

THE TOURIST POTENTIAL OF THE ROMAN ROAD OF SÃO MAMEDE DE RIBATUA, ALIJÓ

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to present the historical and cultural importance of the existing Roman road in São Mamede de Ribatua, Alijó, in north of Portugal. It is intended to demonstrate that it is an important patrimonial resource for the region and should be valued in terms of tourism.

KEYWORDS

Roman Roads; Medieval Roads; Tourism; Tourist Route

1. INTRODUCTION

It is intended to show the importance of a tourism resource that is not properly explored in tourist terms: the Roman road of São Mamede de Ribatua, as it is a secular historical legacy.

Tourism is one of the world's largest industries, bringing economic benefits and contributing to the development of countries. In this way, the path must be transformed into a tourist product, contributing to the development of the region.

In the first we make some considerations about the historical and architectural evolution of the Roman and medieval ways. Subsequently, the territory of São Mamede de Ribatua is contextualized through the history of the Roman path. Finally, it is analyzed how the route can be valued in terms of tourism, through the implementation of a tourism-cultural route that allows the dynamization of the territory.

2. ROMAN ROADS AND MEDIEVAL ROADS

The road network in Portugal has remote origins. They were initially the castrejos people to implant a road system in the Iberian Peninsula. However, it was the Romans who developed the road network in the Iberian Peninsula. The Roman road network covered much of Europe, North Africa and the Middle East.

In the north of Portugal, the most important Roman roads and medieval paths “were almost always on a sidewalk, except for the abundant granite region. The rainy climate and the large number of ox carts meant that most of the most important roads were cobbled with stone” (Machado, 2016: 30).

In constructive terms, the Roman strata was more complex: it had pavement built and had structure by layers. The medieval roads were simpler, where “in most cases, it was confined to a surface packing of the land, and the materials on the site or nearby were used without much

preparation. The technique of construction used was limited to flattening the bed of the road (...)"(Monteiro, 2012: 22). Exceptionally, road paving could occur at the entrance of cities, access to bridges or at strategic locations.

The Roman strata was built in three phases according to the Monteiro (2012: 36):

"it began by opening a trench about 6 meters wide by about 1 meter deep, and there was placed a first layer of primary stone, the statumen, formed by large stones and represented the foundation; this was then covered with a second layer of gravel, bonded with a kind of mortar, the rudus. Finally, in a third phase, the entire bed of the road was filled with a last layer of flat stones of medium size and polygonal shape, summa crusta".

There are other aspects that need to be mentioned such as: the fact that the Roman roads exclude the curves, that is, as a rule, the sidewalks had rectilinear paths; and have an arched and curved profile, with the purpose of draining the rainwater to the berms.

"The Roman system was designed to serve and unite a cohesive empire, while medieval authority and interests were of a more local nature. The tendency of medieval roads was less to constitute engineering works than mere rights of way. The Roman roads were destroyed, abandoned, overrun, the cladding stones were removed, or gradually incorporated into medieval or fully preserved paths", defended by Loyn (1990: 141).

Secondary roads had no milestones and were the subject of less investment during construction.

These Roman roads, combining the main and secondary roads, were part of a complex road network whose primary objective was to connect the large administrative centers.

The journeys on these medieval roads were characterized as long, risky and painful, as there were innumerable obstacles; along the way the travelers were faced with the lack of accommodation to rest, with the lack of food; the risk of occurrence of robberies; adverse climatic conditions; the relief; Given this, summer was the best time to travel in these ways.

The Roman and medieval bridges also present differences. Both sought to overcome natural obstacles such as rivers. The Roman bridges had a horizontal board and were constituted by semicircular arcs.

During the Middle Ages, the roads registered a high dynamism due to the time of the great pilgrimages, mainly to Santiago de Compostela, in Spain.

