

# © COPYRIGHT NOTICE ©

This digital offprint is provided for the convenience  
of the author of the attached article.

Though this work has been written by the recipient of this electronic file,  
the Copyright is held by ACMRS (The Arizona Center for Medieval and  
Renaissance Studies), as represented by The Arizona Board of Regents for  
Arizona State University.

**This file may not be reproduced or output for any commercial purpose  
without first obtaining permission from ACMRS.**

***Prohibited commercial use includes, but is not limited to:***

- Use in any other publication (in part or in whole)
- Online publication or distribution
- Student/classroom course packs

If you have any questions regarding copyright or  
permissions, please contact ACMRS:

Permissions Department  
ACMRS  
Arizona State University  
PO Box 4402  
Tempe, AZ 85287-4402

Tel. 480-965-5900   Fax 480-965-1681   [acmrs@asu.edu](mailto:acmrs@asu.edu)





# INSCRIPTIONS AND THE ROMANESQUE CHURCH: PATRONS, PRELATES, AND CRAFTSMEN IN ROMANESQUE GALICIA<sup>1</sup>

JAMES D'EMILIO

## INTRODUCTION: SANTIAGO AND GALICIA

The cathedral of Santiago de Compostela preserves a range of inscriptions related to the history and liturgy of the Romanesque church, the protagonists of its construction, and the didactic or symbolic aspects of its decoration.<sup>2</sup> An ample text in the eastern chapel relates to the commencement of the building, a date is boldly cut into the jambs of the south transept portal, and twelve roundels in the nave celebrate the consecration of 1211 with liturgical verses encircling crosses. On the underside of the lintel of the west portal, a monumental inscription famously credits *Magister Mathevs* with raising the porch from its foundations and setting its lintels in 1188 (Fig. 1) Matheus is not the only person remembered in these inscriptions. On capitals at

---

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Colum Hourihane and the Index of Christian Art at Princeton University for organizing and hosting the conference at which this paper was presented; the Humanities Institute of the University of South Florida and the Program for Cultural Cooperation between Spain's Ministry of Culture and United States' Universities for grants supporting this project; the George A. and Eliza Gardner Howard Foundation, the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, and the Edilia and François-Auguste de Montéquin Senior Fellowship in Iberian and Latin American Architecture awarded by the Society of Architectural Historians for grants supporting my research on Galician Romanesque churches; and the Casa de Velázquez (Madrid) and Instituto Padre Sarmiento de Estudios Gallegos (Santiago de Compostela) for providing library resources. I am grateful, too, for the kind collaboration of diocesan authorities, parish priests, and numerous individuals throughout Galicia, and for the opportunity to present an early version of this paper at the XVe Colloque international de Paléographie latine in Vienna in September 2005.

<sup>2</sup> For Santiago cathedral see S. Moralejo Álvarez, *Patrimonio artístico de Galicia y otros estudios*, ed. A. Franco Mata (Santiago de Compostela, 2004), vols. 1–2; M. Castiñeiras González, "La catedral románica: tipología arquitectónica y narración visual," in *Santiago: la catedral y la memoria del arte*, ed. M. Núñez Rodríguez (Santiago de Compostela, 2000), 39–96. For medieval epigraphy see R. Favreau, *Épigraphie médiévale* (Turnhout, 1997), and the thoroughly annotated bibliographic surveys published for the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica (Hilfsmittel)*, most recently *Literaturbericht zur mittelterlichen und neuzeitlichen Epigraphik (1992–1997)*, ed. W. Koch, M. Glaser, and F.A. Bornschlegel (Hannover, 2000); *Literaturbericht zur mittelterlichen und neuzeitlichen Epigraphik (1998–2002)*, ed. W. Koch and F.A. Bornschlegel (Hannover, 2005).



Fig. 1: Santiago de Compostela, cathedral, lintel of west porch, inscription of Magister Matheus (1188) (photo: author)

the entrance to the eastern chapel, carved scrolls borne by angels identify the small figures of King Alfonso VI and Bishop Diego Peláez and link both to the cathedral's construction. *ANFVS REX* (King Alfonsus) is prominently written alongside St. James's image on the south transept façade, and the twelfth-century Pilgrim's Guide records the inscription of Bishop Diego Gelmírez on the silver altar frontal. More enigmatically, an impost in the nave galleries bears the name *GVDESTEO*, and, in the transepts and eastern bays of the nave, prominent masons' marks trace the initial letters of the most common Christian names. Finally, several tituli explicate the early twelfth-century sculpture of the south transept façade, and painted texts surely covered the scrolls held by carved figures in the west porch.

