

FROM SCULPTURE TO ARCHITECTURE: JEAN DE ROUEN AT THE MONASTERY OF SANTA CRUZ OF COIMBRA (c^a 1528-1535)

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Abstract

Upon his arrival in Coimbra, in about 1528, Jean de Rouen immediately started working for the Monastery of Santa Cruz, of the Canons Regular of St. Augustine. The house was undergoing a spiritual and physical reformation ordered by John III, with the Hieronymite Friar Brás de Braga in charge. Jean de Rouen, sculptor, or “imagineer”, was commissioned with some ornamental architectural pieces, such as arches and doorways, where he applied the new language of the Renaissance – as, for example, the arch of the high choir of the church, framed by a classic composition of pilasters, entablature and a pair of *tondi*. Simultaneously, he also became responsible for those space-containing architectural structures such as a small chapel amongst the Silence cloister, or the Manga cloister fountain *tempietto*. In this paper we aim to analyse Jean de Rouen’s work at Santa Cruz, during the first phase of his Portuguese career, and the growing scope of his artistic activity from the scale of sculpture to that of architecture.

Key-words: Jean de Rouen, Monastery of Santa Cruz, Silence cloister, coffered vaults, Manga fountain

Resumo

À sua chegada a Coimbra, por volta de 1528, João de Ruão começou imediatamente a trabalhar para o Mosteiro de Santa Cruz, dos Cónegos Regrantes de Santo Agostinho. A casa passava então por uma reforma espiritual e física ordenada por D. João III, a cargo do jerónimo Frei Brás de Braga. João de Ruão, escultor ou “imaginário”, foi contratado para realizar algumas peças arquitetónicas ornamentais, como arcos e portas, onde aplicou a nova linguagem do Renascimento – como, por exemplo, no arco do coro alto da igreja, enquadrado por uma composição clássica de pilastras e entablamento e por um par de *tondi*. Simultaneamente, também se tornou responsável por algumas estruturas arquitetónicas contentoras de espaço, casos da pequena capela na ala norte do claustro do Silêncio ou da *fonte-tempietto* do claustro da Manga. Neste artigo pretendemos analisar a obra de João de Ruão no Mosteiro de Santa Cruz, durante a primeira fase da sua carreira portuguesa, e o âmbito crescente da sua atividade artística, desde a escala da escultura à da arquitetura.

Palavras-chave: João de Ruão, Mosteiro de Santa Cruz, Claustro do Silêncio, abóbadas de caixotões, Fonte da Manga

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I. The Monastery of Santa Cruz, Coimbra

The Monastery of Santa Cruz in Coimbra, of the Canons Regular of St. Augustine, was the see of the order in Portugal and one of the main religious houses in the country. It was founded in 1131 by the archdeacon Telo, the school master João Peculiar and the future Saint Theotonius (Gonçalves, 1938: 21, 26) and came under the direct support of the first King of Portugal, Afonso Henriques (1109-1143-1185), who made Coimbra Portugal's first capital city. Afonso and his son Sancho I are both entombed in the church. The monastery was set outside the city walls, to the North, over an old water course that flowed from the Santa Cruz valley to the nearby *Mondego*. It had its own circuit of walls and it has been suggested that the former Romanesque church, finished around 1150, had a pillared narthex before the nave (Gonçalves, 1942; Real, 1974: II, 212; Rossa, 2001: 349; Alarcão, 2008: 154-167; and 2013: 27-31).

Santa Cruz was extensively reformed in its architecture during the first years of the 16th century. In 1502, King Manuel (1469-1495-1521) passed through Coimbra on a journey to Santiago de Compostela and was able to observe the poor state of the monastic building, by then already three hundred years old. However, the decision to intervene in the monastery only occurred when Pope Julius II attempted to nominate his nephew Galliotto Franciotto Della Rovere as the new prior, to succeed the deceased João de Noronha (1505), in order for him to receive the monastery's extensive incomes. King Manuel warned the Pope not to expect any money since it was needed for the total reconstruction of the religious house. With this

show of resistance, the kings of Portugal eventually obtained the right to appoint the new priors, as the Pope gave up on the idea of diverting the wealthy revenues to one of his own family (Dias, 1982: 105-106).

Hence, during the priorship of Pedro Gavião (1507-1516), a new church was erected over the original one, in the late-Gothic *Manueline* style, under the direction of master Jacques Boytac, a chief architect of French origin who was also conducting the works at the *Jerónimos* monastery in Lisbon. Boytac was responsible for dismantling the Romanesque church, for restructuring the façade (in order to top the two lateral towers with octagonal pyramids, Fig. 1a) and for erecting and vaulting the new nave (Fig. 1b) and chancel.



Fig. 1 [a; b; c] - The *Manueline* works at the Monastery of Santa Cruz: church (Jacques Boytac: 1507-14) and cloister (Marcos Pires, 1517-21). Photos by the author.

A second phase, under local master Marcos Pires (between 1517 and 1522), saw the building of the late-Gothic Silence cloister (Fig.1c), which also replaced a former Romanesque structure (Correia and Gonçalves, 1947: 41; Dias, 1982: 136-138).

Inside the nave of the church, elaborate new ornamental structures were executed for the royal tombs, between 1518 and 1522 (Gonçalves, 1975; Craveiro, 2002: 63). These new structures were not originally placed inside the chancel (where they can be seen today) but rather against each lateral wall of the nave, just before the main chapel. They were probably designed by João de Castilho, master and architect of Spanish origin (who was in charge of the *Jerónimos* monastery in Lisbon, having succeeded Boytac) and executed by his half-brother Diogo de Castilho (Fig.2a), who had settled in Coimbra (Dias, 1982: 141-144). The resemblance of these structures to the south portal of the *Jerónimos* church is suggestive. Finally, master builder Diogo de Castilho was responsible for the church's main portal,

executed between 1523 and 1525, in the soft white limestone of *Ançã* (Dias, 1982: 148-149).

It was also in this timeline that another important character came onto the scene, the French sculptor Nicholas Chanterene, who played a pivotal role in introducing Coimbra to the Renaissance. He executed the church's pulpit (before 1521, Fig.2b), the recumbent royal figures for the tombs and also four Renaissance reliefs for the new cloister, representing stages of the "Passion of Christ" (Fig.2c), directly inspired by engravings by Albrecht Dürer and Martin Schongauer (Moreira, 1991: 314; Gonçalves, 2007: 182; Craveiro, 2011a: 131). During his stay in Coimbra, Chanterene, who had also worked at the *Jerónimos* monastery in Lisbon, completed the magnificent altarpiece for the Hieronymite monastic church of *São Marcos*, in the city outskirts, in 1523. Here, directly above the central scene of Christ's descent from the cross, we can observe what Rafael Moreira called the "*The first coffered barrel vault of Portuguese Art*" (Moreira, 1991: 276).



