

# IDENTITY AND ARCHITECTURAL VALUES OF THE MONASTERY OF SÃO BENTO DE CÁSTRIS IN THE PERIOD 1957-2005

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## ABSTRACT

Identity is part of the architectural heritage, related directly to the cultural values of the place. In Portugal the monasteries were significantly changed after 1834, reason why they are architectural entities whose materiality reflects the adaptations to which they have been subjected over time, integrating its authenticity. This is the case of the Monastery of São Bento de Cástris, in Évora, which had several uses through time, adapting the place to allow its physical continuity. Through the study of its materiality it was sought to recognize the identity of the place between 1957-2005, when it was used as the male section of Casa Pia, a child care institution.

This study aims to contribute to a future intervention methodology that considers the material values of the Monastery, due to the need to safeguard this currently abandoned place. This will contribute to regain a new collective esteem, essential for its continuity.

Key-word: Architectural values; Identity; Monastery of São Bento de Cástris; Cistercian Architecture; Material Cultural Heritage.

## 1 IDENTITY AND ARCHITECTURAL VALUES

The theme of *identity* of architectural heritage has been studied by several authors who also refer that the *memory* is an essential tool and contribute to its continuity and safeguard. Regarding the themes *identity* and *memory*, it was recently presented a dissertation within the scope of the Masters in Architecture at the University of Évora, entitled “The Monastery of São Bento de Cástris: Memory and Identity”<sup>1</sup> (Faustino, 2016). This group of buildings from the 13<sup>th</sup> century is part of the identity of the city of Évora and has been classified as National Monument since 1922<sup>2</sup>. However, previous investigations about the monastery did not reflect on the present *memory* and *continuity* of its *identity*, focusing mainly on historical aspects (Conde, 1995, 2009; Caeiro, 2008; Tereno, Pereira, & Monteiro, 2013). On the recent history of the place, and particularly on its use as Casa Pia<sup>3</sup> between 1957-2005, little is known – being the most consistent use for a certain period, since its use as an agricultural school occurred in a very short period between 1900-1930. Being this last continuous use as child care institution recent, it allows us to collect and document the memories of its previous users. These were the main reasons that lead us to define the *place’s memory mapping*<sup>4</sup> as this investigation objective (Faustino, 2016, pp.116-131,133-157), as a result of its spatial adaptation to the new use. However, in the context of the

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<sup>2</sup> Decree n.º 8 218, DG, I Série, n.º 130, from 29-06-1922, in <https://dre.pt/application/dir/pdf1s/1922/06/13000/06300630.pdf> (consulted 07-08-2016)

<sup>3</sup> Child care institution.

<sup>4</sup> To spatially identify the spaces, present in people’s memories.

contribution of tangible values to the establishment of intangible values, this article will present the study on the material identity of the Monastery of São Bento de Cástris.

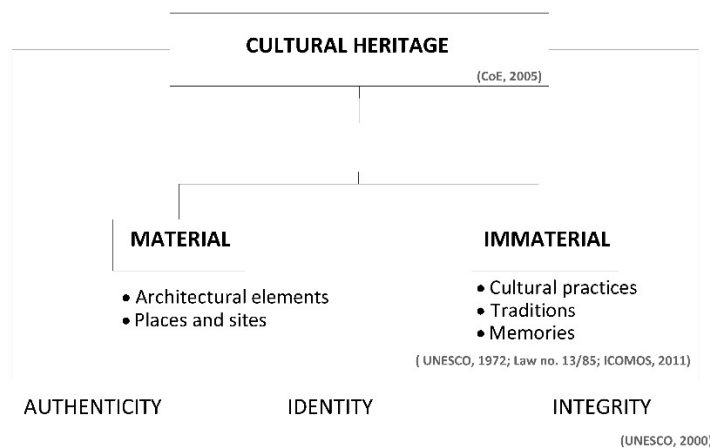
After the conceptual framework and a brief approach to the history of the place, we'll compare the original construction and the adaptation of the building to the new functions in order to verify if two different identity epochs can coexist in this place.