Such loquacity is hardly surprising for a shrine that ranked with Rome and Jerusalem as a goal of medieval pilgrims. Compostela attracted royal patronage, its prelates controlled the chancery of the Leonese kings, and the cathedral eventually housed the tombs of Ferdinand II and Alfonso IX. Bishop Diego Gelmírez skillfully won the metropolitan dignity in 1120, and, throughout the twelfth century, bishops and clerics promoted the see, the cult of the apostle, and the pilgrimage to his tomb.<sup>3</sup> Art and architecture were vital to this campaign: the sculptural program planned for three façades at the beginning of the twelfth century was unprecedented in scope, and the Pilgrim's Guide describes the cathedral in terms that are exceptionally precise and extensive for a medieval account of a monument.<sup>4</sup> The nature of the shrine demanded that its decoration address a wide public, and its realization drew itinerant artists

<sup>3</sup> For the cult of St. James, the career of Diego Gelmírez, and the promotion of Compostela in the twelfth century see R.A. Fletcher, *Saint James's Catapult: The Life and Times of Diego Gelmírez of Santiago de Compostela* (Oxford, 1984); F. López Alsina, *La ciudad de Santiago de Compostela en la alta edad media* (Santiago de Compostela, 1988); *The Codex Calixtinus and the Shrine of St. James*, ed. J. Williams and A. Stones (Tübingen, 1992); *El Papado, la Iglesia Leonesa y la Basílica de Santiago a finales del siglo XI: El traslado de la Sede Episcopal de Iria a Compostela en 1095*, ed. F. López Alsina (Santiago de Compostela, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> P. Gerson, A. Shaver-Crandell, and A. Stones, *The Pilgrim's Guide: A Critical Edition* (London, 1998), 2: 66–87, 129–41, 194–218. The translated description also appears in K. J. Conant, *The Early Architectural History of the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela* (Cambridge, MA, 1926), 49–58.



whose work at sites of such importance spread their fame, enhancing their own status and that of their craft.

It is more remarkable, perhaps, that churches throughout the surrounding region of Galicia display carved inscriptions rivalling those of Compostela in their artful design, the extent of their texts, their size and prominence, and their determination to record the roles of clerics and patrons — and even craftsmen and scribes — in every aspect of the making and sanctification of the Romanesque church. At Lugo cathedral, nested letters of a verse inscription ring the impost of a capital representing the Last Supper, and their elegant forms vie with the virtuosity of the unusual pendant capital itself (Fig. 18). The cruder execution of the west tympanum of the modest church of Santa María de Taboada dos Freires did not discourage its authors from touting their work. A text naming the sculptor, *Pelagivs magister*, and its author, *Iohane q(vi) notvit*, crowds the irregular space above the lobed arch framing figures of Samson and the lion (Fig. 2). Below it, a heavily abbreviated notice of the consecration — difficult to decipher — begins, oddly, in the lower of two regularly spaced horizontal lines, forming a lintel. On the underside, the date, *ERA MCCXXVIII* (1190 A.D.), is deeply cut in monumental letters.<sup>5</sup> For monumentality, few can match the colossal inscription commemorating the consecration of San Martiño de Cornoces by Bishop Alfonso of Ourense in 1200 (Fig. 3).<sup>6</sup> Splashed across the south façade, it covers twenty-seven ashlar blocks in three courses of masonry on both sides of the narrow doorway, a reminder, perhaps, of inscriptions that were more often painted on plastered walls.

Such examples highlight the diversity — in form, placement, and content — of even roughly contemporary inscriptions in Galicia. There is a twofold context for this array of carved texts. Inscriptions were an integral part of the assertive public art of Romanesque portals and façades on the roads to Compostela. From the erudite emblem at Jaca that urges its “reader” (*lector*) to decipher its letters to the profusion of titles and verses complementing the Last Judgment at Conques, texts supplied a rich counterpoint to imagery.<sup>7</sup> Long texts also recorded the construction and consecration of churches, celebrated patrons and artists, and memorialized builders who maintained the pilgrimage road itself.<sup>8</sup> From the start, the inscriptions at Compostela provided evidence of these contacts. The sadly mutilated epigraph of the eastern chapel tallies

<sup>5</sup> In 1935, the removal of plaster revealed the inscriptions. Diverse readings have been published: J. Ramón y Fernández Oxea, “Pelagio, maestro románico,” *Archivo Español de Arte y Arqueología* 12 (1936): 171–76; idem, “Santa María de Taboada dos Freires,” *Boletín de la Comisión Provincial de Monumentos Históricos y Artísticos de Orense* 15 (1945): 16–21; F. Vázquez Saco, “Iglesias románicas de la provincia de Lugo, papeleta 153: Iglesia parroquial de Santa María de Taboada dos Freires,” *Boletín de la Comisión Provincial de Monumentos Histórico-Artísticos de Lugo* 6 (1956–1957): 161–65.

<sup>6</sup> J. A. Saco Rivera and J. L. Saco Cid, “San Martín de Cornoces: inscripciones medievales,” *Porta da Aira: Revista de Historia del Arte Orensano* 8 (1997): 139–52. The text also lists the relics of Sts. Martin, Vincent, Mary Magdalene, and Euphemia, and names the woman, Urraca, who founded the church and had it built: CONSECRATA: FVIT: ECCL(es)IA: ISTA: AB ALFO(n)SO AVRIEN(se): EP(iscop)O: I(n) HONORE: B(eat)I / MARTINI: CV(m) RELIQVIIS: EI(vs)DE(m): ET S(ancti): VI(n)CE(n)CII M(ar)tyR(is): ET S(ancte): MARIE: MAGDALENE: ET / S(ancte) EVFEMIE: ET RELIQVIIS: ALIIS: E(ra): M<sup>a</sup>: CC<sup>a</sup>: XXX: VIII: XVI: K(a)L(endas): MAII. On the east side of the doorway: VRACE: <F>: QVE: EA(m): FV(n)D(a)TVS: / EDIFICAVIT.

