a recess overlooking the Manueline portal of the "Capítulo velho", which currently provides access to the Adega dos Frades. The recess was decorated in a seventeenth-century style similar to that of the national-style altarpieces. The ensemble is completed by the coat of arms of the Order of Preachers at the saint's feet, both of which are polychrome, based on what can be observed in a photograph from 1868 (CT THOMPSON, 1868; photo 10). Without any other attributes other than the rosary, the sculpture attests to the continuity of a local sculptural tradition adapted to the aesthetic requirements of the Counter-Reformation.

PR



Photograph: ADF/José Paulo Ruas

Cat. 15

CRISTO CRUCIFICADO (CRUCIFIED CHRIST)

<i>Date/period:</i>	17 th century
<i>Workshop:</i>	Portuguese workshop
<i>Technique:</i>	polychrome limestone sculpture
<i>Dimensions</i> (height x width x depth):	Christ – 154 x 141 x 39.5 cm; cross – 236.5 x 154.5 x 4.3 cm
<i>Owner:</i>	Diocese of Leiria-Fátima
<i>Provenance:</i>	Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, Batalha; church; Jesus altarpiece (?)
<i>Location:</i>	Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, Batalha; church; high chapel
<i>Inventory no.:</i>	DLF-Bata.13

Description and commentary:

The elongated image of the crucified Christ was most likely intended for worship in the central niche of the lower section of the altarpiece of Jesus, located at the north end of the monastery church (Cat. 6) until 1945. This inference is based on the style and chronology of the piece, the type of iconography, the scale consistent with the paintings that side the referred niche, and the flattening of the sculpture itself.

Despite the technical archaism, evidenced by the stiffness of the limbs, underscoring the tense parallelism of the legs, and the severity of the lines of the sendal, which drapes in straight pleats, both the carver's work and the painter's intervention reveal remarkable virtues as regards its actual design. This is revealed on the one hand by the primitive crown of thorns that can still be seen on the back of the head, carved with it and not juxtaposed like the one that replaced it and hid the original; and, on the other hand,



Photograph: ADF/José Paulo Ruas

by the fine and elaborate polychromy of the face, the only section that escaped an almost complete repainting of the piece at a date we are unsure of.

Highlighting the suffering endured during the Passion until the last moment on the cross, as shown by the multiple body wounds caused by the nails and the spear of the Roman centurion, the figure of a dying Christ, His expression of agony, shows a gaunt face sprayed with blood drops, torpid look and half-open mouth in a drama accentuated by the use of lacquer with very good results. The sculpture was carved from a single piece of wood, with the exception of the arms connected to the body by splints whose pins are visible through the polychrome. A second painting of the image was polished in order to get nearer to the better achieved complexion of the pale face.

The cross is of dense wood, apparently original, and the sculpture was attached using an iron suspension hook at the waist and three nails. Those at the hands are made of wood and original; those at the feet were introduced in more recent times. The disproportionate roll which is currently at the top with the inscription "INRI" is not the original, as proven by the handwriting, the rough painting, lower quality wood (pine) and the splicing done at the top of the cross to make it fit, which seems to have created an unusual join.

MP

Cat. 16

S. DOMINGOS (ST. DOMINIC)

<i>Date/period:</i>	18 th century
<i>Workshop:</i>	Portuguese workshop
<i>Technique:</i>	polychrome wood sculpture
<i>Dimensions (height x width x depth):</i>	147 X 73.6 X 35.50 cm
<i>Pair:</i>	with the sculpture of S. Francisco (Cat. 17)
<i>Owner:</i>	Diocese of Leiria-Fátima
<i>Provenance:</i>	Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, Batalha; church
<i>Location:</i>	Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, Batalha; church; high chapel
<i>Inventory no.:</i>	DLF-Bata.05

Description and commentary:

St. Dominic, the founder of the Order of Preachers to which the friars of the Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória in Batalha belonged, is depicted in this sculpture wearing a white tunic and scapular under a black cape, which flows and drapes over the forearms, and a wide hood which is also black but lined in white. Under the long white robe the tip of a boot of the same black colour timidly peeks out.

The Castilian saint appears in triumphant prayer pose with lifted arms, open hands and a slightly twisted body, as if caught preaching against the Albigensian or proclaiming the Gospel, two of the more reproduced biographical episodes in European religious art. The expressive look on St. Dominic's face is presented with a half-open mouth, an abundant wavy beard and voluminous curly brown hair, with a tonsure at the top of his head and a hole where a halo would certainly have existed.



Photograph: ADF/José Paulo Ruas

On the octagonal base, white like the vestments, one of his most common attributes, a dog, lies at the feet of the famous preacher of Toulouse. The dog's head is raised and its open mouth suggests a lighted torch, which is usually represented in the saint's iconography in allusion to his role as the guardian of the Faith, a loyal *Domini Canis*. The glass eyes are mounted from inside the head of the image, apparently carried out separately. The fingers were almost entirely mutilated and there is damage and gaps at the base.

The original very high quality polychromy was preserved only in the flesh tones, hair and beard, and in perfect agreement with the sculpture. The robe, dog and shoe were roughly and carelessly repainted at an unknown time.

The major issues that place this image in the Baroque period reside in the treatment given to the sinuously curly hair, the expressiveness of the face and wavy, even if sober, movement of the monastic robe. The same characteristics in the treatment of the face, associated with the size of both pieces, allow us to associate this image to the same workshop as that of the sculpture of St. Francis of Assisi (Cat.17).

