



THE COLLEGIATE CHURCH OF PASTRANA AND ITS ARCHITECTONICAL DEVELOPMENT.

The origin of the collegiate church goes back to the Middle Ages, when the knights of the military order of Calatrava, at the time lords of that area of the country, built a small church in Romanic style at the end of the twelfth century. The only piece kept of the original building is the bell tower, of a strong and defensive character, reflecting the period in which it was raised. The Crucifix placed in one of the niches of the transept, a magnificent wood statue of the transition to the Gothic (end of the thirteenth and beginning of the fourteenth century), impressive not only for its size but also for its artistic quality and preservation, also belongs to that age.

As a consequence of the increase in both power and population, the church of Pastrana underwent two big expansions; the first one ca. 1500 in late Gothic style, affected the two lateral naves, the retrochoir and the main door, or North door. The second expansion was undertaken by D. Fr. Pedro González de Mendoza (1570-1639), son of the first dukes of Pastrana. He ordered the demolition of the Gothic front, and built, between 1625 and 1637, the monumental and luminous part of the temple. Of this reform the main altarpiece of 1636, the work of the artist Andres Extarja, from the city of Sigüenza, stands out. In it the feminine gender predominates: ten women saints at both sides of the central section, this one crowned at the height by the Crucifix of Matias Ximeno, St. Francis at the center, and below, over the tabernacle, a magnificent painting that represents the Assumption of the Holy Virgin, the patroness of the collegial church. This painting, finished in 1624, is the first work signed by the French Jacques Stella (1596-1657), its most surprising feature being that it is painted on agate stone. It was one of the gifts of Pope Urban VIII to the third Duke of Pastrana when he was ambassador to the Holy See (1623-1626).

In the new structure, the choir of the collegiate with its walnut seats was installed inside the Gothic church; it was commissioned by D. Fr. Pedro González de Mendoza to the craftsman Juan de Arteaga, from the town of Mondéjar. Within the choir, we may contemplate the magnificent funerary catafalque—another gift of Fr. Pedro— surrounded by chandeliers, maces and crosses in ebony. Another piece deserving attention is the organ, in perfect use and upkeep. Of Iberian style, it was finished in 1704 by the master organ builder Domingo de Mendoza. Its baroque frame covers the 931 tubes hidden in its box.



During the work of expansion of the collegiate, Fr. Pedro built the Ducal crypt under the high altar of the church. It is arranged in the form of a Latin cross, with the main altar in the front, and the stony urn of Fr. Pedro, the sponsor of the construction, at the opposite extreme. He died in 1639, being bishop of Sigüenza, after he had been archbishop of Granada (1610-1616) and Zaragoza (1616-1623). To the right of Fr. Pedro are located the sepulchers of the parents of the Princess of Eboli; to the left, Fr. Pedro's parents, Princes of Eboli and first dukes of Pastrana: in the lower niche Ruy Gomez de Silva, who died in 1573, and over the urn of her husband, Da. Ana de Mendoza, deceased in 1592. In the crypt two types of urns are found; the ones in limestone were there from the beginning, while the ones in marble were brought in in the nineteenth century by the tenth duke of Pastrana from the crypt of the Mendoza family in the convent of St. Francis in Guadalajara. That crypt followed the model of the royal pantheon in Escorial, and was vandalized by the French soldiers in the war of independence (1808-1814).

THE PARISH MUSEUM OF PASTRANA

First gallery

The first gallery contains on its side walls four tapestries of the six that represent the exploits of Alfonso V of Portugal (1432-1481) in North Africa. In the front wall of the gallery there is another tapestry, also Flemish, but from the end of the sixteenth century, and with Alexander the Great as its protagonist.