<sup>7</sup> For the inscriptions of Jaca and Conques see notes 31 and 41 below.

<sup>8</sup> For the notion of the road itself as an enterprise that needed to be built and that celebrated its builders see S. Moralejo Álvarez, “Artistas, patronos y público en el arte del Camino de Santiago,” *Compostellanum* 30 (1985): 395–430, here 398–99, repr. in *Patrimonio artístico*, 2: 22–23.



Fig. 2: Sta. María de Taboada dos Freires (Lugo), west portal, tympanum (1190) *(photo: author)*



Fig. 3: San Martiño de Cornoces (Ourense), south wall, inscription (1200) *(photo: author)*

the date, 1075, in the *anno domini* rather than the Spanish Era.<sup>9</sup> The angels carrying inscribed scrolls on capitals have clear antecedents at Conques and in the Auvergne, and the lettered cruciform nimbuses of Christ on the early twelfth-century Puerta de Platerías find far-flung parallels in the earliest Romanesque monumental sculpture.<sup>10</sup>

At the same time, Galicia and the surrounding regions of northwestern Iberia had a rich epigraphic heritage dating back to Roman times.<sup>11</sup> Roman inscriptions were re-used in churches, and tenth-century inscriptions on roads and bridges kept Roman traditions alive.<sup>12</sup> One of Christianity's earliest monuments in the region is the marble roundel from Quiroga decorated with a chrismon and bordered by a verse inscription, and the sixth-century abbot-bishop Martín of Braga authored verse inscriptions for his refectory at Dumio and, more distantly, for the shrine of St. Martin at Tours.<sup>13</sup> Early medieval monasteries exhibited lengthy dedications, narratives, and exhortations, and florid epitaphs shrouded tombs.<sup>14</sup> In this respect, early medieval Galicia participated in and contributed to the culture of the Astur-Leonese kingdom in which

---

<sup>9</sup> It was first published by A. del Castillo, "Inscripciones inéditas de la Catedral de Santiago," *Boletín de la Real Academia Gallega* 15 (1926): 314–20. M. Gómez Moreno's reading added the date of the consecration "thirty years after" the foundation of 1075, but that is uncertain: *El arte románico español, esquema de un libro* (Madrid, 1934), 113. A.D. 1075 corresponds with the likely commencement of the cathedral with a royal council in Compostela: *Santiago, Camino de Europa: Culto y Cultura en la Peregrinación a Compostela*, ed. S. Moralejo and F. López Alsina (Santiago de Compostela, 1993), 286–89; S. Moralejo, "The 'Codex Calixtinus' as an Art-Historical Source," in *Codex Calixtinus*, 207–27, here 211–14, repr. in *Patrimonio artístico*, 2: 226–27.

<sup>10</sup> M. Durliat, *La sculpture romane de la route de Saint-Jacques: De Conques à Compostelle* (Mont-de-Marsan, 1990), 209. The capitals are analyzed in V. Nodar Fernández, *Los inicios de la catedral románica de Santiago: el ambicioso programa iconográfico de Diego Peláez* (Santiago de Compostela, 2004), 84–93; M. A. Castiñeiras González, "La meta del camino: la catedral de Santiago de Compostela en tiempos de Diego Gelmírez," in *Los caminos de Santiago. Arte, historia, literatura*, ed. M. C. Lacarra Ducau (Zaragoza, 2005), 213–52, here 218–21. For the nimbuses see J. Bousquet, "Les nimbos à anagramme: origines et brève fortune d'un motif roman," *Cahiers de Saint-Michel de Cuxà* 11 (1980), 101–21.

<sup>11</sup> For the Roman inscriptions of Galicia see F. Arias Vilas, P. Le Roux, and A. Tranoy, *Inscriptions romaines de la province de Lugo* (Paris, 1979); J. Nicols, "Indigenous Culture and the Process of Romanization in Iberian Galicia," *American Journal of Philology* 108 (1987): 129–51; G. Pereira Menaut, *Corpus de inscripcions romanas de Galicia*, vol. 1, *Provincia de A Coruña* (Santiago de Compostela, 1991); G. Baños Rodríguez, *Corpus de inscripcions romanas de Galicia*, vol. 2, *Provincia de Pontevedra* (Santiago de Compostela, 1994).

<sup>12</sup> Five inscriptions of the late ninth and early tenth centuries from bridges in central Galicia were cited, and a sixth of 1062 was published, in F. Bouza Brey, "Restos epigráficos de una puente medieval desaparecida," *Cuadernos de Estudios Gallegos* 20 (1965): 379–81. For facsimiles of two see A. López Ferreiro, *Lecciones de Arqueología Sagrada* (Santiago de Compostela, 1889), 425; E. Sánchez del Río, "Inscripción medieval a orillas del río Ulla en tierras de Golada," in *Primera reunión gallega de estudios clásicos (Santiago-Pontevedra, 2–4 Julio 1979): ponencias y comunicaciones* (Santiago de Compostela, 1981), 181–84.

