

Georgiana Goddard King (1871–1939): A Pioneering Project in the Historiography of Portuguese Romanesque Architecture



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This study examines the largely overlooked contribution of the American art historian Georgiana Goddard King, a woman scholar in the early professionalization of art history in the United States, to the study of Portuguese medieval architecture, focusing on the unfinished research project she developed following her journey to Portugal in 1935. Conceived initially as a comprehensive book on Portuguese art, this project was interrupted by severe illness and King's death, leaving instead an unpublished body of manuscript notes—the Portuguese Notebook – Architecture—and a single article, “Little Romanesque Churches in Portugal”, published posthumously in 1939.

Drawing on these sources, the paper reconstructs King's interpretative approach to Portuguese Romanesque architecture within her scholarly career and the “Golden Age” of American art history. Despite its incomplete form, her work articulated a coherent and innovative framework that challenged prevailing Franco-centric models and repositioned Portuguese Romanesque within wider European, Mediterranean, and Atlantic networks of artistic exchange. King's methodology combined architectural and stylistic analysis with historical context, monastic history, pilgrimage routes, and the long-distance circulation of forms.

Placed in dialogue with both her earlier studies of medieval Spain and contemporary Portuguese scholarship of the early twentieth century, King's Portuguese research reveals the historiographical value of comparative and cross-cultural approaches in redefining how local architectural traditions are integrated into broader art-historical narratives. This reassessment demonstrates how an unfinished scholarly project nonetheless exerted a lasting influence on the historiography of Portuguese Romanesque architecture, highlighting the productive tension between national artistic canons and methodologies that operate beyond them.

Biography:

Maria João Baptista Neto is Full Professor at the Institute of Art History, Faculty of Humanities, University of Lisbon, and Director of the ARTIS Research Group. Her research spans art history, architectural restoration theory and practice, heritage management, and the history of collecting and art markets. She teaches graduate courses, supervises doctoral research, and has coordinated several national and international research projects. Teresa Neto (ARTIS – Faculty of Humanities, University of Lisbon) holds a Master's degree in Theory and History of Architecture (Técnico, ULisbon) and is currently a PhD candidate in Art History, researching exhibition architecture, collections, and curatorial practices.