

THE DOME AS REASON AND SCIENCE IN DEVOTIONAL CONSTRUCTION

Maria de Lurdes Craveiro^{1 2}

Universidade de Coimbra, Faculdade de Letras da Universidade de Coimbra |
Centro de Estudos em Arqueologia, Artes e Ciências do Património

Abstract

The covering of devotional space with the dome option is a strategy of the architectural design affirmed in Coimbra and Portugal with the arrival of Jean de Rouen. A theme originated from classical culture and always associated with the centralization of plans, it would be up to Jean de Rouen to introduce it to the altarpiece plasticity that organizes the devotional world of the Christian church of the 16th century. But, at the same time that the cosmic dimension contained there captures the scientific nature of discourse, it also goes beyond the "two-dimensional" boundary of the altarpiece as well. Quickly, the solution of the dome would integrate a harmonic set between the created space and the forms; and between the elements of architecture, ornament and decoration.

With particular focus on the central region of Portugal and the area of activity of Jean de Rouen, the new chapels to be built would often adopt a system of coverage from which it is possible to recognize the French artist. It also identifies an erudite character based on his presumable formation in Normandy and in all the contributions provided by the Italian Renaissance and the architectural treatises. More than a sculptor, Jean de Rouen is perhaps more concerned with the definition of space and with issues related to proportion and balance in the use of such space.

Key-words: Architecture, sculpture, Jean de Rouen, dome, Renaissance.

Resumo

A cobertura do espaço devocional com a opção da cúpula constitui uma estratégia do desenho arquitetónico que se afirma em Coimbra e em Portugal com a chegada de Jean de Rouen. Tema oriundo da cultura clássica e sempre conotado com a centralização dos planos, caberia a Jean de Rouen introduzi-lo na plasticidade retabular que organiza o mundo devocional na igreja cristã do século XVI. Mas, ao mesmo tempo que a dimensão cósmica aí instalada capta a natureza científica do discurso, ultrapassa também a fronteira "bidimensional" do retábulo. Rapidamente, a solução da cúpula passaria a integrar um conjunto harmónico entre o espaço criado e as formas e entre os elementos de arquitetura e o ornamento e a decoração.

Com particular incidência na região centro de Portugal e na área de atuação de Jean de Rouen, as novas capelas erguidas passariam frequentemente a adotar um sistema de cobertura a partir do qual se reconhece a marca do artista francês. Identifica-se também um carácter erudito e apoiado na sua presumível formação na Normandia e em todos os contributos fornecidos pela Itália do Renascimento e pela tratadística. Mais do que um mero escultor de figura avulsa ou retabular, Jean de Rouen está talvez mais preocupado com a definição do espaço e com as questões relacionadas com a proporção e o equilíbrio no usufruto do espaço.

Palavras-chave: Arquitetura, escultura, João de Ruão, cúpula, Renascimento.

¹ mlcraveiro@gmail.com

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Respecting to the dome that encloses the architectural space, this text will face three fundamental problems regarding to what Jean de Rouen's production tells us. The first will deal with:

I. The difficulty of placing Jean de Rouen as architect or sculptor, while, at the same time, understanding up to what point is legit and historiographically appropriate to limit him to just one of these disciplinary areas.

From the first time (approximately 1528) it is possible to detect his presence in Portugal, exactly in the portal of the church of Atalaia (Fig. 1), we can verify the confluence of both areas, architecture and sculpture. In the likeness to an "arch of triumph" framing the facade, respecting the basilar ingredients of classic architecture, or in the sculptural work of the sparse figure and the representation in relief, the result is always the perception of the familiarity of the artist with the most beloved procedures of the Renaissance culture.

The constant presence of ornamentation will be the most distinctive mark of his work and, precisely, the one that the artistic historiography highlighted the most. That is perhaps the clearest indication of his provenance. Had he arrived from Italy, where, in the first quarter of the 16th century, was already emerging a different understanding of form passing through the containment in the relation of forces between space and ornament, and I believe his production would have been completely different.

It was in the circles of Gaillon and Rouen, related with the lessons and the decorative

practices coming mostly from Lombardy and Northern Italy, that Jean de Rouen acquired his initial training. It was around the big ateliers under the sponsorship of Cardinal George d'Amboise or the works happening in the first quarter of 16th century in Rouen, including the big endeavor of the Cardinal's tomb, that Jean de Rouen familiarized himself with Italian sensibility and understood the eloquent force of ornaments (Calame-Levert *et al.*, 2017). We just need to think about the castle of Gaillon to find one of the most generous sources of his balanced work between sculpture and architecture. With an Italian decoration and elevated in three overlapping registers, the "Door of Genoa" (Pierre Fain, 1506-1508), to which António Justi should make the golden bronze plates (Bardati *et al.*, 2003: 15-16), offers maybe the most evident parallel to the Especiosa Door



Fig.1 - Portal of the church of Atalaia, Jean de Rouen, c. 1528. @ Maria de Lurdes Craveiro

(Fig. 2, 3) in the Old Cathedral in Coimbra, even if both revolve around the door of the castle in Naples.