Fig. 2 - Architectural and sculptural elements at Santa Cruz: [2a] tomb of King Sancho I (church chancel, attributed to João and Diogo de Castilho, 1518-22), [2b] pulpit (church nave, Nicholas Chanterene) and [2c] relief of "Christ carrying the cross" (cloister, Nicholas Chanterene, c.1522). Photos by the author.

At Santa Cruz, the new church altarpiece (commissioned in 1522) included a set of paintings by Cristóvão de Figueiredo, also embedded in the new aesthetic of the Renaissance. The altarpiece no longer exists but some of the paintings still survive today (Craveiro, 2011a: 30-32).

In 1527, the new King John III (*D. João III*, 1502-1521-1557) stayed for six months in Coimbra in order to avoid Lisbon, which had been affected by the plague. Regarding Santa Cruz, the King decided to apply the generous monastic revenues to yet another architectural transformation of the house. This would go along with a decisive spiritual reformation of the Canons Regular, imposing order and discipline (until then somewhat relaxed) on the brothers. The decision went hand in hand with the reformation of other main religious houses in Portugal, part of a general policy of moralization of the regular clergy, an initial widespread reaction against Protestantism (Silva Dias, 1960: 93).

To put his plan into action, the monarch designated the Hieronymite Friar Brás de Braga (also known as Friar Brás de Barros, c^a1500-1561), who had studied Philosophy in Paris and Theology in Leuven, as the new Prior in charge. Friar Brás entered the house on 13th October 1527 (Silva Dias, 1960: 107). An enlarged monastic environment would compensate for the new and more rigorous way of life, where enclosure would become strict, as a set of new Constitutions was put forward (Silva Dias, 1960: 111).

In this sense, a new cloister – the Porter’s cloister – was planned as a western extension, alongside the church of Santa Cruz, in place of the former female monastery of *São João das Donas*, which was closed down⁴. A third cloister was planned in the other direction, towards the east, as we will see. An extensive new dormitory of individual cells, a new refectory and a new library were also planned, as well as a new parish church of St. John, to the south of the monastic church.

II. Jean de Rouen’s first years in Portugal

Even today, we still do not know the exact succession of events which brought Jean de Rouen from his native France to central Portugal. His training background remains also undocumented, although almost all studies on his life and work agree that he came from Rouen, Normandy, and from the local Renaissance milieu shaped in the early 16th century by Cardinal Georges d’Amboise (Gonçalves, 1981). His route through Spain, in his way to Portugal, also remains unclear.

The first document where his name appears puts him in Coimbra on 4th April 1530 (Garcia, 1913: 1-4)⁵. However, he almost certainly arrived a couple of years earlier, for by this date he was already married to Isabel Pires and was designated as “a friend and server” of the Monastery of Santa Cruz. He was given a plot of land within the city walls to build a couple of

⁴ It was dissolved in mid-1529 (Dias, 1982: 160).

⁵ Contract for the assignment of a plot belonging to the Monastery of Santa Cruz near *Porta Nova*, to Jean de Rouen and his wife in order for them to build a pair of houses.

houses, as a reward for his “many and good works” for the brothers. It was António Nogueira Gonçalves in 1974 (following a hint by Vergílio Correia) who tracked down Jean de Rouen’s “hand” in a group of works commissioned by Jorge de Menezes (1490-1536), 5th Count of Cantanhede (Gonçalves, 1974). The first of them may be seen in his domain of Tancos, in central Portugal, near the Tagus river. There, Rouen most likely designed the main portal of the church of the village of Atalaia, c^a 1528 (Fig.3), leaving his personal mark and proving, from the very first, his mastery of the Classical manner. The portal consists of a typical composition of a Roman arch, flanked by a pair of *tondi* showing the heads of human figures, and framed by a couple of pilasters supporting a Classical entablature.

Another work attributed to Rouen is the simple mortuary chapel of Varziela, which he most probably designed for the Count in his main domains of Cantanhede, only 30 km northwest of Coimbra. Here the main feature is the magnificent altarpiece of Our Lady of the Mantle that shows the skill of the artist in the first phase of his Portuguese career. It is probable that by this time, around 1528 or 1529, he had already started working at the Monastery of Santa Cruz, as we have seen.

While starting work at Santa Cruz, Jean de Rouen continued to receive orders to work outside the monastery and outside Coimbra. Circa 1529 he was commissioned by Luís da Silveira, Lord of Góis and Sortelha, former ambassador of King Manuel to the Emperor Charles V, to execute an entombment lateral

arch on the chancel of the church of Góis, a little town 50 km to the east of Coimbra. The chancel’s late-gothic vault was being built by another man from Santa Cruz, Diogo de Castilho (Correia, 1921: 11). Work was finished in 1531. Both Castilho and Rouen would repeat their partnership in executing the Lemos pantheon, for Diogo de Lemos, cousin of Luís da Silveira, in the Church of Trofa do Vouga (50 km to the north of Coimbra) completed in 1534. Castilho executed the late-Gothic rib vault and Jean de Rouen designed the Renaissance pairs of entombment arches, at each side of the main chapel. In both tombs, Góis and Trofa do Vouga, the kneeling effigies of the nobles have been attributed to Jean de Rouen (Borges, 2004: 43-44) or even to another character connected with Santa Cruz, the French figure sculptor Hodart (Gonçalves, 1974: 14-17).



Fig. 3 - The portal of the church of Atalaia (attributed to Jean de Rouen, 1528). Photo by the author.

III. The first works of Jean de Rouen at Santa Cruz: 1528-1535

At Santa Cruz the shape of the new monastic building was being prepared. After his first years as the monarch, John III decided to do away with the *Manueline* late Gothic style of his fathers' reign, taking interest in the new *formulae* of the Renaissance. However, by 1527, the main Renaissance artist that had been working at Santa Cruz was leaving – Nicholas Chanterene was commissioned to go to Sintra, near Lisbon, to work for the Hieronymite Convent of Pena, where he designed yet another remarkable altarpiece which can still be seen today. In the meantime, he had travelled to Zaragoza (in 1527-1528) to personally overview the acquisition of alabaster for this new masterpiece (Grilo, 2000: 727-801). The absence of Chanterene means, we must assume as a strong possibility, that Jean de Rouen was summoned to Coimbra to serve as a competent substitute for his French forerunner. As we have said, no documents survive to this day relating to Jean de Rouen's coming to Coimbra, or to his former career and training in France, presumably in Normandy.