<sup>13</sup> For the Quiroga chrismon see J. Fontaine, "Le distique du Chrismon de Quiroga: sources littéraires et contexte spirituel," *Archivo Español de Arqueología*, 45–47 (1972–1974): 557–84; H. Schlunk, "Los monumentos paleocristianos de 'Gallaecia', especialmente los de la provincia de Lugo," in *Actas del Coloquio Internacional sobre el Bimilenario de Lugo* (Lugo, 1977), 193–236, here 199–203. The inscription (an elegiac distich) reads "AVRVM VILE TIBI EST ARGENTI PONDERA CEDANT PLVS EST QVOD PROPRIA FELICITATE NITES". For the inscriptions of Martín of Braga see J. Vives, *Inscripciones cristianas de la España romana y visigoda* (Barcelona, 1969), 119–20, 122.

<sup>14</sup> M. Núñez Rodríguez, "Algunas inscripciones de la Galicia prerrománica," *Boletín Auriense* 7 (1977): 173–94. Prominent examples include those of the monasteries of Celanova, Samos, and San Pedro de Rocas, and the early tenth-century epitaph of bishop Naustus of Coimbra in the church of San Andrés de Trobe: M. Gómez Moreno, *Iglesias Mozárabes: Arte español de los siglos IX a XI* (Madrid, 1919; repr. *Granada*, 1998), 249, pl. XCVI; A. Mundó, "La inscripción visigoda del Monasterio de Samos," *Studia Monastica* 3 (1961): 157–64; R. Yzquierdo Perrín, *Arte Medieval (I)*, vol. 10 of *Galicia*, ed. F. Rodríguez Iglesias (La Coruña, 1995), 32–35, 134; T. de Sousa Soares, "A inscrição tumular do bispo Nausto de Coimbra (867–912)," *Revista Portuguesa de Historia* 1 (1941): 144–48.



inscriptions ranging from the labyrinthine text of King Silo at Pravia to the potent invocations of the Constantinian vision on Asturian crosses and reliefs show a keen appreciation for the power of public lettering.<sup>15</sup>

These well-established practices made Galicia fertile ground for new forms and uses for inscriptions introduced at Compostela or other sites. Such novelties are easily overshadowed by more momentous cultural and religious changes that accompanied the integration of the Iberian kingdoms into the wider world of Roman Christendom in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Then, as Richard Fletcher described it, the Iberian church “had undergone a revolutionary assault from without. . . a radical assault upon a whole ecclesiastical way of life.”<sup>16</sup> The Romanesque style of architecture, the liturgy of the Roman rite, the Benedictine rule, the reorganization of the secular church, the Caroline script, and changes in the reading and writing of Latin were among the more profound signs of this upheaval.<sup>17</sup> The inscriptions of Galician churches merit special attention precisely because they record and exemplify several of these changes at once: they cast light on the construction of Romanesque churches, the reception of new forms of writing, and the roles of ecclesiastical authorities and lay patrons in the struggles surrounding the rural church and the consolidation of the parish network.

## ART HISTORICAL APPROACHES TO THE INSCRIPTIONS OF ROMANESQUE CHURCHES

Art historians have long recognized the value of inscriptions in the study of Romanesque architecture and sculpture. In the early twentieth century, they were crucial for establishing dates and stylistic filiations, issues that dominated discussions, particularly of the so-called sculpture of the pilgrimage road. As a staunch advocate of the use of documentary evidence for dating buildings, Arthur Kingsley Porter marshalled datable inscriptions from across Europe. In the raging battles over the relative priority of French and Spanish monuments, dated inscriptions in small churches at Iguácel, Nogal de las Huertas, and Corullón lined up as star witnesses on the Spanish side.<sup>18</sup> The physical setting of an inscription and its technical affinity to sculpture

<sup>15</sup> Inscriptions from the early medieval Asturian kingdom are included in F. Diego Santos, *Inscripciones medievales de Asturias* (Oviedo, 1994). For eighth-century inscriptions, including the labyrinth of King Silo see M. C. Díaz y Díaz, *Asturias en el siglo VIII: La cultura literaria* (Oviedo, 2001). Numerous tenth-century inscriptions were published in Gómez Moreno, *Iglesias Mozárabes*. For the Asturian crosses and related inscriptions see C. Cid Priego, “Las joyas prerrománicas de la Cámara Santa de Oviedo en la cultura medieval,” *Liño: Revista anual de historia del arte* 9 (1990): 7–43; A. P. Bronisch, *Reconquista und heiliger Krieg: Die Deutung des Krieges im christlichen Spanien von den Westgoten bis ins frühe 12. Jahrhundert* (Münster, 1998), 303–19; J. F. Rollán-Ortiz, “Correlaciones entre la lápida prerrománica de Destriana (León) y las asturianas de Alfonso III,” *Boletín del Real Instituto de Estudios Asturianos* 54 (2000): 125–40.

<sup>16</sup> R. A. Fletcher, *The Episcopate in the Kingdom of León in the Twelfth Century* (Oxford, 1978), 25.