MP

Cat.17

S. FRANCISCO (ST. FRANCIS)

<i>Date/period:</i>	18 th century
<i>Workshop:</i>	Portuguese workshop
<i>Technique:</i>	polychrome wood sculpture
<i>Dimensions</i> (height x width x depth):	145.4 X 67.5 X 58 cm
<i>Pair:</i>	with the sculpture of S. Domingos (Cat. 16)
<i>Owner:</i>	Diocese of Leiria-Fátima
<i>Provenance:</i>	Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, Batalha; church
<i>Location:</i>	Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, Batalha; church; high chapel
<i>Inventory no.:</i>	DLF-Bata.02

Description and commentary:

St. Francis of Assisi, the creator of the revolutionary and charitable care movement of the underprivileged at the origin of the Franciscan Order, is represented barefoot and wearing a black robe (instead of the traditional brown obliterated by the last painting), the voluminous sleeves, with sharp folds and hood cut back in triangular shape, girded at the waist with double cord, and with two knots, certainly corresponding to the professed vows.

The right leg is slightly bent which confers some motion dynamism to this sculptural image, the *Poverello* of Porziuncola holds a crucifix, admiring it with true emotional contemplation, a commotion that transfigures the expression in the search for consolation in Christ Crucified. The face of incisive anatomical perfection and energetic plasticity appears with a brown beard, the same colour to the voluminous curly hair delimiting the tonsure at the top of the skull. The eyes are made of glass, mounted from inside the head, which



Photograph: ADF/José Paulo Ruas

was sectioned for that purpose prior to polychromy. A hole in the top of the head suggests the place for a halo. As missing parts there are the mutilated fingers of the right hand and the good part of the right foot, attacked by woodworm, and support base to the devotional image, octagonal, with a small crack and defects in the marbled polychromy.

St. Francis displays the figure of the Crucified, crowned with thorns and nailed to the cross, covered only by white sendal.

The original polychromy of excellent quality was preserved only in flesh tones, hair and beard. The robe was completely repainted at an unknown time, in a careless way, with numerous runoffs and contiguous polychromy overlaps. Technical similarities of the face, although more expressive of emotion compared to the sculpture of St. Dominic (Cat. 16) suggest the same origin.

MP

Cat. 18

SANTA JOANA PRINCESA (BLESSED JOAN OF PORTUGAL)

<i>Date/period:</i>	18 th century
<i>Workshop:</i>	Portuguese workshop
<i>Technique:</i>	polychrome wood sculpture
<i>Dimensions (height x width x depth):</i>	123.5 X 56.5 X 37 cm
<i>Owner:</i>	Diocese of Leiria-Fátima
<i>Provenance:</i>	Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, Batalha; church
<i>Location:</i>	Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, Batalha; church; high chapel
<i>Inventory no.:</i>	DLF-Bata.19

Description and commentary:

Expressing from an early age a special affection for the religious life, the beatified Joana Princesa, the Portuguese Infant descendant of King Afonso V who left the sumptuous palatial setting to join the austere monastic life, is represented here wearing a white tunic and habit, adorned with elaborate floral compositions similar to the decorative treatment of damask fabrics, and girded by a black belt.

The white scapular has accentuated folds with equally golden ornamental treatment, and the long and voluminous black cape attached by golden floral locket is raised by the left arm and curled on her knee, while below, in the long Dominican habit, the black shoes emerge. The delicate and ecstatic face is bounded by the twisted and snaked white cord headdress, over which falls a flowing black veil, held by a crown of thorns of twisted green branches.



Photograph: ADF/José Paulo Ruas

As main attribute of her existential condition in the Christian faith of rigorous penitential discipline is a skull held by her right hand; it is likely that her left hand, half-open, high, crossed by the fixed gaze, would wield a crucifix, a recurrent element in her iconography.

The support base, marbled red and endowed with black letters legend "S. IONA PRINÇEZA", has been fitted on the front section with a mighty stylized shield topped by an open crown and flanked by two green palms truncated by golden crowns. The two-part interior, usual heraldry of Portuguese princesses, shows, in the right field, the coat of arms of Portugal, and on the left, the coat of arms of the Dominican Order, with the lotus flower cross in alternating white and black. The lower section of the coat of arms is extremely damaged and there are traces of an earlier votive legend with black inscribed letters.

Although the mantle and the shoes have been severely repainted, the original polychromy also shows remarkable properties, in particular regarding the decoration of the painted and *sgraffito*-decorated tunic and scapular still visible, despite the disappearing white top layer. The plasticity of the drapery and the strong theatricality of the movements, as well as the elaborate lower shell, are the stylistic elements of the stereotyped language of artistic currents of the Portuguese Baroque.

MP

Cat. 19

S. JACINTO (ST. HYACINTH)

<i>Date/period:</i>	18 th century
<i>Workshop:</i>	Portuguese workshop
<i>Technique:</i>	polychrome wood sculpture
<i>Dimensions</i> <i>(height x width x depth):</i>	93 cm X 36.4 X 25 cm
<i>Owner:</i>	Diocese of Leiria-Fátima
<i>Provenance:</i>	Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, Batalha; church
<i>Location:</i>	Parish church of Batalha
<i>Inventory no.:</i>	DLF-Bata.46

Description and commentary:

St. Hyacinth of Krakow, a Polish friar preacher who received the Dominican habit from the hands of St. Dominic, is depicted here in a white tunic adorned with golden floral elements tied by a black belt, over which he wears a white scapular bordered by a broad gold stripe of identical polychrome and decoration. He is wearing a black cape, which drapes onto his forearms and is profusely adorned with rosettes, volutes and golden shells, and an overcoat, buttoned at the front and with a golden decorative zigzag design. On his feet, under the long white and golden habit, he is wearing black shoes which stand directly on the green marbled polygonal base.