III.1. Archways at the church of Santa Cruz

One of Jean de Rouen's first attributed tasks at the Monastery of Santa Cruz (Dias, 1982: 170) was to collaborate in the refurbishment of the monastic church, which was undergoing yet another major transformation, just a few years after it had been totally reconstructed by Boytac, as we have seen. This new modification comprised the erection of a new high choir over the entrance, the vault of which was executed by Diogo de Castilho, again using the Gothic

structural system. The chancel stalls, made by Olivier de Gand during King Manuel's reformation (Antunes, *et al.*, 2014), were transferred to this new high choir by François Loiret (or Francisco Lorete) another French artist working in Coimbra, who also added a new set of stalls to the older ones.

Jean de Rouen has been credited with executing the slender Roman arch that separates the high choir from the nave (Dias, 1982: 170), with no less than 33 coffers, the age of Christ's sacrifice (Fig.4a). On each side of the arch, Classical *tondi* with human figures appear, while Corinthian pilasters support the architrave and cornice, over which the high choir's balustrade stands. The high choir and arch were ready by 1531 (Dias,



Fig. 4 [a; b; c] - The high choir of the church of Santa Cruz, 1531 (vault by Diogo de Castilho, arch and supports by Jean de Rouen). Photos by the author.

1982: 165). Jean de Rouen should also be credited with the decoration of the vault's structural supports (Dias, 1982: 170), including the amalgamation of Renaissance pillars and columns (which support both the high choir vault and arch) in the hinge between the church's sub-choir and the nave (Fig.4b) and the high choir's angular vault supports, on the inside of the church's façade (Fig.4c). It is interesting to note the resemblance of some of the motifs, namely the banister-columns, with those of the *Medidas del Romano*, the popular architectural treatise of Diego de Sagredo (Toledo, May 1526, the first treatise of ancient architecture published in vernacular language outside Italy) which may suggest that Jean de Rouen had brought a copy with him when he passed through Spain in 1526 or 1527⁶.



Fig.5 - Lateral chapel arch, church of Santa Cruz. The original nave-flanking arches (attributed to Jean de Rouen, c^a 1531) were apparently substituted by the current ones in the 18th century. Photo by the author.

The new high choir gave way to the transfer of the royal tombs and of their imposing decorative structures, from the end of the nave lateral walls to the now stall-free chancel. Hence, in the walls of the nave, Jean de Rouen would have designed the Roman arches that open to the church's lateral chapels, two arches at either side (Dias, 1982: 169). However, the current ones (Fig.5) seem to be the result of an 18th century intervention. Apparently (and like in the high choir) the original arches may have been inserted into Classical framings with entablatures, pilasters and human-figured *tondi* (Teixeira de Carvalho, 1932: 70).

III.2. The architectural setting for Hodart's "Last Supper" in the monastic refectory and the Silence cloister chapels.

On 5th March 1528 Bartolomeu de Paiva, one of the King's councillors, celebrated a contract with master Diogo de Castilho for the erection of the new monastic dependencies (Garcia, 1923: 176-189; Dias, 1982: 156-159). New structures were planned, such as a new refectory, a new kitchen, a new library, a new infirmary and a new Porter's cloister to the west. Unifying these new facilities, on an added upper level, was to be the new dormitory, consisting of two perpendicular wings of individual cells along central corridors. One of these wings was to be prolonged to the east, suggesting that a third cloister in that direction was already under consideration (Lobo, 2006: 42-45).

⁶ The book came to be published in French in Paris c^a 1537 and in 1539, and had two editions in Lisbon (in Spanish) in 1541 and 1542. See Bustamante and Mariás: 1986; COAM, *Las Medidas del Romano de Diego de Sagredo*. Online in: <https://www.coam.org/media/Default%20Files/fundacion/biblioteca/muestras-fondos/docs/muestra-las-edidas-del-romano.pdf>

Works, however, had to start at ground level. The north wing of the already existent Silence cloister was rebuilt to accommodate the new refectory. It substituted the former refectory which had been placed along the east wing of the same quadrangle. Diogo de Castilho finished the new structure in a little more than two years, executing the majestic late-Gothic vault that covers its elongated space (Fig.6). For the refectory, a special feature was commissioned – a human-size sculptural ensemble of the “Last Supper” of Christ and the Apostles, in terracotta, to be placed over the refectory’s top east wall. It was ordered in 7th October 1530 (Garcia, 1913: 4-5) from yet another French artist, the enigmatic Hodart Vyrio. He would finish all the statues by the end of 1533 (Garcia, 1913: 6)⁷.

During the late nineteenth century, following the 1834 suppression of the Religious Orders in Portugal, part of the monastic north wing was torn to the ground (in 1888) just east of the refectory. The “Last Supper” figures were taken out, carried from place to place, and significantly damaged in the process. It was only quite recently that they were partially

recovered and put together, although arms and legs are still missing, one of the apostles is headless, and only the head remains of yet another disciple. They are now on display in a room dedicated to them at the Machado de Castro National Museum, in Coimbra (Fig.7).



Fig. 6 - Santa Cruz refectory (1528-1530). Vault by Diogo de Castilho. East end classical structures attributed to Jean de Rouen. Photo by the author.



Fig. 7 - Six figures of Hodart's “Last Supper” (1530-33). Machado de Castro National Museum. Photo by António Monteiro.

⁷ He received the final payment on 8th January 1534 (Garcia, 1913: 6). In the same period, and as we have mentioned before, Hodart may have worked on the kneeling statues of Luis da Silveira and Diogo de Lemos (for Góis and Trofa) which have been attributed to him. Nevertheless, Nelson Correia Borges attributes the kneeling figures to Jean de Rouen himself (Borges, 2014: 43-44).

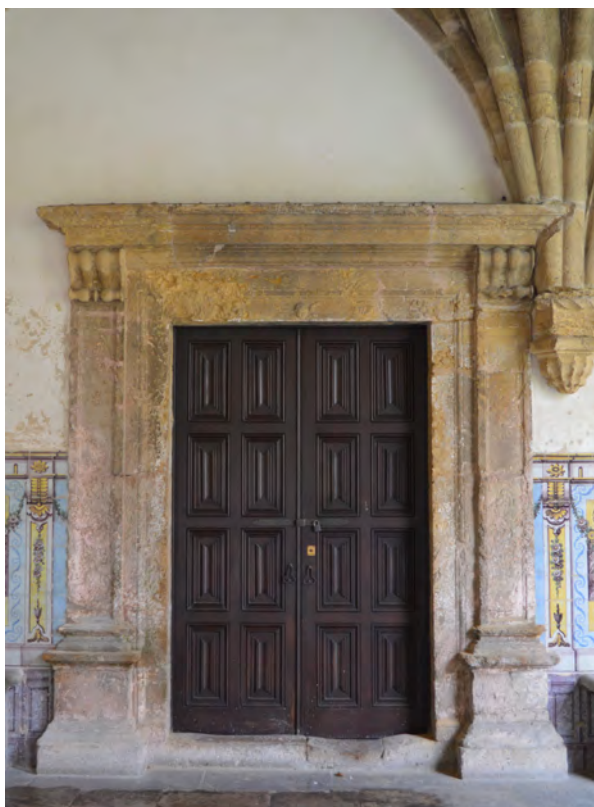


Fig. 8 - Refectory door (attributed to Jean de Rouen, c^a.1530). Photo by the author.