If Jean de Rouen arrived in Coimbra attracted by the stone of Ançã, the regional soft limestone, we would have to deduce his main motive was sculpture. If, on the other hand, what took him to Portugal and Coimbra formed part of a bigger and more complex process integrating the working relations between Portugal and Northern Europe and the common displacement of artists searching for better working opportunities, then Jean de Rouen could be claimed by the areas of sculpture and architecture. Or, as it was a common occurrence in those days, he could have practiced both skills simultaneously, similar to what was happening in Italy in the 15th and 16th centuries.

Nicolau Chanterene or Francisco Lorete are precisely two of the more emblematic names of the Renaissance artistic culture in Portugal. They are both Frenchmen who knew and worked with Jean de Rouen, both arrived in Portugal under unknown circumstances, both worked in Coimbra and both moved around in the sculpture and architecture domains. Chanterene was always linked to stone, Francisco Lorete, was linked to wood and stone, and by chance, born (just like his brother Pedro Lorete, also architect in Portugal) in the village of “*mirepues... a desaseys legoas de paris*” (Bilou, 2016: 171). If Francisco also passed in “*mirepues*” (Mirepoix – Ariège, in the area of Toulouse), learning with the sculptor Jean Rancy – Feuillet (just like, maybe, his brother Pedro), it is yet to prove (Bilou, 2017: 55-56) and remains still possible that its origins were not far from those of Chanterene and Jean

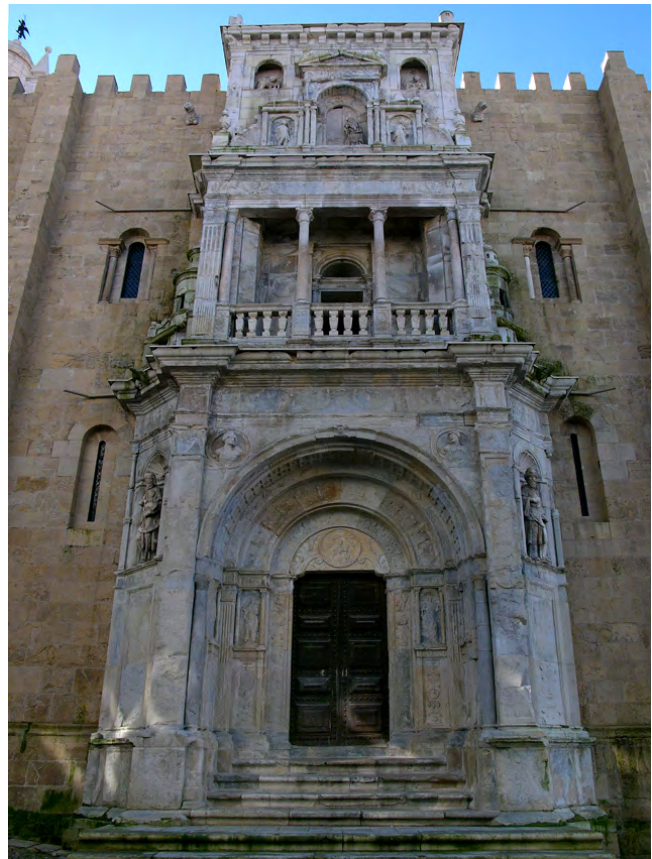


Fig. 2 - Especiosa Door, Old Cathedral, Coimbra, Jean de Rouen, 1535-1540. @ Pedro Medeiros



Fig. 3 - Door of Genoa, Castle of Gaillon, 1506-1508. @ Maria de Lurdes Craveiro

de Rouen. On the other hand, if the union between sculpture and architecture is a known exercise with Chanterene (as it would be the case with Jean de Rouen), to Francisco Lorete would fall the responsibility of the enlargement of the chairs for the high chorus of the Santa Cruz church (Coimbra) in their new space, a woodwork executed in 1531 (Garcia, 1923: 24), as well as the responsibility of the portal of the church of Arronches (c. 1540) and the construction of the Chapel of Our Lady of Light, also in Arronches (1539) (Flor, 2004: 131-151; Bilou, 2016: 165-188). If not before, his link, as “*carpinteiro de marcenaria*”, with Jean de Rouen, designated as “*pedreiro de marcenaria*”, began in 1532 when Rouen showed up as guarantor in the contract where Francisco Lorete commits himself to make the organ box for the church of the Monastery of Santa Cruz (Garcia, 1913: 249-251).