The apostle of Poland, as he is commonly known, is depicted with his arms raised but with his hands empty, but the way he is staring at them suggests that they were probably holding some of his most common attributes, such as a cymborium or an image of the Virgin Mary. St. Hyacinth is depicted with long wavy black hair and a beard and a moustache of the same colour.



Photograph: ADF/José Paulo Ruas

The sculpture has a very delicate poise and somewhat flat shape and the quality and richness of its painted, *sgraffito* and stamped decoration, treated with as much care in unexposed areas as elsewhere, was conceived for a recess.

The stylistic dynamic conferred by the symmetry of the hair, the overall volume of the piece and the overcoat, as well as the *sgraffito* and gilding, undoubtedly denote the legacy of Baroque sculpture that would manifest itself with identical premises in the following Rococo period.

MP

Cat.20

S. JOAQUIM (ST. JOACHIM)

Date/period: 18th century
Workshop: Portuguese workshop
Technique: polychrome wood sculpture

Dimensions
(height x width x depth): 98 x 39 x 26.5 cm

Owner: Diocese of Leiria-Fátima

Owner: Dioc

Pair: with the sculpture of Santa Ana (Cat. 21)

Location: Parish church of Batalha

Inventory no.: DLF-Bata.44

Description and commentary:

A descendant of the House of David, St. Joachim, the husband of St. Anne and father of the Virgin Mary, is dressed in a green tunic profusely decorated with floral *sgraffito* and a red cloak, with plant decoration executed using the same technique, over his right shoulder and fastened at the front with the gilt band tying the tunic. Both pieces of clothing are hemmed with a gold stripe which contrasts with the black of the ankle boots.

With his right arm flexed across his chest and his left slightly raised, suggesting that his hand was holding something that has since been lost, this Nazarene saint with a serious expression reveals a certain baldness through his curly black hair and heavy, also black, beard. The base he stands on is octagonal and reveals brown marbling.

The stylistic and material elements of this sculpture of St. Joachim, and its similar size, suggest that it came from the same workshop as that of the St. Anne sculpture (Cat.21).

MP



Photograph: ADF/José Paulo Ruas

Cat.21

SANTA ANA (ST. ANNE)

Date/period: 18th century
Workshop: Portuguese workshop
Technique: polychrome wood sculpture

Dimensions
(height x width x depth): 98 x 45 x 31.5 cm

Owner: Diocese of Leiria-Fátima
Pair: with the sculpture of S. Joaquim (Cat. 20)
Provenance: church, Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, Batalha
Location: Parish church of Batalha
Inventory no.: DLF-Bata.45

Description and commentary:

The mother of the Virgin Mary is depicted here wearing a long ornate blue dress decorated with stamped and *sgraffito* plant and floral motifs, tied at the waist and with draped pleats covering her feet. Her head, on which sits a gilded veil crossed at her chest, is covered by a cape, also gilded and profusely adorned with floral compositions, revealing the inside of the piece, held in place by her arms and covering her right knee, in a purplish tone. She is also wearing a greenish-coloured mantle which drapes down at her back and features *sgraffito* decoration and a gilded hem.

Saint Anne is depicted standing in a static and rigid pose with a blank face and empty gaze. With her arms raised to chest level, in her left hand she holds a long closed book with a black cover, an attribute of her status as preferred master alongside Holy Mary, to whom, in the Biblical tradition, she is said to have taught to read. The octagonal base is marbled in greenish tones.

As already mentioned, the inclusion of identical stylistic and material elements and similar dimensions to the sculpture of St. Joachim suggest that it was made by the same artist.

MP



Photograph: ADF/José Paulo Ruas

Cat.22

CRISTO MORTO (DEAD CHRIST)

Date/period: 18th century
Workshop: Portuguese workshop
Technique: polychrome wood sculpture

Dimensions
(height x width x depth): 27 x 165 x 59 cm

Owner: Diocese of Leiria-Fátima
Provenance: Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, Batalha; sacristy
Location: Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, Batalha; church; Chapel of Nossa Senhora da Piedade
Inventory no.: DLF-Bata.17

Description and commentary:

Set in a dramatic compositional context, Christ's dead body lies at rest, covered merely by a tiny white sendal of crossed and draped cloths.

The body of Our Saviour, rigorously depicted here in its anatomical proportions and bodily complexions, attests to the martyrdom suffered during the climb and the final moment of the Passion, emphasised by the traces of blood and disturbing open wounds on His hip, right shoulder and knees. Besides the dripping beads of blood, the marks of the sores left by the nails on His hands and feet, as well as the crown of thorns on His forehead, removed from the moment caught here, also leave an impression. While the right arm hangs down, the left rests harmoniously on His abdominal area, his hands executed with true realism.



Photograph: ADF/José Paulo Ruas

The head, slightly angled to the right, reveals very careful attention to anatomical detail, materialising in a face with an expression of great suffering but supreme serenity, illustrated by the closed eyes and half-open mouth. The face is surrounded by a beard and long hair, which falls in wavy locks to the shoulders.