Fig. 9 - Silence cloister north wing chapel, with coffered vault (Jean de Rouen, c^a.1530). Photo by the author.

The Last Supper's original space no longer exists. The Classical opening to this elevated open room at the refectory's east end (which we can almost certainly attribute to Jean de Rouen) has been walled, while the opening itself has been partially destroyed. We think that Jean de Rouen also designed the two missing pulpits on either side of the "Last Supper", and the corresponding canopies, which, since the destruction of the pulpits, have been left hanging on the upper part of the wall. He also likely designed the arched doorways that gave access to the pulpits under each of them. The refectory, today a Municipal exhibition hall, had six tables on each side along the lateral walls. According to the description by Francisco de Mendaña, from 1540⁸, a thirteenth table was placed in front of the elevated "Last Supper" so that the Prior could sit down with the sculptural ensemble visible over and behind him and his fellow table companions (Révah, 1957).

For our Research Project "Santa Cruz" we are trying to recreate the original disposition of the figures in the Last Supper. We have also attempted to reconstitute the complete design of the scene opening and of the missing pulpits. For the first of these pieces, we can make a comparison with the design of other doorways and archways which we think Jean de Rouen designed during the same years along the Silence cloister:

- The refectory's main door (Fig.8);
- The suspended double archway which opens to a chapel on the north wing of the cloister, a chapel covered with a Classical vault (Fig. 9).

⁸ The "description and drawing" of the Monastery of Santa Cruz (*Descripçam e debuxo do mosteyro de Santa Cruz de Coimbra*) was originally written in Italian (Sampayo Ribeiro, 1958: 28-36) by the Prior of the Monastery of St. Vincent of Lisbon for the Cardinal Antonio Pucci in Rome, Protector of the Canons Regular. It was translated into Portuguese by Friar Veríssimo for a very rare edition, printed at Santa Cruz in 1541. A copy from the Newberry Library of Chicago was facsimiled by Israel Salvator Révah (Révah, 1957).

In our opinion, the designer of this last chapel must be the same one responsible for the “Last Supper’s” opening (and the totality of the refectory’s east end, including pulpits, canopies and archways). The pilaster bases of this chapel’s frontispiece are exactly the same, with the same detailing (Fig.10). In 1530, when the opening was almost certainly made, Jean de Rouen was the only artist at Santa Cruz which would have been able to elaborate such a design⁹.

Concerning the design of the upper part of the opening, which is missing, we opted for a scheme with Corinthian pilasters (instead of the solution with ancones, that can be seen both in the refectory’s main door and in the cloister chapel’s frontispiece) on the outside of the opening’s central frame, supporting an entablature similar to that of the pulpit canopies, with a central suspended bracket (Fig.11). This option also gives credit to Jean de Rouen’s extraordinary inventiveness, since he never repeated the same integral solution from one design to the other.

Another important aspect, of course, is the configuration of the space in which the “Last Supper” stood, just behind the opening. Remnants of the end parts of the stone bench blocks, where the apostles sat, still exist associated with the pilaster bases. They are at an angle of 30 degrees relative to the refectory wall.

This is not the occasion to elaborate on the disposition of the figures, which we are still working upon. Nonetheless, we know, through Francisco de Mendanha’s description, that Judas (a terracotta figure that has been identified carrying a small money bag at his waist) would have been sitting on the far left. Additionally, Christ (also identified) would be at the centre, with Saint Peter to his right (left, to the observer) and St. John (the only beardless figure) to his left (Révah, 1957).



Fig. 10 - Comparison between pilaster bases: Silence cloister chapel frontispiece and opening for the “Last Supper”. Photos by the author.



Fig. 11 - The opening for the “Last Supper”, at the refectory’s east end. Current situation (photo by the author) and conjectural reconstitution of the original design (attributed to Jean de Rouen, 1530) by the author and António Monteiro.

⁹ Perhaps with the sole exception of another French artist, François Loiret (or Francisco Lorete), who did design classical portals in stone later in his career (like in the church of Arronches of 1539-42, although with a different, more canonical style). Nevertheless, at Santa Cruz c^a 1530, Loiret was asked to work in wood and was occupied with refitting and completing the stalls of the new high choir. See, on this subject, Serrão, 2015: 18-24. Nicholas Chanterene, the other obvious hypothetical author, had already left Coimbra by this time.

Independently of the layout of the long stone bench where the apostles sat, we think that the table would have had a rectangular shape. The compartment where the “Last Supper” was set would have been about 4.8 metres in depth by about 4.2 metres wide. This width can be inferred, since the compartment and respective walls needed to allow space for the corridors that gave access to the pulpits’ stairways, to one side and the other. Inside the “Last Supper” compartment, there would have been a minimal space for a person to manoeuvre around the terracotta figures for the purposes of maintenance. We know that the figures were repainted at least once, in 1568 (Cristo, c^a 1622: 569).

An important question related to the “Last Supper” is how the space was covered. Our hypothesis is that it was covered by a coffered wooden barrel vault, beneath a stone or brick barrel vault (at a somewhat higher level) that would have defined the dormitory floor. We think this type of solution would have made more sense than a Gothic rib vault, as the whole east end of the refectory was designed in the Classical manner (and also because a Gothic rib vault would probably have lasted to the present day). Relating to the coffer design, we considered a simple grid of square coffers (Fig.12) as in the vault of the chapel of the Silence cloister, given the similarities between the pilasters of both frontispieces (of the “Last Supper” scene and of the cloister chapel) and the resemblance to the coffered vault sections of both pulpit canopies that still exist today. Indeed, our hypothesis is that it was Jean de Rouen who designed this conjectural coffered wooden barrel vault over the “Last Supper”.

