



ROMAN OLD BALNEARY AND POOL

TERMAS - S. PEDRO DO SUL

HISTORICAL SYNTHESIS



D. AFONSO HENRIQUES ROMAN OLD BALNEARY AND POOL TERMAS - S. PEDRO DO SUL

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Currently rehabilitated and valued, it is located on the left bank of the Vouga River, in the center of S. Pedro do Sul Thermal Spa and is one of the most important and well preserved Roman thermal spa facilities in the country. It has been in continuous use for 2000 years and has always been a major driver of local development.

Taking advantage of the abundant therapeutic water springs, the favorable position in the road network system and the proximity to “Castro do Banho”, the Romans owe the initial construction of the balneum, which, through an architectural analysis, made it in two moments: A first phase of construction in the century I d. C. and a 2nd phase, coinciding with the completion of the building at the end of the same century, with archeology uncovering a number of materials and structures: coins, ceramics, fibulae, epigraphic tombstones, plumbing, swimming pools, columns, pavements, foundations, walls or cladding.

Entered at the time of the Christian reconquest, it is believed that the thermal building and its surrounding space were occupied and the subject of some transformations, such as the construction of the old church of S. Martinho do Banho (9th century), of which there is only the main chapel left, an important and rich historical heritage framed in the archaeological area.

Already in the dawn of the founding of the Portuguese nationality, it is noted the role attributed by the first portuguese king D. Afonso Henriques to the “Banho” village (1152) and the name “ Piscina D. Afonso Henriques”, set of buildings of the twelfth century based on pre-existing Roman structures. Promoted by the conquering king, who attended the local baths after the fracture suffered in the unsuccessful battle of Badajoz (1169), establishing royal palace in the “Banho” village along with his son Sancho (future king D. Sancho I), the daughters Teresa and Urraca and all the royal court, with them gathering and deciding important national policies.

There are also architectural remnants of the Dinizino period and the presence of kings D. João I and D. Duarte, as well as the princes of the inception generation.

The fame and excellence of these baths earned the visit of other Portuguese

sovereigns, as was the case, in the 16th century, of King D. Manuel I, who granted new charter to the so-called Caldas de Lafões (1515) and funded so that converted the old thermal building into Real Hospital das Caldas de Lafões, also attending to treat a dermatological disease and granting its exploitation to a well-known and powerful family from Vouzela, which only ceased almost 300 years later.

Also the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries show signs of modifications in the building.

At the end of the nineteenth century, over 4 seasons, the place was sought by the last queen of Portugal, D. Amelia, who carried out treatments and left the mark of her passage in the new building that was then built, thus discontinuing the use of the old medieval-Roman spa.

The old building still served as school facilities and material storage, but the careless and progressive abandonment led to its rapid degradation, especially the flooding caused by the floods in Vouga river in 1995.

After several years of left to its ruins, the S. Pedro do Sul City Council began an energetic approach to the public entities that manage the cultural and patrimonial politics, being able to obtain public communitarian funding to make the archaeological area of the S. Pedro do Sul Roman Spa bath a living monument, respected and with the dignity it deserves, serving the cultural, tourist and scientific purposes.

With this goal, on August 7th, 2019, the largest cultural and heritage work in the central region was inaugurated to revitalize and enhance this Roman medicinal building, classified as a National Monument, until 28 December 536, DG, I Series, No. 66, of 22-03-1938.

Soon, the space will benefit from a museological component, with the exhibition of various materials collected in archaeological context, multimedia reality and more systematized information, to enable a better understanding of this monument. We will also have a theme store.

It is open daily from Monday to Sunday at the following times: from 10am to 12:30 pm and from 2pm to 6pm, with guided tours from Monday to Friday, at 11am, 15pm and 16pm.