<sup>17</sup> For diverse facets of this process: Fletcher, *Episcopate*; A. Linage Conde, *Los orígenes del monacato benedictino en la península ibérica*, 3 vols. (León, 1973); R. Wright, *Late Latin and Early Romance in Spain and Carolingian France* (Liverpool, 1982), 208–60; Santiago, Saint-Denis, and Saint Peter: *The Reception of the Roman Liturgy in León-Castile in 1080*, ed. B. Reilly (New York, 1985); R. Walker, *Views of Transition: Liturgy and Illumination in Medieval Spain* (Toronto, 1998); P. Henriot, “Moines envahisseurs ou moines civilisateurs? Cluny dans l’historiographie espagnole (xiiiie-xxe siècles),” *Revue Mabillon*, n.s. 11 (2000): 135–59.

<sup>18</sup> A. K. Porter, *Romanesque Sculpture of the Pilgrimage Roads*, 10 vols. (Boston, 1923); idem, *Spanish Romanesque Sculpture*, 2 vols. (Florence, 1928); idem, “Iguácel and More Romanesque Art of Aragón,” *Burlington Magazine* 52 (1928): 115–27; Gómez Moreno, *El arte románico*.

lent it special authority, but controversy arose over the relationship between construction and the foundations or ceremonies of dedication and consecration commonly cited in epigraphs.<sup>19</sup> In addition, rhetorical topoi, commemorative texts, and the copying or re-use of earlier inscriptions complicate their use as historical records of construction for an age with other notions of forgery and historical truth.<sup>20</sup> How literally, for example, should one read the narrative concerning the Leonese church of San Esteban de Corullón, consecrated in 1090, torn down after seven years, and rebuilt in another seven?<sup>21</sup> Or one might generalize Moralejo's question about the re-used plaques of 1063 at Nogal: "If those epigraphs do not serve to date the architectural context where they are embedded, how could we accept that they allow us to date the parts of the building in which they are not found?"<sup>22</sup> Such scepticism claimed one of its most notable victims in Italy when the inscription on the throne of Bari naming Bishop Elias who died in 1105 was labelled a late twelfth-century "forgery."<sup>23</sup> Lawrence Nees argued that such forged inscriptions were used systematically, together with spolia and archaic features of style and design, on Roman and Apulian episcopal thrones to assert privileges, just as charters and papal bulls were forged for similar purposes.<sup>24</sup> Today, the tendency to consider medieval historical texts and documents as literary or rhetorical arguments, and not simply as sources, alerts us more generally to the pitfalls of expecting medieval inscriptions to answer modern questions about building histories.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup> J. Bousquet, "La dédicace ou consécration des églises et ses rapports avec leur construction: l'exemple d'Oliba," *Cahiers de Saint-Michel-de-Cuxà* 3 (1972): 51–71. One may usefully compare discussions of the relationship between the dates of charters and the acts they record: V. H. Galbraith, "Monastic Foundation Charters of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," *Cambridge Historical Journal* 4 (1934): 205–22.

<sup>20</sup> At the Leonese church of San Adrián de Boñar, for example, an inscription of 1030 — still extant — was copied on another plaque in the late twelfth century and signed "D(omi)nicus notuit": *Enciclopedia del Románico en Castilla y León*, ed. M. A. García Guinea, J. M. Pérez González, and J. M. Rodríguez Montañés (Aguilar de Campoo, 2002), *Provincia de León*, 211–13.

<sup>21</sup> The convoluted date has normally been deciphered as ERA 1124 (1086), but ERA 1128 (1090) is possible, based on the formula  $(100 \times 10) + 2 \times (50 + 12) + 4$ . IN N(o)M(in)E: D(omi)NI: N(o)S(tr)I: IH(ES)V: CHR(ist)I: ET IN HONORE(m) / S(anc)TI: STEPHANI: SACRATVS: EST: LOCVS ISTE: AB EP(iscop)O / ASTORICE(n)SE N(o)M(in)E: OSMVND: IN: ERA: <C>ENTIES: / <D>ENA: ET: BIS: QVINQVAGENA: ATQVE: DVODENA / ET: IIII: Q(vo)T(vm) XVII K(alendas) I(a) N(va)RII: P(er) MAN(v)S DE PETRO: MONINCI: ET <P>(resbiter) / <cviv>S: ORICO: ERAT: POSTEA: AD ANNOS: VII: EIECIT: EAM: ET / A FVNDAMENTO: CONSTRVXIT: ET IN ALIOS: VII: FVIT: PERFECTA. For a recent discussion see J. M. Rodríguez Montañés, "Iglesia de San Esteban de Corullón," in *Enciclopedia del Románico, Provincia de León*, 298–306.

<sup>22</sup> S. Moralejo, "The Tomb of Alfonso Ansúrez (+1093): Its Place and the Role of Sahagún in the Beginnings of Spanish Romanesque Sculpture," in *Santiago, Saint-Denis*, 63–100, here 77, repr. in *Patrimonio artístico*, 2: 52. The five inscriptions are transcribed, and four of them drawn, in M.A. García Guinea, *El arte románico en Palencia*, 2nd ed. (Palencia, 1975), 88–90. The two earliest ones are photographed in Gómez Moreno, *El arte románico*, pl. XCVI. Their recent disappearance, at a well-known and easily accessible site, is one of the most damning instances of the neglect of Romanesque heritage.