Lemos (1995:134) verifies "the main axes of circulation established in the Upper Empire lasted until the nineteenth century", where most of the network of Roman roads arrived intact in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, this primitive network overlaps a complex network of mediaeval paths. The new routes result both from the new strategic needs created by the defense of the portuguese frontier and from the need to establish more direct links between fortified villages.

3. SÃO MAMEDE DE RIBATUA

São Mamede de Ribatua is a small village belonging to the municipality of Alijó, in northern Portugal and is a land with ancient origins, where there are numerous archaeological remains of

proto-historic settlements of the Iron Age, from the Bronze Age, as the castro of the Moors of Ribatua; Senhora da Cunha, "romanized fortified settlement of which only a few vestiges of houses and materials remain. The stones of the walls are found in the staircase of the Sanctuary"(PDM Alijó: 11); Castle of Safres; and Castle of Boats. It is a predominantly agricultural territory, with a vast patch of forest area, consisting mainly of pine forest, as well as a large area of vineyards, olive and orange trees.

The parish is bounded on the east by the river Tua and on the south by the river Douro. The territory is also part of the Alto Douro Vinhateiro, the oldest demarcated region in the world. A brook crosses through the village's center.

It is a small parish with a population of 750 in 2011.

It was a village and county seat between 1162 and the early years of the 19th century. In patrimonial terms, what stands out is the church, the pillory, the Roman bridge and the respective Roman road. There is another type of heritage built as sources and civil architecture of great historical importance.

3.1. HISTORY OF THE ROMAN ROAD OF SÃO MAMEDE DE RIBATUA

The municipality of Alijó was crossed by two main routes that linked Braga to Astorga, according to the Itinerarium of Antonino. From here, several secondary roads emerged, such as the route studied here, connecting São Mamede de Ribatua to Amieiro, a remote village overlooking the Tua River. In spite of this, this route may have served protohistoric settlements, that is to say, the lodges of Piolho, Cortinhas and Safres, located in S. Mamede de Ribatua. It was the ore-rich Ribatuan subsoil, which probably attracted the greed of the Romans" by S. Mamede de Ribatua.

Although it is not possible to determine in chronological terms the period of construction of this route, it is established that it was built during the Roman period. One of several indicators is the aspect of the path that does not have curves.

In context, the Roman presence in this territory is confirmed by the discovery of several "Roman finds, namely architectural elements such as columns, cornices, bricks, for example) and also amphorae in S. Mamede de Ribatua" (Rocha, 1993: 23). The toponymy itself refers to this presence: Calçada street, proving that this artery had its genesis in the Roman «sidewalk». Note that the street still has the slabs.

For the most part, the road is paved with large granite polygonal slabs, giving it a state of solidity that allowed it to reach our days. However, in some parts there is no longer this flatness, being only the ground floor. In some sections, you can see that the sidewalk has a curved profile, that is, higher at the center to allow drainage of the rainwater to the ditches, one of the main characteristics of the Roman roads.



Figure 1-Path perspective Source:Own authorship



Figure 2-Path perspective Source: Own authorship

The bridge above the São Mamede river is of Roman origin, but underwent alterations throughout the Middle Ages, giving it a medieval aspect. The last renovation on the bridge was in the 18th century. The Romanesque style bridge consists of two perfect back arcs, presenting the central arch with great breadth. Its tray is slightly easel, that is, with double ramp flooring (Almeida, 2001: 149).



Figure3-Medieval bridge Source:Own authorship

Although the route starts outside the village, it is presumed that the route crosses the interior of the village of São Mamede de Ribatua. Over time, the Roman route was eventually incorporated into the village due to the growth of the village, and the places where the road passed were not noticeable. The same situation occurs in Safres, another picturesque village situated on the

riversides of the Tua, where the Roman road takes the street name of Santo António; and in the Amieiro where the sidewalk receives the name of Santa Luzia. In both cases, within the villages the Roman road is no longer noticeable. Similarly, the lack of historical documents does not allow precise information to be obtained.