**Figure 1 – Cistercian atmosphere at Monastery of São Bento de Cástris. Left: Cloister. Right: North gallery of the cloister. Source: Patrícia Faustino, 2016**

## 2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The understanding of concepts of *authenticity* and *identity* of the *cultural heritage*, material and immaterial, seeks to understand the relations between them, how it preserves the heritage values, and what is the role of *memory* in the continuity of material heritage. From the Heritage International Conventions, we highlight: the Recommendation concerning the Protection, at National Level, of the Cultural and Natural Heritage (UNESCO, 1972), for emphasizing the need to identify, protect, preserve and enhance cultural heritage, ensuring its transmission to future generations; the Law of the Portuguese Cultural Heritage (Law no. 13/85) in which material and immaterial values are considered part of the cultural heritage; the Krakow Charter (UNESCO, 2000) in which concepts as authenticity and identity are further developed; the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the value of cultural heritage for society (CoE, 2005), for clarifying the definitions of material and immaterial cultural heritage, for the importance given to people's role in the heritage conservation, and also to the integration of immaterial heritage values on the protection of the material heritage.



**Figure 2 – Conceptual diagram on the relationship between authenticity, identity and integrity of Cultural Heritage. Source: Patrícia Faustino, 2016**

The diagram on Fig. 2 is a result of this research, it shows the relationship between *cultural heritage* – which includes “all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time” (CoE, 2005, art. 2) -, comprising the *material* and *immaterial values* (ICOMOS, 2011), as well as the *authenticity* and *identity* of places (UNESCO, 2000). It is necessary for these concepts to adapt to contemporary values regarding the development of integrated strategies for heritage safeguard.

Cultural heritage, being it material or immaterial, has embedded an idea of past (Cabral, 2011). The value of the tangible heritage has been ensured over the years by the practices of heritage conservation, while the intangible heritage is being lost since there is no methodical record of the activities and practices that define it, relying mostly on the generational transmission. The immaterial heritage, as the material heritage, allows the communities a feeling of identity and continuity that contributes to its preservation through cultural respect (Cabral, 2011). Thus, we identify the necessity for community participation in cultural heritage continuity. Regarding the preservation of material and immaterial aspects of heritage, the identity of places should be respected and listed without preventing its development (ICOMOS, 2011; Lopes & Correia, 2014, p. 493).

Though conventions, charters and recommendations give us guidelines to the heritage safeguard, heritage can't be considered as an isolated object. It is necessary to evaluate and analyse these strategies through contemporary eyes and critics. When it is possible to give the material heritage a new use, without perverting its identity, it is necessary that the place is adapted, in a contemporary manner, suited for the new function. This function - which will be part of its authenticity -, should be thought out according to the place and its identity and as to ensure its continuity, preserving material and immaterial heritage. Only then the conservation of the material values allows the continuity of immaterial values.

## 2.1 THE MONASTERY OF SÃO BENTO DE CÁSTRIS

As material heritage, the Monastery of São Bento de Cástris has been a case study by multiple authors in different fields of research: in history and in the restoration of this architectural heritage (Conde, 1995, 2009, to present; Caeiro, 2008; Tereno, et. Al., 2013); in the connection between culture and the practice of tourism (Freire, 2011); and in the understanding of its role in the Cistercian Architecture (Martins, 2011). The monastery was founded in the 13<sup>th</sup> century (1275) as a Cistercian female monastery, the first to be built South from Tagus (Conde, 2009). It is located close to Évora, 2 kilometres from the classified Historical Centre. The religious orders were extinct in 1834, therefore this monastery – being a female monastery - ceased its use as a religious institution by the time the last nun died, in 1890. From 1900 to 1930 it was used as an agricultural barn, and during this time the building suffered material damage, alterations in the facilities, and was never subject of conservation actions (Conde, 1995). In the 1930's, the General Directorate of National Monuments and Buildings (DGEMN, an extinguished state department for the heritage safeguard) starts the works for the restoration of the building, finally taking charge of it by 1941. This intervention had the objective of settling in the masculine section of Casa Pia de Évora, which was by that time in the same city but at Colégio do Espírito Santo, since 1836 (Gameiro, 2000).