The first four pieces, now known as the famous "tapestries of Pastrana", are considered by the experts among the best ones in both Spain and the world, not only for their size (11 by 4 meters) and their age (end of the fifteenth century), but above all for their historical accuracy (a visual contemporary chronicle of Portuguese victories in North Africa), and for their artistic quality, rich chromatism, and excellent maintenance. It is commonly assumed that they were weaved in the city of Tournai, site of the best manufactures of Flemish tapestries. They narrate with admirable detail events of the epoch in which they were weaved, the conquest of the African cities of Arcila and Tangier, carried out by King Alfonso V of Portugal in August of 1471.

At this time no document of the period is known that would inform us about how and when the tapestries became the property of the dukes of Infantado. They are first mentioned in Guadalajara in 1532 in the estate of the duke D. Diego Hurtado de Mendoza.



On the other hand, it is documented that on May 18 1667 the chapter of the collegiate of Pastrana accepted the six pieces donated by the eighth duchess of Infantado, D^a Catalina Gómez de Sandoval y Mendoza, the wife of D. Rodrigo de Silva y Mendoza (1598-1673), fourth Duke of Pastrana.

From 1950 until the construction of the new rooms in 2014, the tapestries were exhibited in the parish museum, then located in the main sacristy of the old collegial church. In 2008, on the recommendation of the Carlos de Amberes Foundation and the bishop of Sigüenza-Guadalajara, the pieces were transferred to the Belgian city of Malinas, where they underwent a process of cleaning and restoration. For this contribution the Carlos de Amberes Foundation obtained in 2011 the Prize "Europa Nostra" in the category of preservation, and the right to exhibit the restored pieces in several museums. Until 2014, the year in which they returned to Pastrana, they were displayed in several cities, in both Europe and The United States.

The disembarkation before Arcila

This tapestry shows the arrival of the Portuguese ships before the city in the evening of August 20, and the shipwreck that occurs due to the bad state of the sea. The piece consists of several scenes: a) the ships in the high sea and the soldiers boarding the boats in order to reach the coast; b) in it appear for the first time the King and his son Prince Juan, and c) in the third scene some Portuguese boats are shipwrecked while other soldiers reach land led by the two royal persons, and with the inhabitants of Arcila gazing in expectation.

The siege of Arcila

The Portuguese army besieges the city for three days and builds a wooden palisade around its camp in order to protect the rearguard from eventual enemy attacks. The Portuguese divide their assault in two sectors, led respectively by the King and the Prince, each one on either side of the tapestry. The weapons of both artillery and fire are reproduced in detail, showing the strategy employed in attacks to fortified cities. Another reason for the great significance of these tapestries is the way in which they show how the Portuguese army organized itself.

The assault to Arcila

On August 24, after demolishing part of the wall, the Portuguese assault the city. Of the four pieces in the collection, this is the most dynamic and dramatic one. Prince don



Juan appears on the left side with his baton of command, while on the right the more impacting image of King Alfonso V is shown brandishing the sword in order to encourage his subjects for the conquest of the city. The decoration of his armor and the trappings of his horse are particularly conspicuous. While the Portuguese infantry attempts to enter the walled city, the Muslim troops defend it from inside.

The entrance in Tangiers

The fourth and last tapestry of this series represents “the taking of Tangiers”, the true objective of the Portuguese. Four days after the conquest of Arcila, and given the short distance between the two cities, the Portuguese troupes enter Tangiers without opposition, its inhabitants having fled at night as they felt defenseless and knew that many people had died in Arcila. The piece consists of three sections: in the first one Arcila can be seen in the horizon and how the Portuguese march in a triumphal pageant and a marvelous movement toward the main gate of Tangiers; the city is open, and above the gate, a soldier is placing the Portuguese banner. At the center Tangiers is represented in the image of a Northern European city, suggesting to the spectator its riches and importance. However, in order to show the actual identity of the city the walls are reproduced as they were in the XVth. century. The last scene is the most moving one: the people of Tangiers appear leaving the city with their most valued assets, women with their children in hand or in their arms, and faces with deep sadness.

