

THE CHEST GAZETTE

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Monastery of Santa Maria (Alcobaça)

The Royal Monastery of Santa Maria de Alcobaça (UNESCO World Heritage Site; IPPAR National Monument 1910) is the first fully Gothic work erected on Portuguese soil, started in 1178 by the monks of the Cistercian Order, forced to leave the monastery in 1834, following the decree to suppress all religious orders in Portugal.

The hydraulic system of the Monastery Abadia Velha, the first provisional monastery, was built on the bank of the Alcoa river. Later, the Monastery started to be supplied with water that came from an artificial side arm of Alcoa, the Levada.

It is possible that the Alcoa river was diverted or rectified and that some parts of its previous bed were used for the construction of the Levada. However, it is surprising that monks created their own water supply system from an early age. Within the wall of the Monastery there were also several wells, from which clean water came. It is assumed that the water supply, through the underpass, would also serve a need in times of crisis. Corresponding underground tributaries from sources farther from channels diverted to passable tunnels also existed on the south side. There are still parts of these tunnels. Probably, they were intended to supply the Monastery with spring water

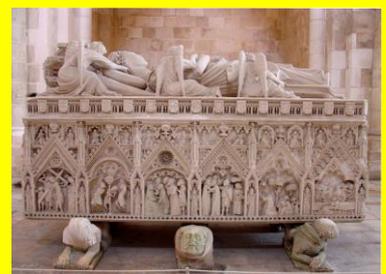
Among all its splendour remains the tombs of Pedro I (1320-1367) and Inês de Castro (1320-1355), as one of the largest tomb sculptures of the Middle Ages and a memory of his great love, who had been cruelly sentenced to death by Pedro's father (Afonso IV, 1291-1357). elucidative scenes are represented in the tombs as other illustrate scenes from the History of Portugal, on its biblical origin or simply resort to fables.

Pedro I married in 1336, in second nuptials, with Constança (1318-1345), a Castilian princess. As chambermaid, she brought Inês de Castro, who came from an ancient noble Galician family. D. Pedro fell in love with her. In 1345, when Constança had died after the birth of her surviving son, Pedro began to live with Inês.

Pedro's father, Afonso IV, did not accept this relationship, fighting it and, in 1355, condemned Inês to death for high treason. After ascending the throne, Pedro I avenged the death of his beloved (claiming to have secretly married her in 1354) and decreed that Inês be honoured as queen of Portugal. When in 1361 the sarcophagi were ready, Pedro I ordered them to be placed in the southern part of the transept of the church of Alcobaça and to transfer the remains of D. Inês de Coimbra to Alcobaça, under the eyes of most of the nobility and the population. D. Pedro I determined to be buried in the other sarcophagus so that, when the couple was resurrected, on Judgment Day, they would look each other in the eye.



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