Casa Pia de Évora moved in 1957, and could only do so due to the physical and functional changes in its facilities. The most intervened part of the monastery, the West wing, was the one that was in the worst state of conservation and didn't have significant vestiges left from previous centuries (Conde, 1995; Martins, 2011). The use of the monastery as a child care institution lasted until 2005, being the monastery without a permanent occupation until the present day. Despite the change in its functions through time, Martins (2011) considers that these new uses ensured the continuity of this architectural heritage. Since 2009 the monastery is owned by Direcção Regional da Cultura do Alentejo (DRCA a state institution for cultural management), who uses the place for cultural events such as concerts and scientific

meetings, as it occurs with the annual seminary, *Residências Cistercienses*<sup>5</sup>, since 2013. Although it has been subject of some recent interventions in roofs and garden space in 2011, the general condition of the group of buildings deteriorates over time. In 1995 Antónia Fialho Conde describes the building as very degraded, in need of urgent interventions, which didn't take place until the year of 2011 and, more recently, in 2015. Exceptionally improvement works in the dormitories were made shortly before the property was left by the institution, as described by its users. If it was the Monastic life that brought it to us, it was its use as a child care institution – Casa Pia – that allowed this building to reach the present day. The conservations made by the extinct DGEMN, with more or less respect for the identity of the monument in study, were crucial so that we can study, preserve and enjoy this heritage. As result of many adaptations throughout the centuries, it reflects the taste and will of those who inhabited it, built according to the techniques of the different epochs, reflecting several architectural styles from different eras. After its abandonment the Monastery of São Bento de Cástris was successively vandalized, degrading from day to day. With minor interventions as mentioned, among others starting in the year of 2015 taking place until now, it is essential to look at this national monument and safeguard its identity (material and immaterial values) based on a study of its spatial-functional evolution.

## 2.2 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

From 1900 to 1930 the monastery was rented by *Estação Químico Agrícola – 8<sup>a</sup> Região Agronómica*, later called *Campo Experimental da Circunscrição Agrícola do Sul* (Conde, 1995; Caeiro, 2008). Relating to this period the information is scarce or inexistent. However graphic documentation allows us to identify changes made in the east facade of the building<sup>6</sup> - namely, the opening of several gateways (that were later closed by the end of 1940's) for the transportation and storage of materials inside the building. In the promotional video Évora<sup>7</sup>, from 1920, it is possible to watch the monastery being used by *8<sup>a</sup> Região Agrícola de Évora*<sup>8</sup>. In 1932, *Direcção Geral dos Serviços Agrícolas* (a government department for agriculture) alerts the DGEMN director for the state of ruin of the monastery, which he had been doing since 1927 without results<sup>9</sup>, leading DGEMN to declare the alarmingly ruinous state of the building in 1936<sup>10</sup>. By the 1930's, the state of ruin of the building, its unknown future use, as well as its favourable functional-spatial conditions allowed for the child care institution to be its future.

In 1940 the building, severely damaged, was handed over to the state, with intention of being used as *Asilo Agrícola Distrital* (Caeiro, 2008).