<sup>23</sup> P. Belli D'Elia, "La cattedra dell'Abate Elia. Precisazioni sul Romanico Pugliese," *Bollettino d'Arte* 59 (1974): 1–17.

<sup>24</sup> L. Nees, "Forging Monumental Memories in the Early Twelfth Century," in *Memory and Oblivion: Proceedings of the XXIXth International Congress of the History of Art held in Amsterdam, 1–7 September 1996*, ed. W. Reinink and J. Stumpel (Boston, 1999), 773–82.

<sup>25</sup> See, for example, the introductory remarks in M. Innes, "Introduction: Using the Past, Interpreting the Present, Influencing the Future," in *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Y. Hen and idem (Cambridge, 2000), 1–8, here 2–3.

Even as dated inscriptions were being enlisted to counter mechanical notions of stylistic development, the inscriptions themselves were subject to the discipline of stylistic analysis. Applying these tools, Paul Deschamps charted a chronology for the letter forms.<sup>26</sup> This approach was attractive, because letter forms could seemingly be defined and distinguished more exactly than the nebulous stylistic traits of figural or decorative sculpture. Nonetheless, style raised as many questions as the texts of the inscriptions, as Meyer Schapiro demonstrated in a brilliant critique of Deschamps' article.<sup>27</sup> The controversies surrounding the date and meaning of the epitaph of St. Dominic of Silos on an impost of the monastic cloister exemplify the limits of this method.<sup>28</sup> One might have imagined this to be the ideal test case, because the proposed dates for the text spanned the crucial years in which the language, writing, and rituals of the Iberian church were overturned by the introduction of the Roman rite. Arguments remained inconclusive because, as Schapiro explained, proposed chronologies for the development of writing met exactly the same obstacles as analogous approaches to artistic style.<sup>29</sup> Stylistic change is neither linear nor mechanical, and its pace is not constant. It is shaped by numerous variables including geography, the status of monuments, the impact and significance of specific models, the choices of artists and patrons, and the irregular rhythms of generational changes.

More recently, Elizabeth Valdez del Alamo has turned attention away from the date of the epitaph at Silos to its placement, design, and relation to the surrounding imagery, and its meanings for the audience viewing and reading it in the monastic cloister.<sup>30</sup> Of course, iconographic studies have long focused on inscriptions that illuminate the meaning of imagery or the building itself. These typically erudite texts also point towards the relationship of sculpture to manuscript painting and the sanctuary arts, and the role of learned patrons in planning monumental decoration at the most privileged sites. The tituli of the ambulatory capitals from Cluny and the verses accompanying the elaborate chrismon and imagery on the tympanum of the west portal at Jaca cathedral have earned the most attention, but consensus has been elusive.<sup>31</sup> The most comprehensive thesis concerning such inscriptions has recently been put forth

<sup>26</sup> P. Deschamps, "Étude sur la paléographie des inscriptions lapidaires de la fin de l'époque mérovingienne aux dernières années du XIIe siècle," *Bulletin Monumental* 88 (1929): 5–88.

<sup>27</sup> M. Schapiro, Review of Deschamps, "Étude sur la paléographie. . .," *Art Bulletin* 12 (1930): 101–9.

<sup>28</sup> On Silos see Schapiro, Review of Deschamps, and idem, "From Mozarabic to Romanesque in Silos," *Art Bulletin* 21 (1939): 312–74, here 365–67, repr. in idem, *Romanesque Art* (London, 1977), 59–60.

<sup>29</sup> For an excellent discussion of the problems of dating medieval sculpture see J. Wirth, *La datation de la sculpture médiévale* (Geneva, 2004). A more recent discussion of the epigraphy at Silos has encountered the same problem of the paradoxical presence, side by side, of lettering normally attributable to different dates: V. García Lobo, "La epigrafía del claustro de Silos," in *El románico en Silos: IX centenario de la consagración de la iglesia y claustro* (Abadía de Silos, 1990), 85–104, here 91.

<sup>30</sup> E. Valdez del Álamo, "The Saint's Capital, Talisman in the Cloister," in *Decorations for the Holy Dead: Visual Embellishments on Tombs and Shrines of Saints*, ed. S. Lamia and eadem (Turnhout, 2002), 111–28. For a fully contextual reading of a very different sort of inscription in a Cistercian monastery see C. Maines, "Word and Image – Meaning and Function: The Aque Ductus Relief at Santa Maria de Alcobaça," *Cîteaux* 57 (2006): 5–44.