The shrouded holy corpse lies in a funeral throne, an “urn for the Dead Lord of carved wood which serves as the same coffin that acts as a sepulchre for Jesus”, executed in 1775 by the master carver António Pereira da Silva (S. A. GOMES, 1997: 306). It stands on four feet and is glazed on its front portal, decorated at its front corners by hanging flowery wreaths, while at the top is a composition formed by a central rosette composed of juxtaposed and open wings on shell and plant motifs.

MP

Cat.23

CALVÁRIO (CALVARY)

Date/period: first quarter of the 16th century

Workshop: unknown

Technique: fresco wall painting

*Dimensions
(height x width):* 220 x 176 cm

Owner: Portuguese government / Direção-Geral do Património Cultural

Location: Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, Batalha; Royal Cloister; south nave

Bibliography: *Frescos*, 1937: 21, figs. 35 and 36; *MURAL DA HISTÓRIA*, 2009: 6-14

Description and commentary:

Despite the countless and extensive gaps due to fallen plaster recorded already in 1937, the theme and composition of this painting is still recognisable. The centre is dominated by the cross, from whose top hangs the crown of thorns and overlapping which is the inscribed *titulus* “INRI”. On the left arm can be seen whips and beside them, as beside the area corresponding to Christ’s feet, the nails. The ensemble of objects connected with the Passion is completed with a hammer, fallen to earth, on the right. At the base of the cross can also be observed a skull and femur, fastened by wooden wedges and stones. Although the meaning of the latter is less clear, skulls are common in this type of depiction, not merely because Golgotha is literally “the place of skulls”, but also because it is identified with the skull of Adam, seen here in relation to the Eucharistic redemption of original sin. The cross in the foreground is set against a landscape of alternating hills at the back of which is visible a walled Jerusalem. Also in the background, but disproportionate in height, are several trees, predominantly



Photograph: ADF/José Paulo Ruas

cypresses, which attempt to create compositional balance with the foreground. The painting is framed by a cincture and sits on a base, both of which are painted.

Painted quickly, as the fresco technique demands – recognisable here by the palette and pigments employed, as well as the transparency of the material – the painting is necessarily unsophisticated due to being completed in just one day (no other *giornate* can be detected). The palette, restricted to ochre, malachite green, slaked lime and their mixtures, is typical of frescoes. It was certainly the work of an itinerant artist or workshop, to whom the other two frescoes in the west and north naves of the cloister also belong.

PR

Cat.24

S. PAULO (ST. PAUL)

Date/period: first quarter of the 16th century

Workshop: unknown

Technique: fresco wall painting

*Dimensions
(height x width):* 218 x 177 cm

Owner: Portuguese government / Direção-Geral do Património Cultural

Location: Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, Batalha; Royal Cloister; west nave

Bibliography: *Frescos*, 1937: 21, figs. 37; MURAL DA HISTÓRIA, 2009: 15-24

Description and commentary:

St. Paul, bald and with a long beard, and accompanied by his customary attributes – a sword and a book – occupies the centre of the composition, wearing a brocaded dalmatic and a red cloak. Behind him is a landscape background in which depth is suggested by an alternate sequence of small hills. To the left, a small church can be made out in the distance with a tower and belfry and, on either side, at the same distance from the observer, are slender trees – cypresses on the left and another rounder species on the right. The theme is presented in perspective, within a frame comprised of an arch supported by two late-Gothic decorated columns standing on a threshold.

Painted quickly, as the fresco technique demands – recognisable here by the palette and pigments employed, as well as the transparency of the material – the painting is necessarily unsophisticated due to being completed in just one day (no other *giornate* can be detected). The palette, restricted to ochre, malachite green, slaked lime and their mixtures, is typical of frescoes. It was certainly the

work of an itinerant artist or workshop, to whom the other two frescoes in the north and south naves of the cloister also belong.

