

Tarouca

Mosteiro de Salzedas



Monastery of Salzedas

Santa Maria de Salzedas: the power and domination of the Cistercians

It is a true wonder, inescapable upon entering the village and realizing the grandeur of the monument. It is also odd, considering the typical façade of a late Baroque: it is incomplete. We can certainly imagine two bell towers that were never erected, but that is also part of the charm of the monastery of Santa Maria de Salzedas. We are in the municipality of Tarouca, in a wine-growing area leaning against the rivers Douro, to the north, and Dão, to the south. This is Távora-Va-rosa, a region that produces the best sparkling wines, and the territory of the Cistercian Order since the beginning of the nationality. And all of that is connected.

The building of the monastery began in 1168, with the church evolving into an imposing Gothic structure of three naves. This structure remained, although different construction campaigns (especially in the 17th and 18th



The façade was still under construction in the early 19th century and remained unfinished

centuries) have been overlaid, as a church resting over others. Only some details, especially where the plaster was removed, on the side of the Epistle (an expression used to reference the right of those who enter the

church, opposing the side of the Gospel), reveal what was there before: columns, capitals, arches and, on the stones, the marks engraved by those who worked on them (in one of the cloisters, the outer wall of the church reads a fair amount of mason's marks). But not only that: in the northern arm of the transept is the door that gave access to the original bell tower; to the left of those who enter the temple, the tomb of Teresa Afonso, the founder of the monastery and second wife of Egas Moniz (traditionally described as the aide to the first king of Portugal). All of this somehow takes us to the medieval abbey.

The church and the cloisters are the seeming result of the great interventions from the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries, including Mannerist and Baroque features. The Baroque influence is noticeable not only in the building itself, but in artistic details such as the altar pieces or the tiling. Let us focus on the cloisters, which are important for us to understand both the pinnacle and the end of this powerful abbey. They clearly show the effects of the galloping decay af-



Cloister of the chapter, rebuilt at the end of the 17th century; on the right, the main chapel of the church



ter the extinction of religious orders, brought about by liberalism in 1834. The collation cloister, the first that the visitor comes across, is both the oldest and the most recent. Let us explain the paradox: this space, to the west of the original cloister, had its building begun in the first half of the 16th century, as indicated by the documentation and the mannerist outline, marked by the Tuscan columns and the upper floor. However, the original cloister (from the chapter) made way to a structure that, while keeping the medieval trapeze shape (and the medieval walls), dates from the late 17th century. This last transformation, and others such

as the vestry (where the ark and a pictorial ensemble depicting the lives of Benedict of Norcia and Bernard of Clairvaux stand out) or the church itself, are associated with the arrival of the Maltese architect Carlos Gimach to Salzedas. It was he who idealized the imposing façade of the temple, which he did not supervise, leaving the work in charge of a rococo master from Northern Portugal. This work that presumably stopped by the time of Napoleonic invasions.

A National Monument since 1997, the monastery underwent restoring in 2002. In 2009, it joined the Rede de Monumentos do Vale do Varosa (Vale do Varosa Monuments Network). In 2011, it opened to the public, with a museum space where much of the artistic collection can be appreciated. Two tablets of a polyptych were attributed to Grão Vasco, but historiography has already suggested that this might not be correct. The essential aspect there is the importance of the Cistercian monks in a vast territory. Their influence extends to the production of sparkling wines, now a local visiting card.



The design of the vestry is testimony to the passage of Maltese architect Carlos Gimach through Salzedas



The order that grew alongside the kingdom of Portugal

The foundation of the Cistercian Order (Cîteaux) by Saint Robert of Molesme dates back to 1096. It was a reform of the Benedictine rule linked to the structuring of the West in the Late Middle Ages when it took precedence over the previous reform of Cluny. The enormous dissemination of Cistercianism is linked to St. Bernard of Clairvaux, as early as the second decade of the 12th century. In Portugal, it occurred alongside the formation of nationality. The most well-known Cistercian abbey in Portugal is that of Santa Maria de Alcobaça (mother house of the order since 1153), but it was in São João de Tarouca, seven kilometers straight from Salzedas, that Cistercians settled for the first time in the young kingdom, in 1144. Since D. Afonso Henriques, the first king of Portugal, the white monks have been essential to the affirmation of the first dynasty, playing a vital role in the planning of the territory and gaining increasing importance, not only cultural or spiritual, but also economic.





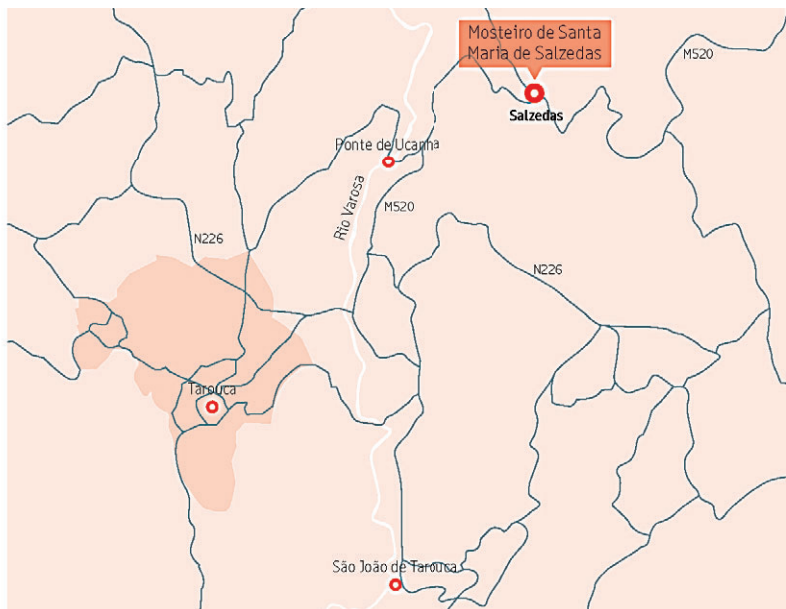


↑ Monastery of Salzedas





→ Mosteiro de Salzedas



Monastery of Salzedas



COFINANCIAMENTO



PROMOTOR



CO-PROMOTORES