## 2.3 BUILDING ADAPTATION

In 1947, studies were made with the intention to settle in the feminine section of Casa Pia de Évora<sup>11</sup> and its agricultural school for the masculine section. The descriptive memory of the project and architecture from 1948<sup>12</sup> asserts that the adaptation project for the building does not disrespect its original material aspects or the simple and sober original epoch features, reflecting a will to preserve original epoch elements in the decorative integrity and spatial organization. The decision to install the male section of Casa Pia was made in 1950<sup>13</sup>. In this year another study is made concerning the adaptation of the old monastery to the new use according to a specific program made and given by Casa Pia de Lisboa. From 1936 to 1950, the works in the building were mainly of conservation and restoration. The new adaptation of the building aims to preserve the old features and change or build only what is essential

<sup>5</sup> Available at <http://residenciacisterciense.weebly.com/> (consulted 16-09-2016)

<sup>6</sup> Available at [http://www.monumentos.pt/Site/DATA\\_SYS/FONTES\\_DOC/IMAGES/00000040/00196978.JPG](http://www.monumentos.pt/Site/DATA_SYS/FONTES_DOC/IMAGES/00000040/00196978.JPG) (consulted 03-09-2016)

<sup>7</sup> Promotional video of the city of Évora and its historical-cultural heritage, produced in 1920 and recovered in 1990 by the Municipality of Évora.

<sup>8</sup> This usage is not specified throughout the video, but at the date this would be the use of the building.

<sup>9</sup> PT-DGEMN:DSARH-005/092-4977/08.

<sup>10</sup> PT-DGEMN:DSARH-005/092-4977/08, p.6

<sup>11</sup> Doc – 005/092-4976/02.

<sup>12</sup> Doc - 005/092-4970/02

<sup>13</sup> Doc – 005/092-4976/04.

for the news use, introducing inexistent services (e.g. classrooms) and refurbishing the spaces for new purposes (e.g. a new dining hall, apt for the institution's spatial needs). After the approval of the proposed program, works were planned in phases for a better project management.

The adaptation to a new use followed a long program, so the space could have the conditions and capacity to shelter and educate children. During the works and by the year of 1955, architect Rui Ângelo do Couto<sup>14</sup> rethinks the program proposed, making the occupation possible in a shorter time. The spaces required by the program were assigned as such:

<p><b>Ground floor, around the cloister:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Gymnasium (temporary)</li> <li>2. Typography, binding, tailoring and shoe workshops.</li> <li>3. Priest-director's office</li> <li>4. Classroom for moral studies</li> <li>5. Lobby, atrium, secretariat and visitors room</li> <li>6. Laundry services</li> <li>7. Kitchen, kitchen's pantry, dining hall for 200 students and 30 workers, with their own sanitary facilities</li> <li>8. Pantries and general sanitary facilities</li> <li>9. Church and outbuildings</li> </ol>	<p><b>First floor:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Two big rooms for dormitories - divided in sections as to better distribute the 170 students - comprehending their own sanitary facilities with toilets (for 50 students)</li> <li>2. Elementary school classrooms (50 students)</li> <li>3. Two classrooms for complementary studies (30 students each)</li> <li>4. Nursery, nursing office and isolation room;</li> </ol>
<p><b>Second floor:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Worker's dormitories, with private sanitary facilities</li> <li>2. Laundry room</li> <li>3. Drawing classroom (30 students)<sup>15</sup></li> <li>4. Music classroom (30 students)</li> <li>5. Elementary school classroom (45 students)</li> </ol>	<p><b>Exterior:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Director's house</li> <li>2. Main pantries</li> <li>3. Bakery and outbuildings</li> <li>4. Laundry machine's room</li> <li>5. Metal's workshop (30 students) and outbuildings</li> <li>6. Carpentry workshop (30 students) and outbuildings</li> <li>7. Temporary byre<sup>16</sup></li> </ol>

In 1956-1957, some phases were already completed. However, by the time the male section of Casa Pia moved to the building (1957) there was some work left to do in the church, the workshops and the cloister. Thus, a new period of use began, which was essential to the monastery's continuity.

Studies were made, during 1961, concerning the classification of the building's ZEP (Special protection zone) attributed in 1962<sup>17</sup>, proposed by the architect Rui Couto who said that the Monastery of São Bento de Cástris groups of buildings and its surroundings are one of the most important rural properties in Évora's surroundings<sup>18</sup>.