Regarding the virtual reconstitution of the pulpits, and considering no pulpit by Jean de Rouen still remains today (and also considering Nicholas Chanterene’s church pulpit at Santa Cruz to be too elaborate), we put forward a schematic version (Fig.13) based on the three-sided pulpits executed by João de Castilho at the refectory of the Convent of Christ in Tomar, around 1535. Finally, we can observe how the frontispiece of another chapel of the Silence cloister (in the south wing) includes a design of diamonds and circles along the frontispiece pilasters and arch, which bears an obvious

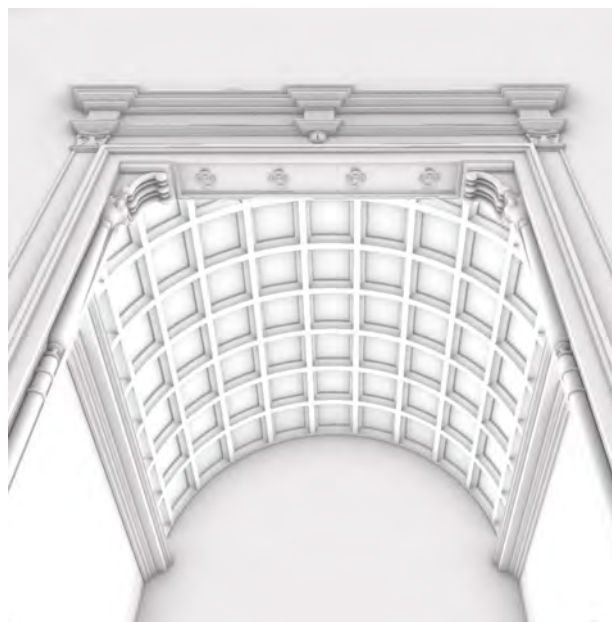


Fig. 12 - Conjectural reconstitution of the wooden coffered vault over the “Last Supper” (attributed to Jean de Rouen, 1530) by the author and António Monteiro.



Fig. 13 - Conjectural reconstitution of the refectory's east end classical structures (attributed to Jean de Rouen, 1530) by the author and António Monteiro.

resemblance to the refectory's arched doorways that give access to the pulpits (Fig.14). This allows us to attribute this chapel to Jean de Rouen and to a time around 1530 or even before. It may be that the Silence cloister chapels referred to above, and the refectory's main entrance doorway, were some of the "many and good works" that Jean de Rouen had made for the monastery, according to the document (mentioned earlier) of April 1530. In our opinion, these are, most probably, Jean de Rouen's first works at Santa Cruz, since the church archways were only executed around 1531.

III.3. The new monastic dormitory

The monastic main dormitory would eventually be built along a sole east-west wing over the new refectory and kitchen, as a contract of 26th September 1530 clearly demonstrates (Garcia, 1913: 253-260; Dias, 1982: 161-164). According to this document, signed between Bartolomeu de Paiva and carpenter Pero Anes, cells were to be built along both sides of a central corridor, 128 meters long, which encompassed the renovated monastery's three cloisters, including the two new ones, to the east and west (Lobo, 2006: 50-54; Couto, 2014: 90-112, 135-137). Large windows were to be placed at each end of the central corridor. Pairs of these large windows were also to be placed on each side of three transverse intervals that crossed the corridor, in order to give further illumination.



Fig. 14 - Comparison between frontispiece of Silence cloister south wing chapel (attributed to Jean de Rouen, c.º.1530) and one of the refectory pulpit's doorway. Photos by the author.

Almost the totality of this dormitory wing (110 metres) was constructed during this campaign (the west end would only be finished in the mid-seventeenth century; Santa Maria, 1668: II, 95). Today, only a short sector survives. The original corridor was covered by a coffered wooden barrel vault, which no longer exists but can still be seen in old photographs (Fig.15). We have reasons to believe this was the original corridor's superstructure, of around 1531 (although the contract stipulated a different type of wooden casing, composed of three articulated panels in each section).

Similar coffered wooden barrel vaults can still be seen today in the Convent of Christ in Tomar, another of the main Portuguese religious houses that underwent spiritual and physical reform, under John III, during the 1530's (Moreira, 1991: 476-533). In our view, it is highly improbable that the wooden vaulting in both Coimbra and Tomar



Fig. 15 - Dormitory corridor, with coffered wooden barrel vault (possibly by Jean de Rouen and Pero Anes, c^a 1531). Photograph of the beginning of the 20th century - SIPA/DGEMN.

was refurbished in similar fashion in another, more recent, era. Curiously, the carpenter who signed the 1530 contract, Pero Anes, was none other than Jean de Rouen's father-in-law. Hence, it is entirely possible that Pero Anes executed the coffered barrel vault to Jean de Rouen's design, an idea we should keep in mind.

III.4. The Manga fountain *tempietto*

An architectonic piece that art historians have attributed to Jean de Rouen is the Manga Fountain *tempietto*, constructed between 1533 and

1535. The story goes, based on Mendanha, that this architectural element was designed upon the king's sleeve ("*manga*" in Portuguese) when he was discussing the monastery's transformation with his collaborators, *in situ*, in late 1527. Some trustworthy authors have accepted this possibility (Sampayo Ribeiro, 1958: 1-19) although we have argued more recently that it would have been more likely that what the king (or someone else) designed on the royal garment was the general layout of a new monastic cloister to the east – or, to be precise, the Manga cloister (Lobo, 2006: 53-54) which would give name to the *tempietto* that stood in its centre, a few years later (Fig. 16).

On 7th September 1533 Friar Brás de Braga signed a contract with three master masons to build the water tanks and the four round turrets of the *tempietto* (Garcia, 1913: 87-89; Dias, 1982: 172). We also know that in 1535 a payment was made to Jean de Rouen (and also to Jerónimo Afonso) on the execution of the stone work and the alter pieces for the four turret cells (Correia, 1930: 110-111; Dias, 1982: 172). No reference has been found to the execution of the eight columns, stairs, fountain and cupola of the *tempietto* proper, but it has been assumed that Jean de Rouen was the architect of the piece as a whole (Kubler, 1972: 9¹⁰; Dias, 1982: 173¹¹).

Independently of the architectural design, the moral author of the composition is to be found in the reformer Friar Brás de Braga. Susana Matos

¹⁰ "Jean de Rouen may have been the designer".

¹¹ "All that remained to say was to whom the project belonged. We believe that it was to Jean de Rouen, although the orientation of Frei Brás de Braga should not be discounted. However, it would not go so far as to outline the plan, elevations, etc..." (our *free translation* into English).