The Santa Cruz Monastery in Coimbra (Fig. 4) is therefore the place where all these men met and the key that allows us to understand the relationship between them all. The reformation of the monastic structure began in 1507 under the authority of King Manuel I, and it was where the big reshaping of spaces began. After 1527 it would go through the spiritual reform that embraced the modern plasticity of Jean de Rouen and of so many French, Spaniards, Italians, Flemish or German artists. In the 1520s, the great stone-works in the Jerónimos Monastery in Lisbon were mostly finished; Évora had not yet began the great investment to coincide with the presence of King João III and the Convent of Christ in Tomar was waiting for a new interventive breath, after having closed the campaign for the construction of the new church transforming the templar church into the main chapel.

Indeed, the Santa Cruz Monastery in Coimbra was in the 1520s the most interesting structure in Portugal for the expectations of foreign artists. The probable personal links of the members of this religious order to an educated Europe, able to stimulate the movements of suitable workers to the demands of a modern sensibility, and, on the other hand, their submission to the royal authority, must be considered in this process. These conditions promoted a central operative works, lasting until 1543 due to the loss of a big part of their patrimony and a major concentration by the king to the space and performance of the University.

In 1530 Jean de Rouen had already much and good work done at the monastery, which indicates his arrival prior to this date. Documentation offers many indicators of



Fig. 4 - Church of the Monastery of Santa Cruz, Coimbra, 12th century-16th century. @ Pedro Medeiros

multiple professional statuses and of his responsibility at different levels. In 1540 Jean de Rouen is designated in a document as a contractor building a barn for the Clerisy of Coimbra (Garcia, 1913: 144-146), and for the first time as an architect in 1566 (Garcia, 1913: 32-35). In 1549 he has work done in the church of Mercy in Coimbra, which implies the commitment to sculpture and architecture (altarpieces, chapels and a balcony) (Garcia, 1913: 196-197). In 1565 he had finished the chapel and altarpiece in the chapel of Tesoureiro for the church of S. Domingos (Garcia, 1913: 75-85) and in 1566 concludes the Sacramento chapel in Coimbra's Old Cathedral, also joining sculpture and architecture. The construction of the church of Salvador de Bouças in Matosinhos (1559-1576) (Garcia, 1913: 93-121) ended up being a painful endeavor that was only completed with the assistance of his partner Tomé Velho (also an architect and sculptor). In 1580, the year of his death, the bricklayer Gaspar da Fonseca was named master of works in the Cathedral of Coimbra, replacing Jean de Rouen in that position (Garcia, 1913: 179-180).

The architectural works attributed to Jean de Rouen integrate even more, like the small temple and balcony before the new cloister of the Entrance of the monastery of Santa Cruz, the idea for the definition of space and the decoration of the Fountain of Manga' cloister, the projection of the centralized system built in the augustine monastery of Serra do Pilar at Gaia, a verified participation in the important structure of the College of Arts in Coimbra and the chapel of the Three Kings in the hieronymite monastery of S. Marcos (c. 1574) in Tentúgal. More than enough reasons to think of Jean de Rouen as an architect in a cultural environment that always

knew how to combine the ornament with the projection of space.

In a previous place (Craveiro, 2020: 215-218) I already defended an architect profile for Jean de Rouen. Integrated in a context already dominated by the architect Diogo de Castilho, he found it more difficult to position himself as a candidate for the works at Santa Cruz or for the giant operation generated by the university colleges, after 1537. Truth be told, Jean de Rouen was a sculptor and an architect at the same time, as most great contemporary artists admittedly did at the time.

The second issue on this, goes through the approach to:

II. Formal, spatial and decorative criteria in the architecture of Jean de Rouen.

Jean de Rouen is undoubtedly one of the biggest heirs of an aesthetical vision that reconciles Classic Antiquity with a Neoplatonic philosophy, conceiving an image of the universe as a harmonic construction where men and the arts are the reflection of a superior cosmic order. For that reason, his artistic production will always include the principles of regulation, harmony, proportion or perfection. It includes the scientific spheres of geometry and mathematics, stereotomy or a philosophy with Christian origins that also integrates the intellectuals of Antiquity. In short, Jean de Rouen is, and as all his works prove, an artist who dominates the knowledge through a practice exercised, first in France, and a theoretical sense consolidated mostly in Coimbra. His involvement with Santa