## 2.4 NOWADAYS

Besides the changes in its use, it's still possible to find vast integrated heritage in the Monastery of São Bento de Cástris, mainly from the Cistercian epoch. Such as various panels of painted tiles –in the lower choir (17<sup>th</sup> century), in N. <sup>a</sup> Sr. <sup>a</sup> do Rosário chapel (circa 18<sup>th</sup> century) and the set of panels in the church depicting St. Bernardo's life (Verão, 2016) -, as well as several frescoes, the church's gilded woodcarvings, or even the columns of the arcade of the cloister. From the frescoes and paintings, the work of Diogo de Contreiras stands out – dating from the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century (Conde, 2010)-, as the 17<sup>th</sup> century Cistercian dining hall frescoes from José

<sup>14</sup> Doc – 005/092-4966/04.

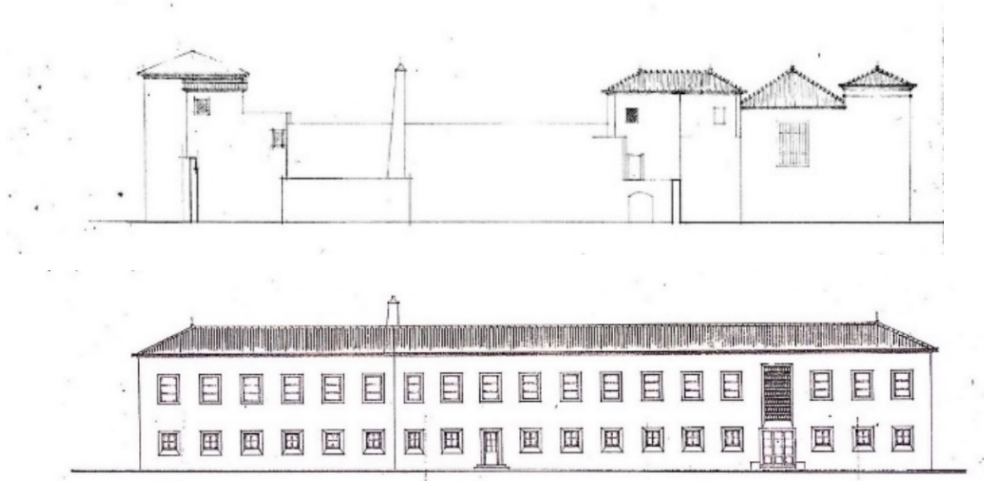
<sup>15</sup> Specific identifier (TXT.05581623)

<sup>16</sup> Doc – 005/092-4967/01 - Specific identifier (TXT.05581624, TXT.05581623)

<sup>17</sup> Order-in-Council of 20-08-1962, published in DG, II Série, n.º 210, of 06-09-1962 (with ZNA), in <http://www.patrimoniocultural.gov.pt/pt/patrimonio/patrimonio-imovel/pesquisa-do-patrimonio/classificado-ou-em-vias-de-classificacao/geral/view/69780/> (consulted 07-08-2016);

<sup>18</sup> Doc – 005/092-4975/05.

Escobar – never intervened – (Gil, Costa, Dias, Candeias, & Mirão, 2016), and finally the frescoes and paintings in the church and the nursery's first floor altar. The intervention in the Monastery of São Bento de Cástris is described by Tomé (2003) as less violent than previous ones in other monasteries, because the program was better suited to the building.



**Figure 3 –Top: West facade in ruins, no date (SIPA DES.00053662); Bottom: West facade, with the remaining 15<sup>th</sup> century chimney, no date (SIPA DES.00053694)**

According to Martins (2011, p. 1534), the Cistercian monastery's authenticity remains in its 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century architectural features, having all the other epoch's remains been altered by the construction and reconstruction campaigns, especially the ones when DGEMN was in charge; the monastery's integrity was lost due to the works made during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The damages to the West wing, where the kitchens were located, are an example of lost remains that were essential to understand the monasteries architecture. Nowadays we still have the 15<sup>th</sup> century chimney (Fig. 3) and some identifiable areas of Casa Pia's kitchens.