Abreu (Abreu, 2009) has demonstrated the symbolic resemblance of the fountain's structure to the precepts of the book by the Flemish Franciscan mystic Hendrick Herp (c. 1470-1478) *Ein Spiegel der Volcomenheit*, or "A Mirror of Perfection", written in the 1460's and which had a first Latin translation in Cologne, in 1509¹². Curiously, as Susana Abreu has pointed out, the Portuguese translation of Herp's work was done by Friar Brás de Braga himself. It was also one of the first three books to be published at the newly established Santa Cruz printing house (Herp, 1533), the others being the *Memorial de Confessores*, of 1531, and the new Constitutions of the Portuguese Order of the Canons Regular, of 1532 (Abreu, 2009: 36).

The architectural piece was set in a square precinct – the cloister itself – and is composed of one central circle (the dome over the "fountain of life", or *Fons Vitae*)¹³ and four peripheral circles, the turrets. The square and the circle, as in neo-Platonic convention, point to the earthly and heavenly worlds. The cloister assumes the role of a terrestrial Eden, in the tradition of the cloistral *Hortus Conclusus* (Abreu, 2009: 40). The four water tanks represent the four rivers of the *Genesis*, as Francisco de Mendanha relates in his description (Révah, 1957).

In his book, Herp suggests a method of inner recollection to reach communion with God (in the wake of the *Devotio Moderna*, of the Bretheren of Common Life), a connection which, as Susana Matos Abreu points out, relies on a progression in height. A similar progression is needed to reach the fountain – which also has a symbolical link with the blood of Christ (Abreu, 2009: 43)¹⁴ – under the central dome. Hence the monastic ground level is the level of earthly concerns (of "perfect active life", according to the second chapter of Herp's book), while a "contemplative and spiritual" level (third chapter)



Fig. 16 - Manga cloister and *tempietto* (c^a.1880) before the demolitions. Photo by José Sartoris (Alexandre Ramires collection)

would be attained through the stairways at the end of each corridor, beginning at the four cardinal points. These sets of steps are guarded by stone dogs and parrots, representing recurrence of sin and the luxury of "too much talking", obstacles which must be avoided to prepare for higher thoughts and aspirations (Abreu, 2009: 42). According to Friar Brás de

¹² Published under the title *Directorium aureum contemplativorum*.

¹³ Although the fountain, which has a circular base, stands upon an octagonal platform.

¹⁴ "In effect, this central *tempietto* houses and dignifies these pure waters that cleanse of all sin, the source from which the blood of Christ springs, shed in remission from the sins of the world, under the pagan architectural sacredness of the tholos".

Braga's translation of Herp's book, each step of the stairway (today six but originally seven) represents the gifts of the Holy Ghost¹⁵, which have to be attained in order to access the spiritual level represented by the fountain, under the dome of sanctity (Abreu, 2009: 41).

Finally, the four circular turrets, set to the diagonals, functioned as hermit's cells, designed as pieces of military architecture – like the French *donjons* of the time, implanted over water (Abreu, 2009: 45) – as true fortresses of the spirit. Access was originally through wooden drawbridges (not extant) that the brothers could pull up towards themselves, shutting the door to the cells and keeping themselves in isolation. The turrets have no windows, only elevated slots for light to enter. Inside them Jean de Rouen executed a series of retables (one for each turret) evoking saints who were examples of solitary life¹⁶. Hence, as the brothers were in mystical contemplation (to reach the “over-essential and contemplative life”, the fourth and final chapter of Herp's book), the only bond that was established outside was with God himself, symbolized by the flying buttresses that connect the small domes of the turrets with the central celestial dome of the fountain.

Therefore, the Manga fountain and *tempietto* stands as a permanent reminder of moral obligation and ideal attitude, passed down by Friar Brás to the canons through the re-foundation of the house (Abreu, 2009: 40). Jean de Rouen was the artist behind the reformer's vision, the man capable of executing the classical dome supported by eight Corinthian columns and of coordinating the whole design (Fig.17).



Fig. 17 - Manga tempietto (Jean de Rouen, 1533). Photo by the author.

Besides the substitution of the original wooden drawbridges by the current wedged stone slabs (Fig.18a), another visible alteration was the opening of passages through the stone bases (in the shape of quarter circles) that unified each pair of Corinthian columns (Fig.18b). These passages originally did not exist – the stone bases have clearly been cut through. Therefore, physical access to the drawbridges was not straight forward (it may have been assisted by a stone square platform where the wooden drawbridges would land, Fig.18c). This reinforces, in our view, the required metaphysical

¹⁵ Fear, pity, science, fortitude, advice, understanding and knowledge.

¹⁶ Saint Hieronymus, Saint Anthony the Great, Saint John the Baptist and Saint Paul the Anchorite.

process of passing from the “spiritual life”, represented by the octagonal platform of the fountain, to the “over-essential and contemplative life” – of which no physical remnants subsisted, when the brother was enclosed in his turret-cell for “over-essential contemplation” (Fig.18d).



Fig. 18 [a; b; c; d] - Details of the *Manga tempietto* and conjectural reconstitution of the drawbridges, by Miguel Alberto Pedrosa.

It is not known when these alterations were produced. We can observe, by enlarging the famous photograph of the Manga cloister of c^a 1880 (again, Fig.16), that the stone benches had already been cut through and that the wooden drawbridges had already been replaced by the stone slabs. Perhaps this was done after the dissolution of the religious orders of 1834, or perhaps the brothers themselves altered the design sometime during the 17th or 18th centuries, forgetful of its original symbolism.

III.5. The new monastic façade

The monastic façade of Santa Cruz no longer exists, as well as the Porter’s cloister that was

built in the place of the old female monastery of *São João das Donas*¹⁷. The whole western section of the monastery, to the north of the Santa Cruz church façade, was demolished to give way to the new town hall building, erected between 1876 and 1879, under a design by the municipal engineer Alexandre da Conceição.

The Porter’s cloister, also built during the early years of Friar Brás de Braga’s reformation, was most probably executed in the Classical manner, since it had four stone arches supported by columns along each side, as both Francisco de Mendanha (in 1540, Révah, 1957) and José de Cristo describe (Cristo, c^a 1622: 537v^o)¹⁸. In addition, a Classical chapel was erected on the cloister’s east side, the Chapel of the Holy Ghost (also referred to as St. Vincent’s), covered by a wooden coffered vault (Révah, 1957) and

where one would enter through a double Roman arch with a central column (Cristo, c^a 1622:537v^o). In this chapel, which gave access to the monastic council hall, hung the magnificent painting of the “Pentecost” executed by the Portuguese Renaissance artist Vasco Fernandes (still at Santa Cruz today). Of course, Jean de Rouen’s hand can easily be imagined in the making of some of these architectural structures.