Cruz Monastery and his continued connection to the monastic structures and the University, would allow him easy access to information on the artistic world from abroad and to all the updated literature that filled the libraries of monasteries and university colleges. A clear example that proves his constant connection to the external universe of representation comes from the medallion alluding to *Opportunity* at the National Museum Machado de Castro (Fig. 5). Set with the shape of *tondo* and with the border filled with foliage and fruit motifs is a consequence of the production of the Florentine workshop of the della Robbia, as well as the *Emblems* disclosed by Alciato (1531) (Fig. 6) that, at various occasions, would have expression in the accompaniment of several books published in Europe (Dias, 1995: 62-63). His contacts at the highest level or his family relations, including his son-in-law Henrique from Köln, librarian (married to his daughter Maria de Ruão, deceased in 1559) (Garcia, 1913: 122-127) empowered him to obtain a degree of update knowledge that never eradicated his Norman heritage. His entire sculpture and architecture production vouch for it.



Fig. 5 - *The Opportunity*, Jean de Rouen, c. 1545: MNMC, Coimbra. @ Maria de Lurdes Craveiro.



Fig. 6 - *In Occasionem* (Emblema CXXI). In: Sebastián, Santiago (1993). *Alciato. Emblemas*. Madrid: Ed. Akal, p. 160.

In this confluence of procedures, what emerges from his architecture is the leaning on centralized plans, always accompanied by the decorative profusion justified by the keeping with the humanist values around the Santa Cruz

Monastery and the University. The *tempietto* of the new cloister of the Entrance in

the Santa Cruz Monastery, inscribed in the great reform after 1527, and only known by the drawing of 18th century (Fig. 7), shows how from very early and since his arrival at Coimbra, Jean de Rouen knew how to complexify the surfaces on the walls, giving them an added value around the idea of perfection. The small tower which still remains today

(after its recovery on the 20th century) in the

facade of apparatus of the

building that was, beginning in 1515, the Parliament of Normandy (and today the Palace of Justice) underlines the importance of the facade (as it happened with several cylindrical structures in other palatial works in Normandy), following or not an internal progression and finishing the gothic cycle in Rouen (Fig. 8). The

building, which was part of the Royal Palace, was

fundamentally finished in 1526. It remains to be seen how far Jean de Rouen brought its memory to Coimbra; not the formal design, but the idea of the volume on the facade.

Still in that reformist process that adapted spaces to the new spiritual discipline for the canons of Santa Cruz, the Fountain of Manga (Fig. 9) is an important moment of creative freedom, submitted to a culture that integrates the values of *devotio moderna*. Widely referred to throughout all bibliography dealing with Renaissance architecture in Portugal, and with a symbolic sense agreeing with Christian humanism (Abreu, 1999: 64-68), for the Fountain of Manga, in addition to other participants³, is to Friar Brás de Barros and Jean de Rouen⁴ that we have to credit for the idea of this complex central plan that in 1540 left Francisco Mendanha seriously embarrassed while describing it⁵, and in 1589 still amazed Jerónimo Roman⁶.

Virgílio Correia vaguely proved the inspiration for the layout of Manga in the building of Villa Adriana in Tivoli (Correia, 1946: 267). The recent reconstitutions of the designated *Maritime Theater*, which was serving as a rest house for the emperor, showed some proximity to the Fountain of Manga, especially regarding the crossing between the two geometrical shapes of circle and square (Adembri *et al.*, 2017: 599-604), without dismissing other possibilities, always searching for the cosmic perfection. It is in the broad universe of references supporting this model that can be found a formal proximity, translated, for example, in the text and drawings of Filarete (Fig. 10). Not that it had arrived to Portugal by then. It is more like the expression of an idea abundantly

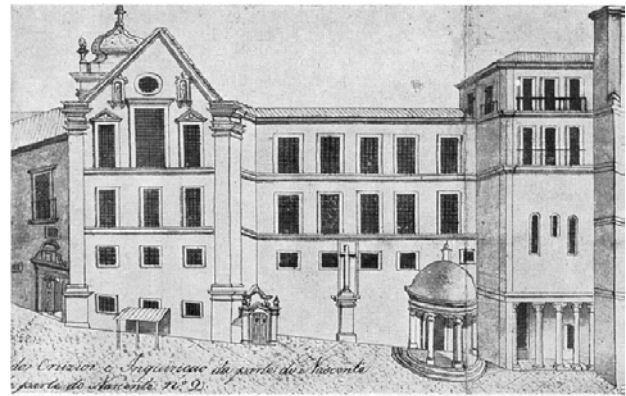


Fig. 7 - Drawing of the facade of the monastery of Santa Cruz (detail), José Carlos Magne, 1796: MNMC, Coimbra, Inv. nº 2941; DA133.