PR



Photograph: ADF/José Paulo Ruas

Cat.25

S. JOÃO EVANGELISTA (ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST)

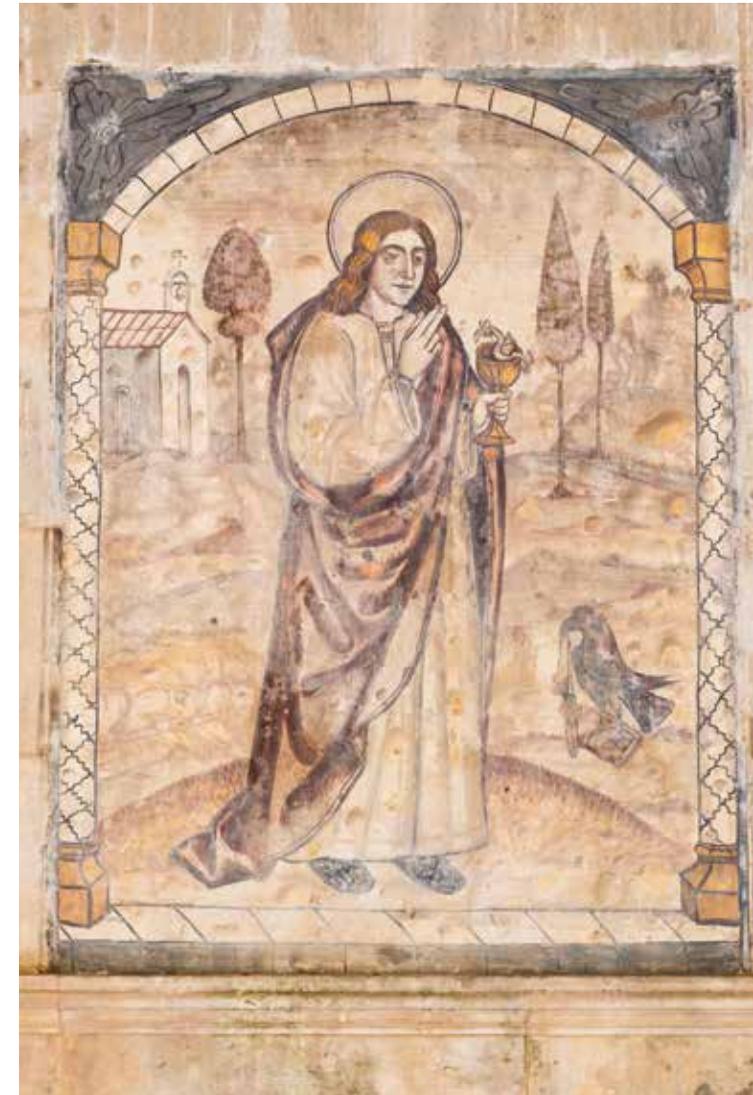
<i>Date/period:</i>	first quarter of the 16 th century
<i>Workshop:</i>	unknown
<i>Technique:</i>	fresco wall painting
<i>Dimensions (height x width):</i>	184 x 138 cm
<i>Owner:</i>	Portuguese government / Direção-Geral do Património Cultural
<i>Location:</i>	Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, Batalha; Royal Cloister; north nave
<i>Bibliography:</i>	<i>Frescos</i> , 1937: 21, figs. 38; MURAL DA HISTÓRIA, 2009: 25-36

Description and commentary:

In the centre of the composition and its focal point, St. John, in a youthful and beardless state dressed in a white shirt and tunic and covered in a red cloak, can be seen holding the goblet of poison in his left hand with which they tried to kill him and which he is blessing with his right. Instead of the usual snake to represent the demon (the chalice symbolises the Christian faith), a small dragon can be seen, inspired by the medieval iconographic tradition. At his feet and to the left an eagle, his winged attribute, perches on the Evangelist's writings and reaches out an inkpot with its beak. These motifs stand out against a landscape background in which depth is suggested by an alternate sequence of small hills. To the left, a small church can be made out in the distance with a belfry and, on either side, at the same distance from the observer, are slender trees – cypresses on the left and another rounder species on the right. The theme is presented in perspective, within a frame

comprised of an arch supported by two late-Gothic and coarsely decorated columns standing on a threshold. Painted quickly, as the fresco technique demands – recognisable here by the palette and pigments employed, as well as the transparency of the material – the painting is necessarily unsophisticated due to being completed in just one day (no other *giornate* can be detected). The palette, restricted to ochre, malachite green, slaked lime and their mixtures, is typical of frescoes. It was certainly the work of an itinerant artist or workshop, to whom the other two frescoes in the west and south naves of the cloister also belong.

PR



Photograph: ADF/José Paulo Ruas

Cat.26

TRÍPTICO DO INFANTE D. FERNANDO (TRIPTYCH OF THE INFANTE FERNANDO)

<i>Date/period:</i>	ca. 1451
<i>Artist:</i>	João Afonso (?)
<i>Technique:</i>	oil on wood painting
<i>Dimensions (height x width):</i>	110.5 x 140.5 cm
<i>Owner:</i>	Portuguese government / Direção-Geral do Património Cultural
<i>Provenance:</i>	Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, Batalha; Founder's Chapel; <i>infante</i> Henrique altar (in the second aedicule on the east wall looking from the north)
<i>Location:</i>	Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga
<i>Inventory no.:</i>	MNAA 1877 Pint
<i>Bibliography:</i>	J. A. S. CARVALHO, 1995: 477-478; J. A. S. CARVALHO and M. J. V. CARVALHO, 2002; P. DIAS and V. SERRÃO, 1986: 168; J. FIGUEIREDO, 1910; P. FLOR, 2010: 176; L. A. FONSECA, 1993; J.-A. FRANÇA, 1981; S. A. GOMES, 1990:115-116; idem, 1992; A. GUSMÃO, 1948 and 1951; D. MARKL, 1995: 273-275; M. J. MENDONÇA, 1940; J. SARAIVA, 1925. Inventory sheet for the piece consulted on 13 November at http://www.matriznet.dgpc.pt/MatrizNet/Objectos/ObjectosConsultar.aspx?ldReg=251289

Description and commentary:

The *infante* Fernando was the youngest child of King João I and Philippa of Lancaster. He was born in Santarém in 1402 and died in captivity in the city of Fez on 5 June 1443. He had a privileged childhood and developed a particular interest in spirituality, proof of which was a library that was large for the era and which was entirely filled with books on liturgy and the Divine Office and patristic texts. He was appointed governor of the Order of Avis and allocated a residence, as a royal prince, though he is understood to have considered the stipend he received "miserliness". It is known that he was proposed by Pope Eugene IV for the cardinalship, but that he was turned down. In 1437, he set sail with the Portuguese armada commanded by his brother, Henry the Navigator, with the objective of conquering Tangier, a military undertaking which ended in disaster.