The bibliography asserts that only the adequate use of places allows for their continuity (Cabral, 2011; Lopes & Correia, 2014). In our case study the record shows that the inadequate use can lead to severe and irreversible damage, such as the use of the monastery as agricultural barn, which resulted mainly in ruin of the West wing and severe damage to the integrated heritage (Tomé, 2003). The damage to the roof, the pavements and to the West wing are evidence that any use is not in itself a guarantee for the continuity of heritage (Tomé, 2003). The use as a child care institution allowed, otherwise, the survival of this building until today, despite the loss of some material heritage until the 1930's and during the 20<sup>th</sup> century DGEMN campaigns.



**Figure 4 - Materiality. Left: Cistercian dining hall; Right: Casa Pia's dining hall.**

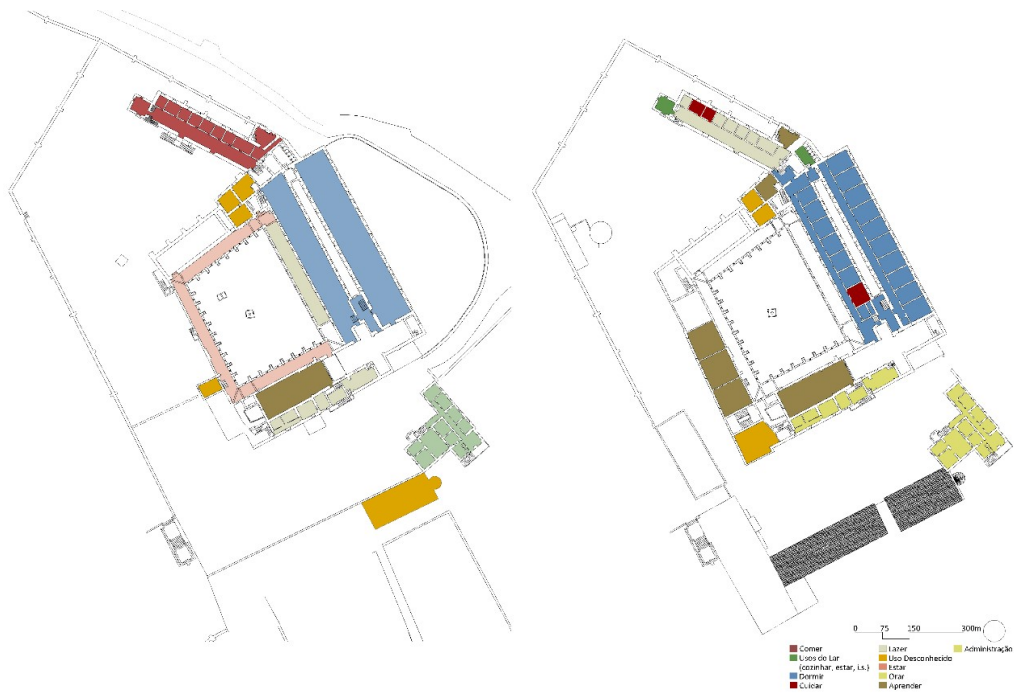


Through the analysis of the different uses of the monastery, from the beginning - as Cistercian monastery (1275-1890) – to its use as a child care institution (1957-2005), we could identify the spaces that maintained or changed their functions and uses. From this analysis we conclude that the Cistercian spatial organization structure was kept. The similarities between monastic living and the life in a child care institution (Tereno, et. Al., 2013) made for an easy adaptation of the building to its new functions, because the space was suited for these functions in a way that allowed for the place's identity to be maintained. As we can see in Fig. 5, on the ground floor, the major changes in the form of the building were made in its West area (West wing), which, due to severe damage, required extensive requalification works. There were major changes in the building's facade, especially in the new kitchen and dining hall areas (Fig. 5) and this area's materiality is clearly different than the rest of the building (Fig. 4). In the new plan drawings, we can see that the architect followed the remaining traces of the old kitchen structure and facade. On the first floor (Fig. 6), the major changes were made in the same side of the building, where the classrooms were built.