Fig. 8 - Palace of Justice, Rouen, first decades of the 16th century. @ Maria de Lurdes Craveiro



Fig. 9 - Fountain of Manga Cloister, Monastery of Santa Cruz, Coimbra, Jean de Rouen and others, 1533. @ Pedro Medeiros

³ Historiography had no doubts in attributing to Pero de Évora, Diogo Fernandes and Fernão Luís the work of the tanks, the four small towers and the arches regarding to masonry, to Jerónimo Afonso the role of the stonework and to Jean de Rouen the altarpieces and other imaginary: Correia, 1946: 270; Gonçalves, 1947: 56-57; Dias, 1988: 208-210.

⁴ The monastery Note Books record the payment of “*seys colunas que estam nos cubelos da claustra nova scilicet a duzentos reais cada hua*”, to “*Joham de Ruão e a Jheronymo Aº cento e setenta e seis mill e seiscentos rreais por a obra que fizeram dos cubelos na crasta terceira da pedraria lavrada somente scilicet a Joham de Ruão cento e corenta mill e seyscentos rreais e a Jheronimo Aº trinta e seis myll reais*”: Coelho, 1984: 409, 420.

⁵ “*Em o meyo do ceo desta claustra, ou todo o ceo de hua fonte de agoa muy clara, limpa e saborosa feyta per tam estranha maneyra que inda he mais do que se pode encarecer, nem se pode pintar, nem dizer de seus primores que nõ seia menos do que he na verdade, enfim que podemos dizer que he hua das quatro maravilhas do mundo*”: Révah, 1958: s/p.

⁶ “*Ay pues aqui una fuente en medio de este patio de el claustro trazada para ponerse de tan estraña manera, q nõ sabria yo pintarla como ella es*”: Correia, 1946: 230.

circulating in the erudite circles of European Renaissance and finding here significance through the augustine theory of the two worlds, the inferior and the superior. Among the many possible references, another likely influence for the Manga's design was Francesco di Giorgio Martini:

“torreões circulares de telhados cónicos como os das ermidas da fonte, detalhes construtivos de fossos e tanques como os usados no jardim, engenhos vários para pontes levadiças de fortalezas como os dos acessos móveis que terão existido nas ermidas, ou rebuscados mecanismos hidráulicos como aqueles que faziam brotar miraculosamente a água da fonte central” (Abreu, 1999: 157).

We go back to Gaillon: observing the famous drawing of Jacques Androuet Du Cerceau (Fig. 11, 12), there is a structure (maybe in stone and wood) in the middle of the garden with, in fact, the same ingredients of the Fountain of Manga. Without surprises, the gardeners at Gaillon were also Italians who may have designed this centralized volume with four wings (Smith, 2003: 45-49). In addition to all other references, Jean de Rouen could go back home to rescue a familiar model.

Just as it happens with the strategy at Manga and in the adoption of models with architraves sustained by columns (as recommended by Alberti) (Alberti, 2011: 496), the monastery of Serra do Pilar (1536), with the involvement of the trio operating in Santa Cruz (Friar Brás de Barros, Jean de Rouen and Diogo de Castilho), subscribed itself in the same logic

of redemption already rehearsed in Manga. Though the current church is from a later period, the plan recovers the circular definition of the first one and integrates a round cloister (Abreu, 1999: 69-80), as

“alegoria às esferas terrestre e celeste e também uma alegoria da cidade Santa de Jerusalém ... um organismo pontuado por dois grandes monumentos redondos: o templo da Rocha ou de Salomão – de facto, a Mesquita de Omar – e a basílica do Santo Sepulcro, ela própria formada pelo encontro de dois organismos circulares”,

as Paulo Varela Gomes already said (Gomes, 2001: 84).

The several chapels with centralized plan, where he was involved or being attributed to him, develop a mystic significance tied to a production which integrates mathematics and geometry, but also a set of classical references that can be

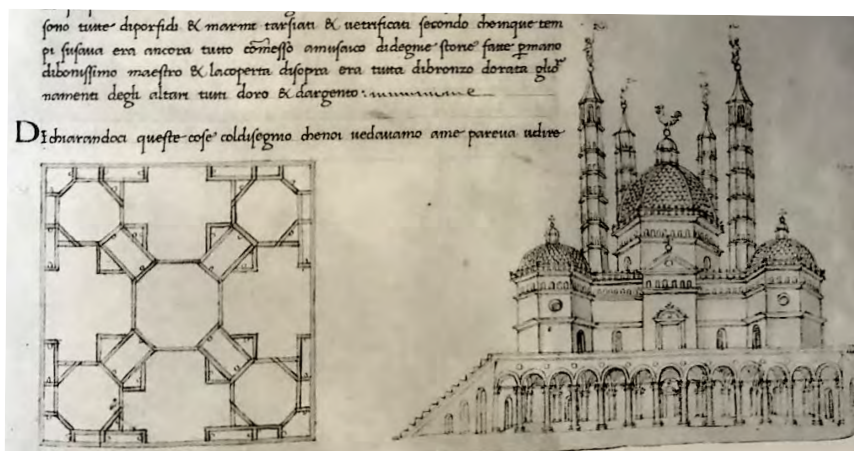


Fig. 10 - Drawing of a church: Filarete. *Trattato di Architettura*, fl. 108.