<sup>31</sup> For the inscriptions of the Cluny capitals see C. E. Scilla, "Meaning and the Cluny Capitals: Music as Metaphor," *Gesta* 27 (1988): 133–48; P. Diemer, "What Does *Prudentia* Advise? On the Subject of the Cluny Choir Capitals," *Gesta* 27 (1988): 149–73; K. Ambrose, "Visual Poetics of the Cluny Hemicycle Capital Inscriptions," *Word and Image* 20 (2004): 155–64. For the Jaca tympanum see J. F. Esteban Lorente, "Las inscripciones del tímpano de la catedral de Jaca," *Artigrama: Revista del Departamento de Historia del Arte de la Universidad de Zaragoza* 10 (1993): 143–62; idem, "El tímpano de la catedral de Jaca (continuación)," *Aragón en la Edad Media* 14–15 (1999): 451–72; D. Simon, "El tímpano de la catedral de Jaca," in *Actas del XV Congreso de Historia de la Corona de Aragón*, vol. 3: *Jaca en la Corona de Aragón* (Zaragoza, 1994), 406–19; R. Favreau, "Les inscriptions du tympan de la cathédrale de Jaca," *Comptes rendus de*

by Calvin B. Kendall.<sup>32</sup> Focusing on the verse inscriptions of Romanesque portals, he relates them to the allegorical traditions of scriptural exegesis developed by the Church Fathers. Using Bede's writings as a notable example of the application of such methods to the church itself, he argues "that the Romanesque church was a material allegory and that the portal with its verse inscriptions spoke the allegory in the voice of Christ and the Church."<sup>33</sup>

While devoting most of his book to explicating portal inscriptions that allegorize the church, Kendall concedes that these diverse texts "tell more than one tale."<sup>34</sup> Even among the verse inscriptions on portals, several credit artists or patrons, and their numbers increase when more prosaic texts and those in other parts of the church are reviewed.<sup>35</sup> Of course, Abbot Suger looms large for the inscriptions he planted throughout the church of Saint-Denis and his obsession for recording them in the account of his building activity, *De administratione*.<sup>36</sup> This idiosyncratic case — vital though it is for the history of art — should not overshadow the prominence of artists themselves in inscriptions. Their signatures were particularly widespread and elaborate in northern and central Italy, and several studies have linked these artists' aspirations with social and political change in the twelfth- and thirteenth-century Italian communes.<sup>37</sup> This environment, it is claimed, favored the development of an artistic individuality and self-consciousness among builders and sculptors that has not been widely acknowledged outside of Italy at this date. As a result, Peter Cornelius Claussen heralded the first half of the twelfth century as the "heroic phase" for artists' signatures. Their design and conspicuous placement, the erudite comparisons with figures of antiquity, and the adjectives that laud the artists' skills make claims for their social and intellectual status, elevating the manual arts to the level of the liberal arts.<sup>38</sup>

One need not embrace the idea of a proto-Renaissance or celebrate the discovery of the individual to recognize the protagonism of these artists and, more importantly, the intimate

---

*la Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres* (1996): 535–60; C. B. Kendall, "The Verse Inscriptions of the Tympanum of Jaca and the Pax Anagram," *Mediaevalia* 19 (1996): 405–33; idem, *The Allegory of the Church: Romanesque Portals and Their Verse Inscriptions* (Toronto, 1998), 125–38; D. Ocón Alonso, "El sello de Dios sobre la iglesia: tímpanos con crismón en Navarra y Aragón," in *El tímpano románico: imágenes, estructuras y audiencias*, ed. R. Sánchez Ameijeiras and J. L. Senra Gabriel y Galán (Santiago de Compostela, 2003), 75–101.

<sup>32</sup> Kendall, *Allegory*.

<sup>33</sup> Kendall, *Allegory*, xi, 9–13.

<sup>34</sup> Kendall, *Allegory*, xi.

<sup>35</sup> Kendall, *Allegory*, 171–84.

<sup>36</sup> For Suger's inscriptions see C. Maines, "Good Works, Social Ties, and the Hope for Salvation: Abbot Suger and Saint-Denis," in *Abbot Suger and St.-Denis: A Symposium*, ed. P. L. Gerson (New York, 1986), 77–94.

<sup>37</sup> P. C. Claussen, "Künstlerinschriften," in *Ornamenta Ecclesiae: Kunst und Künstler der Romanik* (Cologne, 1985), 1: 263–76; A. Dietl, "In Arte Peritus: Zur Topik mittelalterlicher Künstlerinschriften in Italien bis zur Zeit Giovanni Pisanos," *Römische historische Mitteilungen* 29 (1987): 75–125; idem, "Künstlerinschriften als Quelle für Status und Selbstverständnis von Bildhauern," in *Studien zur Geschichte der Europäischen Skulptur im 12./13. Jahrhundert*, ed. H. Beck and K. Hengevoss-Dürkop (Frankfurt, 1994), 1: 175–91, 2: 63–70; C. B. Verzar, "Text and Image in North Italian Romanesque Sculpture," in *The Romanesque Frieze and its Spectator*, ed. D. Kahn (London, 1992), 120–40; *ibid.*, "Text und Bild in der norditalienischen Romanik: Skulpturen, Inschriften, Betrachter," in *Studien zur Geschichte der Europäischen Skulptur*, 1: 495–504, 2: 298–307. More broadly, on medieval artists' signatures see P. C. Claussen, "Nachrichten von den Antipoden oder der mittelalterliche Künstler über sich selbst," in *Der Künstler über sich in seinem Werk: Internationales Symposium der Bibliotheca Hertziana, Rom 1989*, ed. M. Winner (Weinheim, 1992), 19–54.