Some old photographs show what the monastic façade looked like, although the best testimony we have (before important changes took place) is the drawing by José Carlos Magne realized in 1796 (Fig.19). Here, the most striking element appears: a half *tempietto*, just like the central piece of the Manga fountain, which stood over

¹⁷ See above, footnote 3.

¹⁸ Various monastic dependencies were organized along the cloister’s top floor.



Fig. 19 - Monastery of Santa Cruz façade, 1796. Drawing by José Carlos Magne (detail), Machado de Castro National Museum.

the monastery's main entrance door. However, it is possible that this element does not correspond to the original entrance structure. Indeed, if we read Francisco de Mendanha (Révah, 1957) we can conclude that the structure that is described is somewhat different. It had four pillars (and not columns) organized along a square plan, supporting an architrave from which a dome was set covering the space in front of the monastic door¹⁹. This way we can assume an alteration was made some time between 1540 and 1796. The half *tempietto* we can see in Magne's drawing, executed as a probable replica of the dome of the Manga *tempietto*, was probably not the original entrance piece. Nevertheless, this original architectural element, akin to a series of similar structures that exist in central crossroads of various localities around Coimbra, should also be credited, in our opinion, to Jean de Rouen²⁰.

We can also note in Magne's illustration an architrave sustained by three Tuscan columns and two half-columns. This structure defined the main entrance space to one of the new colleges of Santa Cruz (that of St. Augustine) established by Friar Brás to prepare for the transfer of the

University, which took place in 1537. This architrave is similar to the one over the balcony of *Porta Especiosa*, the famous Renaissance lateral door of Coimbra's Cathedral (Fig.20). No documents subsist relating to the construction of this magnificent architectural structure (Gonçalves, 1974: 26; Craveiro, 2011b: 78), which was made under the bishopric of Jorge de Almeida (1482-1543). Art Historians have credited it to Jean de Rouen (Gonçalves, 1974: 29; Dias, 1982: 206) an attribution with which we agree. We also agree with its timing being around 1535, when his main works at Santa Cruz were already finished. This resemblance also leads us to admit that the Frenchman is the probable sculptor of the architrave portico alongside the monastic church of Santa Cruz. Finally, on the far right of Magne's picture, we can still see the parish church of St. John, which replaced the feminine monastic church of *São João das Donas*, and which is today a famous café. Inside, the majestic rib vault by Diogo de Castilho, of around 1531, still remains.

¹⁹ "Sta ante esta porta hu deambulatório pequeno quadrado com um semicírculo de graos de pedraria que tem o ponto em o meio do portal. Sobre estes graos se armam umas collunas estriadas e quadradas com suas bases e capitees romanos, sobre as quaes vay hua alqtrava com sua frisa e cornela de pedraria lavrada de romano & com sua cimalha rica & muyto ao proposito. Desta sae abobeda a maneyra de cibório com hua lanterna que tem o remate. Debayxo desta abobeda sta o porta de pedraria com algua obra custosa."

²⁰ This type of classical structure over the monastic entrance was soon to be copied and systematized by a new religious congregation that would make its appearance in the following few years. In fact, the Jesuits would replicate this type of element in the entrance of almost all of their houses and colleges in Portugal.



Fig. 20 - *Porta Especiosa* (attributed to Jean de Rouen, c.^a1535), Coimbra cathedral. Photo by the author.

III.6. The infirmary chapel

To conclude the story of the group of works executed by Jean de Rouen at Santa Cruz, during the first phase of his Portuguese career, we should make reference to a small space-containing original structure that no longer exists. The infirmary chapel was set at the southern end of an elongated room, which ran along the upper floor of the Manga cloister's east wing. The cloister, and surrounding dependencies, would have been finished around 1533 (the year when the *tempietto* was commissioned). Francisco de Mendanha's description, written seven years later, is quite clear: *"At the end [of the infirmary] stands a small chapel with its musical arch and wooden vault, in*

Roman style" (Révah, 1957)²¹. This wooden vault would have been a similar coffered structure to the one we have placed over the reconstitution of the "Last Supper". Naturally, the design of this architectonic element must be credited, again, to Jean de Rouen.

IV. Transmission / repercussion

The transformation of the Monastery of Santa Cruz in the late 1520's and early 1530's constituted a major source for the spread of the Renaissance in Portugal. Practically at the same time John III also ordered the reformation of the Convent of Christ, in Tomar, 80 km to the south of Coimbra, along the road to Lisbon.

As at Santa Cruz a Hieronymite friar, Friar António de Lisboa, was put in charge. The existing convent was also much enlarged to enforce the enclosure of the friars. A large square-planned edifice was added to the west, comprising four ample cloisters and the smaller cloister of Saint Barbara, which articulated the old and new convent. The architect in charge was João de Castilho (c.1470-1552), who had been responsible for the magnificent rib vaulting of the *Jerónimos* monastery church in Lisbon. As we have seen, the design of the royal tombs at the church of Santa Cruz has also been attributed to him. At Tomar, Castilho would display his enormous capacity for adaptation (see Moreira, 1991: 406-475). While responsible for the design of the Saint Barbara and main cloisters, which were already in a proto-Renaissance style (the latter replaced by the existing main cloister of the 1560's), he would execute two outstanding

²¹ "Em fim da qual sta huã capella pequena com seu arco musico & abobada de madeyra ao romano".

coffered Classical vaults over the refectory²² and over the crossing chapel of the upper floor dormitory (see Pereira, 2017) both built around 1533 (Fig.21). After the chapel of the Santa Cruz main cloister, these are the earliest space-covering coffered classical vaults, made of stone, in Portuguese architecture. In addition, the long “T” shape dormitory corridor would be covered with coffered classical wooden vaults (like the one in Santa Cruz), assuming, that is, that the ones which still exist today are the original ones.