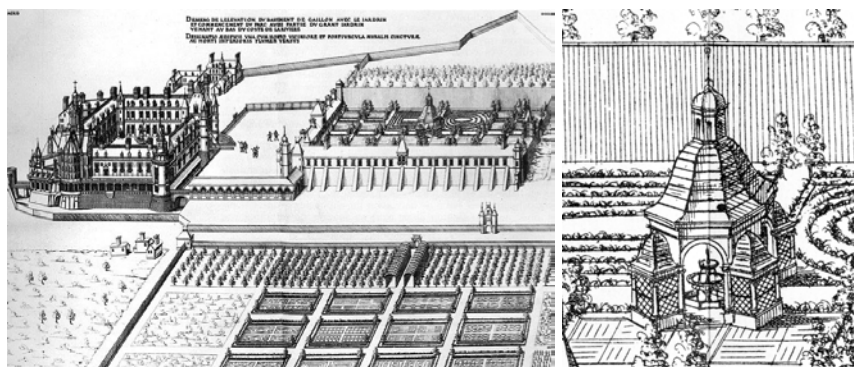


Fig. 11 [on the left]; Fig. 12 [on the right - detail] - Engraving of Gaillon, Du Cerceau, Jacques Androuet (1576). *Le premier volume des plus excellents bastiments de France*. Paris.

observed in the following norms of the treatise as well as in the architectural practices of early Renaissance, at the beginning of the 16th century, starting with the main example of Bramante. The circle and the square became a kind of obsession in the painted architecture of the period, as so many examples can show.

The observation of the works of Jean de Rouen and Diogo de Castilho, the architect that stands out the most in 16th century in Coimbra, clarifies the differences between them. Castilho would not allowed himself to be seduced by the centralization of plans, nor the decoration nor the sculptural strand in architecture. His options were specially the use of vaulted arches and the following programs that were functional, sober and repetitive. The identifying factor for Jean de Rouen will be, all through his life, the obstinate presence of ornamentation in a succession organized by space that, as much as possible, inscribe a symbolic sense to representation.

This question will assist in the understanding of the third issue:

III. The meaning of the dome in the works of Jean de Rouen.

No doubt that the covering of a space with the dome is a formal option inherited from Classic Antiquity. It is also understandable that the medieval covers, more concerned with a definition of space favoring the longitudinal sense of the composition, did not invest as much on the dome solution, which favors the reinforcement of the centralized plan. Even so, the registers of the legacy remaining from the old

Roman Empire of the Orient, the Romanesque culture or an Islamic medieval tradition mark a permanence of the idea of cosmic perfection that arrived at the Renaissance period.

With Jean de Rouen and in the relation with his architectural background, it is not unusual to find the presence of small domes or temples that complete, balance and dignify the sculptural and architectural blocks. The most evident cases are located in altarpieces (Fig. 13, 14) where the



Fig. 13 - Altarpiece of the church of Mercy of Pinhel, Jean de Rouen, 1537. Museu Municipal de Pinhel. @ Maria de Lurdes Craveiro



Fig. 14 - Altarpiece of the church of Verride, Montemor-o-Velho, Jean de Rouen, 1543. @ Maria de Lurdes Craveiro

tabernacles assume a typified shape surmounted by a small templet, but they are also spread out over other retable structures and framing architectural systems such as the Coimbra Especiosa Door. Francisco de Holanda, the nearest artist with Italian culture in the 1540s, elevated the centralized plan to an official advertising statute that, finally, praised the *idea* at the expense of practical execution (Deswarte, 1992: 131-139). And if, for Alberti,

“o cubo é, de todas as figuras, o único perfeitamente estável, constante e inabalável em qualquer das faces”
(Alberti, 2011: 603),

the dome is the natural solution finishing the cubic structures that, in most cases, associates or coexists with the church’s nave.