Fernando was taken hostage by Lazaraque as a bargaining tool to force the Portuguese into returning Ceuta to the Moroccans. The way the story ends is well known. At the Cortes in Leiria in 1438, it was decided to keep Ceuta and to pursue other military and diplomatic measures to free the captive *infante*, which did in fact take place but without success. On 5 June 1443, Fernando died in captivity after much humiliation and physical suffering. His 15th-century biographers created the image of a pious Christian prince and faithful imitator of the life and painful passion of Christ, an *alter Christus*, much in line with the models of Christian perfection encouraged by the spiritual currents of the 15th-century *devotio moderna*.

On 8 January 1444, the Regent Pedro assigned a chapel to him at the Monastery of Batalha in the name of the king. In 1451, with the arrival in Portugal of the first relics of the "*Infante Martyr*", Henry the Navigator established a sung Mass for the soul of his brother, receiving festive liturgical offices from the Martyrs. In 1472, his bones arrived at Batalha. It must have been around this time that *Martyrium pariter et gesta magnifici et potentis infantis*



Photograph: ADF/José Pessoa

domni Fernandi, sent to the Holy See (Vatican Library, code 3634), was written. No documentary record exists to confirm that he was beatified in 1470 by Pope Paul II. He did, however, become the subject of veneration at Batalha, on the impetus of the royal family and the Dominican friars from the 1440s onwards, but the cult was eventually forbidden by a Bishop of Leiria, Martim Afonso Mexia (1605 and 1615), who was especially strict concerning Catholic orthodoxy.

The *infante santo* altarpiece represents a memorial with, of course, a social significance for the Portuguese monarchy of the 1400s. Its aesthetic and symbolic composition affirms the deep belief by the Illustrious Generation, and in particular its mentor and commissioner, Henry the Navigator, in the heroic virtues of his brother. On the central panel of the altarpiece, on a damasked background of red and gold, can be seen the prince's full-length figure. Full of hieratic dignity, he is old and wearing a red shirt and black sleeveless robe. In his relaxed hands he holds the shackles which had chained his feet and with a wan and pallid face, almond-shaped and dull eyes, a Maghrebi hat on his head, shoulder-length hair and long but trimmed beard, he appears absorbed in a questioning silence.

A 15th-century drawing of this panel attached to the manuscript *Martyrium pariter et gesta* mentioned above copied the central panel of the altarpiece. In this image, dating from around 1472, the prince, standing between his motto ("*Bien me plet*") and his coat of arms, is turned slightly to his left, in the same position we see in the altarpiece panel, while showing symbolic details like the three

crowns at his feet alluding, according to the identification of the drawing itself, to *diabolus*, *mundus* and *odio*.

The altarpiece was designed bearing in mind the characteristics of the altar it was intended for and the space it had to fit into, that of the Founder's Chapel with its dignified stained glass, mural painting and Gothic imagery, in similarity to the King João I and Philippa of Lancaster altar, and almost certainly tapestries and other ornamental drapery, not to mention the objects and vestments associated with each chapel and altar. The painter responsible for this panel was careful to take into account the space available to it. It is highly likely that it was the work of the official royal painter at the Batalha building yard, João Afonso, who was actively engaged on the monument in 1449 and 1450, at least, and of whom we know that he had a workshop in Leiria in the 1930s where he received a commission from other important figures such as, for example, the Abbot of Alcobaça, Estêvão de Aguiar, after a long sojourn in Italy. Mural paintings with damasked themes enriched by the heraldic devices of their respective holders also line the walls of the arcologia of the altars and tombs of the princes in the Founder's Chapel. It is also possible today to see fragments of this mural decoration in the old chapel of D. Pedro, dedicated to St. Michael, and the tomb of *infante* Henrique, while in the tomb of the *infante* João bags full of scallops were carved, an allusion to the Jacobean cult of whose Military Order he was the governor.

SAG

Cat.27

O TRÂNSITO DA VIRGEM (THE DEATH OF THE VIRGIN MARY)

<i>Date/period:</i>	ca. 1525 - 1540
<i>Artist:</i>	Cristóvão de Figueiredo
<i>Technique:</i>	oil painting on oak
<i>Dimensions (height x width):</i>	79 x 88 cm
<i>Owner:</i>	Portuguese government / Direção-Geral do Património Cultural
<i>Provenance:</i>	Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, Batalha; Founder's Chapel; King João I and Philippa of Lancaster altar
<i>Location:</i>	Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga
<i>Inventory no.:</i>	MNAA 63 Pint
<i>Bibliography:</i>	J. A. S. CARVALHO, 1991: 84-86; F. GONÇALVES, 1990: 48-49; P. REDOL, 1992 Inventory sheet for the piece consulted on 14 November 2013 at: http://www.matriznet.dgpc.pt/MatrizNet/Objectos/ObjectosConsultar.aspx?IdReg=248869

Description and commentary:

The Death of the Virgin Mary panel was part of the altar of King João I and his wife in the Founder's Chapel, as the 1823 inventory attests (S. A. GOMES, 1997: 239). It was removed during the restoration work by Mousinho de Albuquerque at Batalha between 1840 and 1843, and sent for storage at the Academia de Belas Artes (J. A. S. CARVALHO, 1991: 84-86).

The painting, attributed to Cristóvão de Figueiredo, depicts an episode from the life of the Virgin: the moment of her passing. The theme does not appear in the Bible, but is contained in the New Testament Apocrypha. These recount that, having been warned by Archangel Michael of her imminent death, the Virgin was visited by the twelve Apostles, who appeared miraculously from heaven to accompany her in her last hour.