For his part, Jean de Rouen has been connected with the design of the unique *Serra do Pilar* monastery, also of the Canons Regular, on the south bank of the Douro, facing the city of Oporto. The first stone was laid down on 6th December 1537, in the presence of the local Bishop and of both Jean de Rouen and Diogo de Castilho (Abreu, 1999: 21). The scheme, under the supervision of Friar Brás de Braga, comprised a round church and a round cloister. Friar Brás referred to *Serra do Pilar* as the “king of monasteries” (Brandão, 1937: 178)²³. An original round church, probably designed by Jean de Rouen, was finished in 1544 (Abreu, 1999: 24, 164-166). It no longer survives, since it was replaced by a new rotunda started in 1579 (but only finished in 1672, Abreu, 1999: 28-31). The cloister was built mainly between 1575 and 1583, under master mason Jerónimo Luís (Abreu, 1999: 27) almost four decades after the original

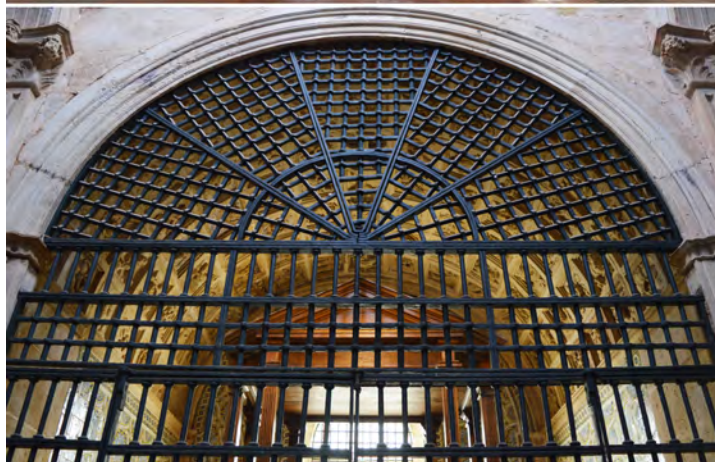


Fig. 21 - Convent of Christ, Tomar. Refectory and dormitory crossing chapel (João de Castilho, 1533). Photos by the author.



Fig. 22 - Monastery of Serra do Pilar, Vila Nova de Gaia (Jerónimo Luís, 1575-83). Photo Manuelvbotelho, Wikimedia Commons.

²² It is interesting to compare it with the Santa Cruz refectory in Coimbra, covered by the late-Gothic rib vault by Diogo de Castilho, João's younger half-brother.

²³ “*Rey dos Moesteyros*”. Letter of Friar Bras de Braga to John III, 25th November 1541.

foundations were laid. The gallery is covered by a continuous coffered barrel vault (Fig.22), but it is doubtful that Jean de Rouen would have designed anything more than the structure's original general layout²⁴.

Nevertheless, there was a reaction to Jean de Rouen's use of Classical style, and to the coffered vaulting he established in his first years at Santa Cruz, in Coimbra itself. Jean de Rouen continued using this type of covering in new stone structures, like the beautiful Sacramento chapel at Cantanhede (of 1547, Fig.23) or the Treasurer's chapel of *São Domingos* church (1558-1565)²⁵. But it would be in the new university colleges that

this type of vaulting would stand out (even though through the hands of other masters and architects), applied both to the galleries of the cloisters and to the colleges' public churches. The church of the college of Graça, of 1548-55 (Fig. 24), built by Diogo de Castilho, on *Rua de Santa Sofia* (the newly opened street of the University colleges), was one of the first churches in Portugal covered by a coffered stone vault, indeed probably the very first. This configuration literally set in stone the extraordinary success of this type of classical vaulting in the subsequent college churches of Coimbra: *São Jerónimo* (started 1565, disappeared), *São Bento* (started 1576, also disappeared), Carmo (c^a 1576-1600) and the church of the Jesuit Jesus college, of 1598-1698.



Fig. 23 - Chapel of Sacramento (Jean de Rouen, 1547), parish church of Cantanhede. Photo by the author.



Fig. 24 - Church of the college of Graça (Diogo de Castilho, 1548-55). Photo by the author.

²⁴ The cloister was moved several metres to the east, in 1690-92, to make way for the new rotunda's chancel. It was probably reduced in the process (Abreu, 1999: 41-42, 81-89).

²⁵ Here, the design of the chapel vault can be alternatively (or jointly) attributed to the church's architect, Isidoro de Almeida.

V. Conclusions

Although in his time Jean de Rouen was normally referred to as an “imagineer”²⁶ he was also considered, more rarely, to be an “architect” – at least a couple of times, the first in a contract of 1566 (Garcia, 1913: 32; Gonçalves, 2005: 290). Modern scholars have also acknowledged this latter activity (Dias, 1982: 163, 462; Abreu, 1999: 163-166; Lobo, 2006: 180; Gonçalves, 2011: 119; Craveiro, 2013: 15) although others have highlighted Jean de Rouen mainly as an artist and sculptor (Borges, 1980; 1981) who was capable of elaborating such refined pieces as altarpieces, sculptural compositions, tumular arches, and portals and doorways, more than buildings themselves. Some of his earliest works in Portugal belong to these varied categories, such as the Atalaia church portal, the Varziela altarpiece, the tumular structures at Góis and Trofa do Vouga, the sculptures he carved for the church portal of Santa Cruz, or the beautiful “Entombment of Christ” (of c^a 1540, Fig.25) also made for the Monastery of Santa Cruz.

Nevertheless, as we have tried to point out, the first phase of Jean de Rouen’s work at the Monastery of Santa Cruz was of the utmost importance for the implementation of Renaissance forms over a wide span of artistic endeavours, including architecture. In this sense, three major conclusions can be reached:

- 1) Jean de Rouen’s first period at the Santa Cruz monastery (1528-1535), in the wake of Nicholas Chanterene’s activity, was decisive in the employment of Renaissance forms in Coimbra, through the design of sculptural figures and compositions but also of architectonic elements such as arches and doorways. The assignment of works such as the cathedral’s *Porta Especiosa* of c^a 1535 is a testimony of how his work was architecturally perceived.



Fig. 25 - Entombment of Christ” (Jean de Rouen, c^a1540), Machado de Castro National Museum. Photo Manuelvotelho, Wikimedia Commons.

- 2) His influence also extended to the conformation of architectural space, mainly through the design of space-containing coffered classical vaults. This specific influence would have a strong and lasting impact in Coimbra and elsewhere, as we have seen. Jean de Rouen also introduced spherical domes as in the Manga *tempietto*.
- 3) The first seven years of Jean de Rouen’s activity at Santa Cruz were decisive to the development of Renaissance architecture

²⁶ “Imaginário” or “Imaginador”.

in Coimbra and in central and northern Portugal. Hence, Jean de Rouen has to be considered a key figure in the development of Portuguese Renaissance architecture (and not only of Portuguese Renaissance sculpture, as has normally been the case).

Following these first few years, Jean de Rouen's activity in the architectural field must be highlighted in such works as the abovementioned Monastery of *Serra do Pilar* or the Sacramento chapel in Cantanhede, or further still in his design of the church of *São Salvador de Bouças* (begun c^a 1559 and later demolished and rebuilt) in Matosinhos, near Oporto. The contract to finish the altarpiece, choir and nave, signed in June 1572 (Garcia, 1913: 108), clearly states: “Y^o de Ruã arquiteto” – a totally deserved account, as we have just seen.

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