



32.

CHURCH
OF SAINT
JAMES OF
VALADARES



Lugar da Igreja
Valadares
Baião



41° 8' 40.24" N
7° 58' 58.61" W



+351 918 116 488



Sat., 4 pm/5 pm (win./
sum.) or Sun., 9 am



Saint James
25th July



Public Interest
Monument, 2012



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Valadares is, as the toponym recalls, a fertile valley with a healthy environment. Here we find the small Church of Saint James of Valadares, which fits into the peripheral “resistance Romanesque” or “rural Gothic” style and it is a late example of a building marked by the difficulties of the Middle Ages: few resources, the distance from major centres, manorial and ecclesiastical interferences, etc. Perhaps this is the reason behind the reconstruction of the chancel when an inscription from the Era of 1226 (1188) - possibly a reminiscence from the previous building - was reused.

Consisting of a single nave and a square chancel, which is narrower and lower than the nave, the Church features a vernacular structure; it is considered “rustic” by a few authors due to the shape and arrangement of its ashlar with different sizes and which result in somewhat irregular walls. It is in the chancel and on the north façade that we find the Church’s primitive series of modillions whose decoration includes rolls, balls and a few somewhat unpretentious figures. The late nature of these corbels is shown in the difficult adjustment of the sculpted elements to the original shape of this supporting element.



On the north façade, the persistence of protruding corbels halfway up the wall indicates the previous existence of a porch-like structure.

The main façade is surmounted by a belfry for two bells and its only opening is a portal carved in the thickness of the wall, whose composition confirms the late chronology of the Church's construction (late 13th century). The outer archivolt is slightly broken, flat and with moderately bevelled edges. On the other hand, the inner one is dotted with pearls on the chamfer, a motif that is repeated on the impost. The portal of the south façade also confirms this thesis, because it consists of a single plain archivolt carved in the thickness of the wall.

The sculptures carved in relief that mark the beginning of the main façade's gable

have been a matter of discussion: on the left there is a rabbit or a hare, perhaps symbolising a communal wish for fertility and, on the opposite side, there is a yet unidentified animal.

For better or worse, manorial power was always a constant in the history of Valadares. On the one hand, the Church was established in private properties and was, therefore, subject to the excesses of several family members until the power of the Catholic Church put an end to this type of interventions. But it never left the sphere of the lords of Baião, the municipality which Valadares always belonged to. The noblemen appointed as abbots, either men they trusted and whom they were close to - like João Camelo de Sousa, in the 15th century -, or their own sons, who profited from the Church's revenues.





In fact, this illustrious abbot was the mentor of the mural paintings that, until very recently, were considered as an enigmatic element within the context of Portuguese wall art. These paintings depict scenes arranged as a fake altarpiece divided into several panels that included male and female saints and scenes from the life of Christ: *Saint Catherine of Alexandria*, the *Lamentation over the Dead Christ*, *Saint James*, *Saint Barbara* and *Saint Paul*. On the north wall, a series of fantastic animals apparently wishes to show us the way down to Hell.

This beautiful series of pictorial representations already reveals the considerable investment associated with the decoration of the Church that was certainly made by the lords of Baião who held the patronage of Valadares.

The interior of the Church underwent several changes in the Modern Period. The medieval space was covered with gilded and polychrome wood altarpieces. Saint James, the pilgrim, was also reviewed in

the light of the Dominican preaching that probably got here through the Monastery of Ancede (Baião) (p. 139); the preaching monks talked of a Moor-slaying Apostle who fought against heresy and Protestantism that, despite never having reached Valadares, were echoing far away in Europe. So, the somewhat eccentric iconography of Christ's companion stands out both on the chancel arch and on the nave's ceiling; it is indeed different from the Baroque sculpture (the patron) that rests, much like a watchful pilgrim, on a niche in the main altarpiece.

This structure stands out by the precious articulation between its National Baroque woodwork and the small chancel whose coffered ceiling seems to be a horizontal extension of the vertical carpentry and joinery work.

In the nave there are two collateral altars that emerge as elements of the community's devotional expression. In the 18th century they were dedicated to the Holy Name of Jesus and to the Virgin of the

THE RIGHT OF PATRONAGE

The right of patronage allowed the possibility of appointing the parish priest and collecting the parish church's revenues. The clergyman's wage and the money allocated to the chancel's construction were taken out of these revenues; the nave was under the parishioners' responsibility. The church's patrons, either lay or ecclesiastical, did not always fulfil their duty of keeping the chancel as properly clean, repaired and decorated as the church's noblest space was supposed to be. But many did it in a zealous way and, especially, with the intention of leaving their mark, or that of their lineage, that would work as a means of promotion and a model of prestige or piety.

Rosary, currently "replaced" by the titles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Virgin of the Rosary of Fátima. They are part of a larger structure that covers the entire chancel arch, which is feverishly decorated with niches and pediments, twisted and fluted columns that combine several grammars and languages from the Mannerist period to the Johannine Baroque style [style which develops during the reign of King João V (k. 1706-1750)].

Above the arc, Saint James, "the Moor-slayer", is flanked by two major saints from the Dominican Order: Saint Gonçalo (recognised by the bridge that accompanies him) (p. 278) and Saint Vincent Ferrer, the guide of souls.

Therefore, the interior of this Church is a good example of how the aesthetic language of a Romanesque church is easily modernised according to new tastes and different liturgies.



DON'T MISS OUT

- 17.5 km: Village of Mafómedes (p. 273)
- 8.3 km: Eça de Queiroz Foundation (p. 273)