Returning to São Mamede, it is presumed that after the Roman bridge, toward the settlement, the road continued through the interior of the village and reached the street of Calçada. Being the nucleus of the church the oldest part of São Mamede, it is presumed that the Roman way had here beginning or crossed this part of the town. The road should follow towards the villages of Granja and Favaios, intersecting with other Roman secondary roads. In the villages of Granja and Favaios there are streets called the Right, which leads us to believe that a Roman road passed here. They were called "Right" because they were the main streets and in a straight line.

In addition to the Roman period, the path continued to be used during the Middle Ages and later times. Some of the sanctuaries were built along the way, and in the surrounding area there were several shrines, such as the Chapel of Nossa Senhora dos Prazeres or also called Senhora da Cunha (where there was a Roman settlement) where pilgrims used the Roman road to reach the place of worship. These two situations confirm the maintenance of the Roman route by the local population. Over the centuries, the route continued to be used by the population for their travels and mainly to carry out agricultural activities, especially for the passage of oxen and transport of agricultural goods.

The municipal road that connects S. Mamede to Amieiro, the Municipal Highway 596, passing through Safres, has a route parallel to the Roman road.

4. TOURIST VALUE OF THE ROMAN ROAD

4.1. CREATION OF A CULTURAL ROUTE

"Paths are territorial marks of Man, his techniques, his cultures of his habitat, his ecosystem, his time and the level of social organization of the society that uses them" (Azevedo, 2016: 58).

The concepts of itineraries or cultural itineraries were defined by the Council of Europe and UNESCO during the 1980s and 90s of the twentieth century. The term itinerary originates from the word 'itinerarium', referring to 'travel'.

A route or cultural itinerary is currently defined by Perez (2009: 232) as "a circuit marked by sites and steps related to a theme. This theme should be representative of a regional identity of its own, to foster a sense of belonging, of recognition anchored in the collective memory".

The Roman road of São Mamede de Ribatua is an excellent example of a cultural itinerary, inserted in the definition attributed by ICOMOS (2008: 1), elucidating that cultural itineraries represent evolutionary, interactive and dynamic processes of intercultural human relations.

4.2. TOURISTICDINAMIZATION

In recent years, cultural tourism has been gaining increasing interest worldwide.

"In the Iberian Peninsula the use of cultural heritage as a development strategy took place later than in France and England, and is only now being discussed and debated" (Perez, 2011: 197).

At the end of 2017, the autarchy inaugurated a pedestrian trail, called "PR1 ALJ Trail of Fragas Más", which crosses sections of the Roman road. Although it is an important step in the tourist valorisation of this resource, a tourist itinerary should be created along the Roman road, since "the itineraries or cultural itineraries have the purpose of giving to know natural and historical environments" (Azevedo, 2016: 58). The itineraries are associated with an exhaustive and detailed description of the main places of tourist interest. In addition, "touristic itineraries are considered instruments that enable the visitor to have a more extensive, organized or thematic knowledge of the destination's points of interest (...)" (Perussi, 2011: 189).

The realization of this route allows the visitor to live with the people of these lands, to visit villages and sites with heritage considered of high historical-cultural interest and to enjoy a unique landscape. Part of the route is part of the Vale do Tua Regional Natural Park and is close to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Alto Douro Vinhateiro.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is concluded that although the route is not classified in heritage terms, the valorization of this Roman road (in excellent state of conservation) as a tourist resource, reconciled with the new tourist activities that are being developed in the natural park of the Tua Valley, affirms itself as an important new attraction for the municipality of Alijó, but especially for the entire region of Trás-os-Montes.

Increasingly, "cultural tourism reconciled with historical heritage emerges as a strong stimulant of the regions and as an element of attraction of society, widely mobilized by nostalgia, seeking in the heritage, an encounter with the past" (Azevedo, 2016: 115).

The Roman road constitutes a mark of territorial identity as a historical legacy, that is, it is the cultural heritage of a people.

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