The theme always presented some difficulty for artists due to the need to depict such a large number of figures in a small space while giving the main character, the Virgin, who to make matters worse had to appear in bed, the necessary emphasis amid the crowd. The solution most commonly used in Byzantine art, with the bed placed in profile, obliged the Virgin to be depicted from the side too, thus removing some of her involvement.

In western art, on the contrary, the solution used tended to be that seen here: the positioning of the bed at an oblique angle allowed, on the one hand, for the Virgin to be depicted almost from the front and, on the other, for a sense of depth to be created which amplified the space available to portray the twelve Apostles (L. RÉAU. V, 2008: 629).

The composition of the artwork we see before us thus focuses the observer's gaze on the left half of the painting where the action is taking place and where the figures the artist wants to give prominence to are located. The Virgin, lying down, stands out against the white pillows. To her left, St. John, Christ's favourite disciple, helps her hold a candle which it was believed helped to prolong the life of the dying, while beside him St. Peter presides over the ceremony with a codex in his left hand and an aspergillum in his right, wearing a sumptuous cape and aided by another apostle who holds out the basin of holy water. To the right of the Virgin, another apostle shakes a thurible of purifying incense. With no plausible interpretation possible, the man holding the basin converses with the apostle at his side, who points to something outside the painting.

The Death of the Virgin theme had some success in 16th-century Portuguese painting and was depicted in at least four other artworks: a panel from around 1535 attributed to Garcia Fernandes and kept at the Museu Grão Vasco in Viseu; another dating from 1533-34 at the Monastery of Ferreirim; a third from around 1523 attributed to Gregório Lopes at the National Museum of Ancient Art (MNAA); and the last dating from ca. 1550-60 by the Mestre de Arruda at the Parish Church of Arruda dos Vinhos.

Even though each one of these painting has its own particularities in terms of iconography and composition, all of them have one thing in common: a bench beside the bed with a set of objects which, while varying slightly from painting to painting, always includes a pomegranate and/or a bowl of seeds. The supreme symbol of female fertility, the pomegranate alludes in these works to the status of the Virgin Mary as the Mother of Christ.

BFT



Photograph: ADF/José Pessoa

Cat.28

S. TOMÁS DE AQUINO (SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS)

Date/period: ca. 1525 - 1540

Artist: Garcia Fernandes (?)

Technique: oil painting on oak

*Dimensions
(height x width):* 80 x 45 cm

Owner: Portuguese government / Direção-Geral do Património Cultural

Provenance: Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, Batalha; Founder's Chapel

Location: Museu Nacional de Arte Antiga (MNAA)

Inventory no.: MNAA 68 Pint

Bibliography: J. A. S. CARVALHO, 1991: 84-86; F. GONÇALVES, 1990; D. MARKL, 1998: 296-299; P. REDOL, 1992a
Inventory sheet for the piece consulted on 14 November at: <http://www.matriznet.dgpc.pt/MatrizNet/Objectos/ObjectosListar.aspx?TipoPesq=4&NumPag=1&RegPag=50&Modo=1&NumInv=68+Pint&SupCat=1&BaseDados=23&Cat=42&IdAutor=>

Description and commentary:

The Saint Thomas Aquinas was part of the collection endowed to the Founder's Chapel. It was removed during the restoration work undertaken by Mousinho de Albuquerque in Batalha between 1840 and 1843 and sent for storage at the Academia de Belas Artes (J. A.



Photograph: ADF/José Pessoa

S. CARVALHO, 1991: 84-86). It is not known which altar it specifically belonged to.

The saint, standing out in the centre of the composition, is wearing the Dominican habit and holding a goblet with a Host in his left hand and a calamus in his right. His black cloak is fastened at the chest by a precious brooch, representing an original interpretation of one of St. Thomas's traditional attributes: a large ruby which shines like a star either over his chest or over his shoulder (L. RÉAU, 2002. 8: 282-283). Behind, on a bench, is a pile of books and writing utensils which reinforce the saint's status as one of the great sages of the Church. In fact, his extensive academic output ensured him a place among the four Doctors of the Latin Church (Saint Ambrose, Saint Augustine, Saint Gregory the Great and Saint Jerome) and his adoption as patron saint of Catholic theologians, schools and universities.

In the background, to the right, in a scene characteristic of the era, there is an open window onto the outside, while on the left there is a depiction of an episode from the saint's life – his visit to the Franciscan theologian Saint Bonaventure to ask for advice. An iconographic curiosity in this painting is the fact that Saint Bonaventure has been replaced by a Dominican friar (P. REDOL, 1992a: 64), attesting to the rivalry between the two mendicant orders. Although nothing is known about the commissioning of this work, this detail suggests the Dominicans were directly involved.

In fact, the theme itself would indicate it: St. Thomas Aquinas was not commonly depicted in Portugal at that time, but as one of the Order's leading figures, it was a natural choice for the most important Dominican monastery in the country, which during the 16th century was reputed for its theological studies and was eventually given university status in 1551.