SECOND GALLERY

The set of drawers used to be in the first gallery, which was the main sacristy, and was built in the seventeenth century during the enlargement of the collegial church by D. Fr. Pedro Gonzalez de Mendoza. The drawers contain liturgical ornaments, many of which are still used in solemn celebrations. Moreover, they reflect the splendor of Pastrana in the sixteenth century, when the Holy See granted to the parish the dignity of collegiate with forty-eight canons. Thus, it became the second chapter in Castile, only below the primate cathedral of Toledo, which numbered fifty. Above the drawers there are several wooden statues of the Castilian school of the seventeenth century, such as the Virgin of Almudena or the Assumption of Mary, choir books of Gregorian and polyphonic music, samples of the rich archive of the collegiate, as well as a copy of “St. Jerome in penance” by El Greco.



Two paintings allow us to appreciate the development of the art in little more than a century. The “Descent of the Cross” (which may have been part of the original high altar piece of the collegiate), oil on wood by Juan de Borgoña (ca. 1535), a representative of the early Castilian Renaissance, and “Saint Bernard in front of the Virgin and the Child”, finished by Juan Carreño de Miranda in 1668, in a baroque style, highly theatrical in its composition, treatment of space, etc.

In this second gallery two other tapestries are displayed, also showing conquests of Alfonso V of Portugal, in this case the city of Alcazarseguer in 1456. They were weaved around 1500 in an atelier at Brussels; the chromatic game is different from the four of the first gallery, with duller and less variegated colors. In turn, these pieces stand out for the sharper expression of the faces, the richness of the clothes worn by some personages, and a higher percentage of silk. In the first one the monarch receives the noblemen in a hand-kissing reception, and afterwards enters under pallium the cathedral of Lagos, in the Portuguese Algarve. The second tapestry consists of three scenes: the march of the army from Lagos toward the port, the vessels in transit, in which the flagship musters the figure of Alfonso V, and in the third scene the arrival of the troupes at the African shore.

THIRD GALLERY OR CHAPTER HALL

It is also known as the treasure room and exhibits numerous works of great artistic quality. Among the pieces of precious metal work, the oldest one in the museum is the relic-chest (arqueta) of Limoges (France) of the end of the XIIIth century, in the front of which appears the child Jesus imparting a blessing. Equally worth of attention is the sixteenth century perfume spreading vase (pebetero) in the form of a nautilus richly decorated with vegetarian and oriental motives, and with its mythological filigree in gilded silver. Next comes the small retable of the Pietà, with a mixture of bronze, enamels, precious stones and ivory, resulting in a work that surprises for its delicate beauty and harmony. It was one of the gifts of Pope Urban VIII to ambassador Ruy Gómez de Silva y de la Cerda, third duke of Pastrana.

There are also two wood sculptures, which some scholars attribute to the school of Salzillo, while others place them in the Madrid school of the eighteenth century. Their authors are unknown to this day but the works muster great artistic quality; one is the Prophet Elias, with a remarkable frown, and the other the “Divine Shepherdess” with a sweet and delicate gesture in her face. Both are dressed in the habit of the Carmelite order, since they belonged to the convents founded by St. Teresa of Jesus in Pastrana in in the sixteenth century.



For this reason, the collegiate as well as the museum keep and exhibit relics of St. Teresa, the most important of which is a small piece of flesh contained in a bust with her face, now located in the chapel of baptisms. There is also a hand-written letter of St. John of the Cross.

Some of the works exhibited in the museum are still used in solemn Eucharistic celebrations. Of all processional crosses, the largest one and of greater silversmithing quality still opens some processions. It consists of two different pieces, the cross in Gothic style belongs to the middle of the fifteenth century, while the knot below the cross, where the twelve apostles are engraved, dates from the middle of the sixteenth century. The temple-like silver structure and the monstrance contained within it, are also carried in procession on the day of Corpus Christi, and the big silver tabernacle or Eucharistic ark is used to contain the body of Christ in the monument of the Holy Thursday.

We also can contemplate several paintings of great value, of which the portrait of the distinguished patron of our collegiate, Fr. Pedro Gonzalez de Mendoza, attributed to Matias Ximeno, may be singled out for its historical significance.