**Figure 5 - Mapping of the uses, ground floor - Left: uses from 1275-1890; Right: uses from 1957-2005.**

A comparison between the use of the spaces through time was possible, and the following functions of the space were defined: to eat, the home living (cooking, living-rooms, sanitary facilities), to sleep, to care (e.g. nursery), leisure, unknown use, living-rooms, to pray and to learn. Each function was pinpointed in the plans with a different colour, and the same colour was used in different epochs for the same function so a *place's memory mapping* could be made (Faustino, 2016).



**Figure 6 - Mapping of the uses, first floor - Left: uses from 1275 to 1890; Right: uses from 1957 to 2005.**

Throughout the years, the Monastery of São Bento de Cástris had different uses which were apparently distinct, but actually occupied the spaces in similar ways. Intervention methodologies usually aim to maintain only the material and integrated heritage, when an integrated solution, regarding also its immaterial features, should be the aim of such projects. In the case of the monasteries, we should research on its adaptations through time and on the meaning of this heritage to nowadays communities. The recording of the memory is an essential tool to preserve both immaterial and material heritage and demands the community participation. The identification feeling that results from reciprocal transmission of values promotes the respect for heritage and the necessity to preserve it (Cabral, 2011). The understanding of the place's values and meanings allows the development of integrated solutions for the heritage, regarding specific strategies for each case. The communities should be considered during the process of identifying and defining strategies, so the values and places in their collective and cultural memory can be taken into account. This place should not simply be considered as a Cistercian monastery because its last continued use as Casa Pia was the reason for it to have persisted until these days in a reasonable state of conservation.

### 3 THE IDENTITY OF ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

Through the last decades the Monastery of São Bento de Cástris was widely studied, allowing us to gather the place's history in detail. Throughout its history it is possible to understand its spatial evolution and its Cistercian use (1275-1890), with a lack in the studies from the period between the end of 19th century and the present day. The available documentation on its spatial modifications concerning the time it was used as a child care institution, from 1957 to 2005, is extensive and allows to identify the changes that were made.

The identity of the Monastery of São Bento de Cástris lies in its material and spatial original characteristics, present in its religious configuration inherent to the Cistercian order. The 20<sup>th</sup> century spatial adaptations, between the 1930's and the 1950's, changed some of the original features, which allowed for the new use as a child care institution, that became part of its identity and authenticity. Besides these changes in the building, we came to conclusion that a significant amount of the monastery original and identity features remains intact, such as its surroundings, its fences and its



isolation from the city. The Cistercian architectural identity of the monastery still present in its materiality and its original constructive elements that have remained, such as: the cloister, the Chapter room, the East, North and South wings, as well as in the integrated heritage. In its architectural form it is possible to distinguish identity elements that have been maintained through time, as the Cistercian spatial organization (*Spiritus* and *Corpus*), the church or the cloister, where it is possible to notice decorative vestiges of the Gothic, Manueline and *Mudejar-Alentejano* styles, and also other important elements of the Cistercian architecture such as the balcony on the East wing or the cloister fountains.

In conclusion, the material elements resulting from 20<sup>th</sup> century spatial adaptations to Casa Pia make, nowadays, as much part of the place's identity as the original Cistercian features. This means that these two distinct identity epochs can coexist in the same place. Therefore, it is important to recognize them in every future intervention and safeguard methodology for this architectural heritage. However, it is still relevant to study the memory as an intrinsic part of a place's identity, which will be an important value to better understand these places that live in our collective memory. If the role of society is to maintain the immaterial value of these places, for their importance in the community's identity, it is also the role of the heritage proprietaries to assure the maintenance and safeguard of the heritage and to promote respect for the identity of these places.

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