Recovering and overcoming the sense of Saint Augustine’s philosophy, Luca Pacioli would affirm (in *The Divine Proportion* published in Venice in 1509) (Fig. 15) that everything distributed across the inferior and superior universe is necessarily reduced to number, weight and measure (M. González, 1991: 33), actually quoting the biblical texts (Wisdom, 11:20) and providing the indications of proportion between a sphere and a cube (M. González, 1991: 64-65). With the dome divided into twelve segments, the Chapel of the Three Kings (c. 1574) in S. Marcos (Tentúgal) (Fig. 16) provides the combined harmony between geometry, numerical science, and the iconography related to the representation of paradise. And twelve is

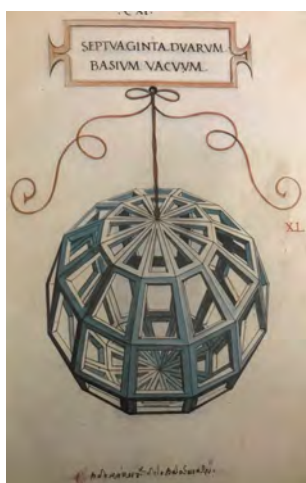


Fig. 15 - M. González, Antonio (Intr. of) (1991). Luca Pacioli. *La Divina Proporción*, Madrid: Ed. Akal, XL.

also the number of the apostles, in a numerical expression that immediately finds a parallel with the Florentine works of Filippo Brunelleschi, namely in the domes of the Old Sacristy of the church of St. Lawrence (1422-1428) and in the Pazzi chapel (1430-1444).

With a stronger certainty, the only chapel that survived and can be attributed to Jean de Rouen is the Sacramento chapel in Coimbra’s Old Cathedral (Fig. 17). It shows a dome divided into



Fig. 16 - Chapel of the Three Kings, Monastery of St. Marcos, Tentúgal, Jean de Rouen (at. to), c. 1574. @ Lieve De Boeck

eight segments, in a balance of powers where the numbers, just like for Alberti,

“fazem com que os olhos e o espírito se encham de um prazer maravilhoso...[and] Está à vista que o octonário desempenha um papel importante na natureza” (Alberti, 2011: 596-597).

This model would be so strong in the Coimbra region that by the end of the 16th century (and no longer attributable to the direct responsibility of Jean de Rouen) the chapel in the church of Cumeeira (Penela) (Fig. 18) or both chapels in the church of Espinhal (Penela) (Fig. 19), among many others, still repeated the same formulas in the formal organization of the dome.

By the same late periods, in the lateral chapels of the churches of Ega (Condeixa-a-Nova) (Fig. 20) or of Sebal (Condeixa-a-Nova) (Fig. 21), the dome is redefined by the construction of a downed cover with the same solution of concentric rings, always with the division in eight segments and always relying on the strong relation between the square and the circle. Nullified the final tempietto, the closure of the composition offers an alternative floral motive which is also associated with the atmosphere created around the idea of paradise.

The entrance to these chapels (within a territory under the administration of the Order of Christ) is organized in the architraved system and framed by pilasters and baluster columns, from



Fig. 17 - Chapel of the Sacrament, Old Cathedral, Coimbra, Jean de Rouen, 1566. @ Pedro Medeiros



Fig. 18 - Chapel of the church of Cumeeira, Penela, late 16th century. @ Maria de Lurdes Craveiro

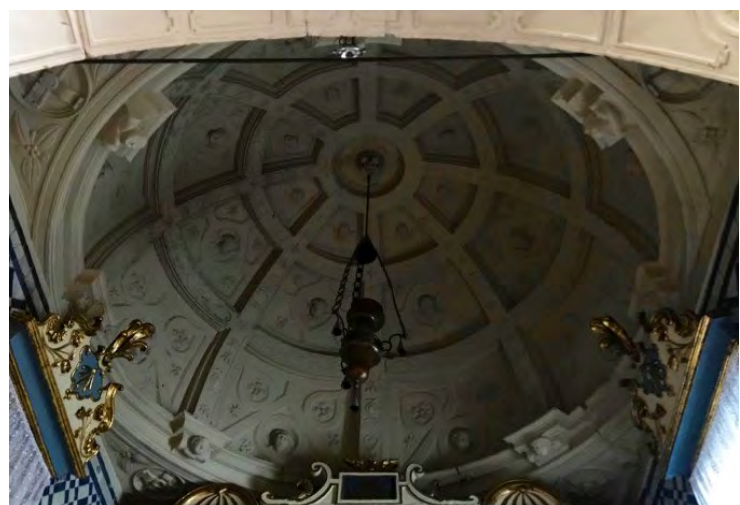


Fig. 19 - Chapel of the church of Espinhal, Penela, late 16th century. @ Maria de Lurdes Craveiro



Fig. 20 - Chapel of the church of Ega, Condeixa-a-Nova, late 16th century. @ Maria de Lurdes Craveiro