As Markl has noted, the pictorial quality of this artwork is striking. However, it has never been deeply studied. The talent of the artist is seen, for example, in the details of the books depicted on either side of the saint, and the treatment of the effects of the light through the pince-nez. These and other features lead Markl to think that the painting could be by Garcia Fernandes (D. MARKL, 1998: 296-299). In a characteristic common to painting of the time, the search for realism is clearly visible in the depiction of the objects but not always in the treatment of the space and the way the objects are placed in it. Thus, for example, a slight difference in alignment means that it looks as if there is not one but two benches behind the saint, one slightly further forward than the other. And on these bench(es) the books are piled in an impossible way, though this adds a dynamic element to the painting, creating an interesting composition of diagonal lines which surprise the eye.

BFT

Cat.29

NOSSA SENHORA DO ROSÁRIO (OUR LADY OF THE ROSARY)

Date/period: second quarter of the 16th century

Artist: unknown

Technique: oil on canvas

*Dimensions
(height x width):* 231 x 144 cm

Provenance: Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, Batalha;
church; chapel of Nossa Senhora do Rosário (?)

Location: Monastery of Santa Maria da Vitória, Batalha;
sacristy

Bibliography: S. BASTA, 2002.

Description and commentary:

In the centre, the Virgin, sat on a monumental concave throne of framed stone, with volutes at half height and two red spheres crowning it, dominates this triangular composition, which also features the standing Child leaning against the left leg of the Mother, and two Dominican saints, without attributes who would allow us to identify them more precisely. At each corner at the top, two substantially-sized angels raise a canopy-like curtain over Our Lady. Inside the framed space reserved for the painting on the sacristy altarpiece, the angels are almost completely hidden, a decision reinforced by the addition of canvas at the base, intended for the depiction of a plinth that underscores the entire scene. The great sensuality of the figures, whose heads had been repainted on new layers of primer, probably contributed to this solution. Otherwise, the painting was subject to some important repainting, namely in the wings and dresses of the angels and all of the Virgin's clothes from the waist downwards. An X-ray examination would be needed



Photograph: José Paulo Ruas

in order to confirm the reasons behind this extensive intervention. What is left of the original allows us, however, to verify the high quality both of the composition and the pictorial execution. Gestures and gazes connect all of the figures in a vital *continuum*: the saint on the right raises his devoted gaze to the Virgin, who holds his scapular; the one on the left observes enchanted the rosary given to him by the Child, who watches him with very adult tenderness; Mother and Son share a strip of tulle which drapes in a gracious curve before the latter.

The influence of Italian painting of the *primo Cinquecento*, which was alien to the Portuguese tradition, is immediately evident in the model of the figure of the Virgin and the Child, as well as in the general mood of the composition. Closer in style to an Italian source, namely Rafael, than the stained glass of the high chapel showing The Virgin and Child Enthroned, which we date to around 1530 and attribute to a foreign artist then resident in Batalha, Pero Picardo (P. REDOL, 2003: 106-108, 141-143, 145-146), it is not

distasteful to think that it might have been by the same man. In fact, several details reveal Franco-Flemish influences: the angels with their curtain and the saints adopting the pose of donors. Noting that, given its theme, this work was certainly intended for the altar in the Chapel of Nossa Senhora do Rosário next to the high chapel of the church of Batalha, it is pertinent to observe that it combines, and here the control of the fathers at Batalha is clear, northern European elements well known at Batalha for many years, namely since the gift of a panel by Duchess Isabel of Burgundy in 1445 (see sub-chapter IX.1) incorporated via Portuguese altarpiece painting into the set of stained glass in the high chapel around 1514. In the belief that the painting was executed in the 1530s, the use of canvas as a medium was very advanced at a time when easel painting in Portugal was practised virtually only on wood panels.

PR

Cat.30

ALTAR FRONTAL

Date/period: third quarter of the 17th century

Workshop: unknown

Technique: polychrome tile

Dimensions

(height x width): frontal: 105.5 cm x 178 cm;
sides: 105.5 x 71.5 cm

Owner: Diocese of Leiria-Fátima

Provenance: Quinta da Várzea; Chapel of S. Gonçalo

Location: Museu da Diocese of Leiria-Fátima

Inventory no.: DLF-Museu.239

Bibliography: A. FERREIRA, 2006: 124-125

Description and commentary:

On the ashlar of the frontal can be seen embroidered grotesque motifs, on the pelmet and orphreys, fringed and crowned at the edge with lace. The cloth is an imitation of a piece of Indian chintz (printed cotton) with a bird and branch motif laden with pagan (Hindu) symbolism – the tree of life, the fertility evident in the species presented in pairs, the contrast between heaven and earth and the struggle between good and evil (J. MECO, 1989: 204-205) – naturally lessened in this purely formal transposition of a decorative theme. In the middle, in a medallion, is the inscription “.S./GONCALO/DAVARZIA”. Perched in trees can be seen pairs of peacocks; below them snails, also in pairs; at the base, pairs of lions, rabbits and deer.

The side panels, inspired by the same theme as the cloth on the frontal, depict flower and fertility vases, flanked by pairs of parrots. These are framed by phytomorphic borders and crowned by lace.

The vibrant polychrome of glassy blues, yellows, greens and purple

is common to tiled altar frontals from the second and third quarters of the 17th century, distinguished merely by the colour of the outlines: cobalt blue, in the former case, and manganese purple, in the second (J. MECO, 1989: 206). They are manifestly comparable to some examples of Portuguese tile-making heritage, of which the set of five altars in the cloister of the Convent of Santa Teresa de Jesus de Carnide in Lisbon stands out.

PR



Photograph: José Paulo Ruas

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