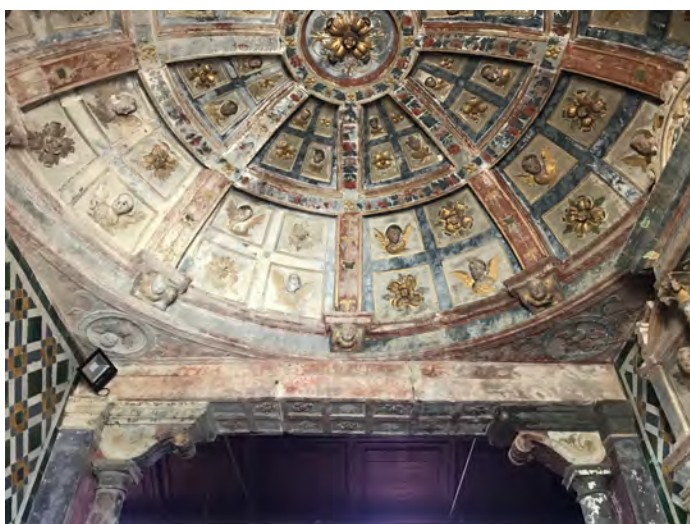


Fig. 21 - Chapel of the church of Sebal, Condeixa-a-Nova, late 16th century. @ Maria de



Fig. 22 - Cloister of Saint Barbra, Convent of Christ, Tomar, João de Castilho, 1533. @ Rui Ferreira

where the developed corbels sustaining the frieze are projected. A model widely used in Spain and that, understandably, can also be found in the cloister of Saint Barbra in the Convent of Christ in Tomar (Fig. 22), headquarter of the Order of Christ, which in Portugal substituted the Order of the Knight Templars. It might not have been by chance that the dominican church of Our Lady of Consolation, in the border city of Elvas (c. 1540-1557) and substituting an old templar chapel, came close to the model of Tomar and applied, in support of the dome, the unusual corbels distancing itself totally from the orthodoxy of the architectural orders. In the case of Tomar, the architect is the Spanish João de Castilho, the architect (still unknown) of the church of Elvas could also be Spanish.

Therefore, the inspiration for these chapels organized around Coimbra and where ornamentation plays such an important role, came from diverse sources. Through the presence of angels, many times accompanied with masks shown in so many engravings intensely circulating in Portugal (Fig. 23), the dome comes to be, not a motive for closure, but material for renovation and salvation. For Nicolau de Cusa,

“Tu, Deus, és a própria infinidade ... tu és princípio sem fim e fim sem fim” (Cusa, 1988: 195).

And,

“aquilo que [one] vê no espelho da eternidade não é a representação, mas a verdade ... Por isso, a representação em ti, Deus meu, é a verdade e o modelo de tudo e de cada coisa que é ou pode ser” (Cusa, 1988: 190).

That's also why, the dome is a mirror of perfection and truth. The text *Espelho de Perfeçam*, by the Franciscan Hendrik Herp (c. 1400-1477), was translated and published in Coimbra in 1533 (Fig. 24) and, from that moment on, literary sources made the ideals transported to sculpture and architecture much more consistent (Abreu, 2011: 33-52; Abreu *et al.*, 2010: 369-393; Barreira, 2012: 231-239).

Treating sculpture and architecture with an overview, Coimbra is insisting in the ornament and in the presence of motives such as the grotesque (going over to the 17th century) and Portuguese historiography has justified the long permanence of this humanistic sense in the arts through the action of Jean de Rouen who, during 50 years, instructed many dozens of stonemasons. It has been more neglected the role of crucial institutions in the city, such as Santa Cruz Monastery and the University, and their capacity of forming a group of intellectuals able of keeping alive the Italian humanist ideal of the last years of the 15th century. Coimbra could also maintain the flame of the group

“inquieto y controvertido en materia de religión [fitting] Policiano, Marsilio Ficino, Cristoforo Landino y Pico della Mirandola, caracterizado por una curiosidad omnívora de signo más abierto que el propio erasmismo” (Tarrío, 2010: 1724).

In the last years in Portugal there are being recovered the great mentors able to stimulate that creative energy as an alternative to the decorum of the Catholic Reformation. In that place was also, and completely, Jean de Rouen.



Fig. 23 - Chapel of the Three Kings (detail), Monastery of S. Marcos, Tentúgal, Jean de Rouen (at. to), c. 1574. @ Gabriel Pereira



Fig. 24 - Herp, Hendrik (1533). *Espelho de perfeçam em lingua portuguesa*. Coimbra: Tip. do mosteiro de Santa Cruz: BGUC, VT-18-8-2.

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