<sup>38</sup> Claussen, "Künstlerinschriften," 267–70. For comparisons with Daedalus see Dietl, "In Arte Peritus," 114–21.

relationship between monumental sculpture and the accompanying inscriptions.<sup>39</sup> The role of a sculptor like Master Nicholaus in composing verses or audaciously juxtaposing his signature with God's creation of Adam blurs the distinction between the making of texts and images.<sup>40</sup> In fact, recent studies have highlighted the "visual poetics" of inscriptions and their integration of form and content, reminding us that, like images, writing had a powerful visual impact beyond the meaning of the written words, and inviting further inquiry into the role of artists and their close collaboration with patrons in designing texts and images.<sup>41</sup>

There remains considerable resistance to accepting the protagonism of Romanesque sculptors outside of Italy, and this colors the interpretation of even the most straightforward texts.<sup>42</sup> In a revisionist study of the church of St.-Lazare at Autun, Linda Seidel set aside the Italian inscriptions as exceptions, and rejected the commonplace reading of the words, "Gislebertvs hoc fecit", beneath Christ the Judge on the tympanum of the west portal as a reference to its sculptor.<sup>43</sup> She argues persuasively that the rediscovery of this medieval "master" and the "invention" of his artistic career were driven by chauvinistic constructions of France's cultural past and bound up with modern preoccupations with individual artistic creation.<sup>44</sup> Seeking instead to recover the likely responses of a twelfth-century community, she contends that the inscription memorialized a tenth-century nobleman, Gislebertus, in order to legitimize the church's claim to the remains of Lazarus and encourage the generosity of contemporary nobles.<sup>45</sup> Seidel offers a perceptive account of how Gislebertus' imagined career was spun from one terse "signature" to create a fully-fledged artistic personality whose style appealed to modernist sensibilities and whose activity took him from Cluny to Chartres. While it may well be true that "what we think we know" about Gislebertus "is a romantic conjecture, a hypothesis based on an historically conditioned, anachronistic assumption about artistic personalities," we hardly need to reject entirely the inscription's plain evidence of a craftsman's role, in favor of a far more convoluted, and largely unsubstantiated, interpretation.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>39</sup> For the classic statement of the twelfth-century renaissance and subsequent discussion see C.H. Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1927); *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, ed. R. L. Benson and G. Constable (Cambridge, MA, 1982; repr. Toronto, 1991). For different views on the "discovery of the individual" see C. Morris, *The Discovery of the Individual* (London, 1972); J. F. Benton, "Consciousness of Self and Perceptions of Individuality," in *Renaissance and Renewal*, 263–95; C. W. Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley, 1982), 82–109. For a discussion of the signatures and artistic originality of early medieval artists, particularly in manuscripts and the minor arts see L. Nees, "The Originality of Early Medieval Artists," in *Literacy, Politics, and Artistic Innovation in the Early Medieval West*, ed. C. Chazelle (Lanham, MD, 1992), 77–109.

<sup>40</sup> Verzar, "Text und Bild," 497–500; Dietl, "Künstlerinschriften," 185.

<sup>41</sup> For example, J.C. Bonne, *L'art roman de face et de profil: le tympan de Conques* (Paris, 1984), 37–48, 206–10, 215–20; and Ambrose, "Visual Poetics." In his seminal study on literacy and documents in medieval England, M. T. Clanchy highlighted the importance of writing as symbol and "the continuing emphasis on the visual aspects of writing," even in deeds and charters, arguing that "the laity were gradually coaxed towards literacy by ensuring that it changed the old ways of hearing and seeing as little as possible": *From Memory to Written Record*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1993), 278–93.

<sup>42</sup> Notably, a recent textbook has taken on the revision of popular myths about the anonymity of the medieval artist: V. Sekules, *Medieval Art* (Oxford, 2001), 35–59.

<sup>43</sup> L. Seidel, *Legends in Limestone: Lazarus, Gislebertus, and the Cathedral of Autun* (Chicago, 1999). She dismisses the Italian examples on p. 14.

<sup>44</sup> Seidel, *Legends*, 18–32.

<sup>45</sup> Seidel, *Legends*, 63–72.

<sup>46</sup> Seidel, *Legends*, 15–16.



Contemporary notions of history and memory, literacy and orality, and performativity make the study of inscriptions more complex than ever, at the very moment when a growing number of publications have placed a huge corpus of texts at our fingertips.<sup>47</sup> Yet the extraordinary group of inscriptions in northern and central Italy remains exceptional in the attention that art historians have given it. Seventy-five years ago, Schapiro urged that inscriptions “be studied in homogeneous groups, like architecture and sculpture, and not in indiscriminate or arbitrary association.”<sup>48</sup> Such studies would expose factors favoring change or conservatism and motivating stylistic choices in inscriptions and the accompanying monuments. Schapiro’s call, however, has not yielded regional studies that specifically relate inscriptions to the Romanesque church building; its fabric, functions, and meanings; its patrons and artists; and its changing place within the larger institutional structures of the Roman church. Inscriptions of major monuments have been isolated, and different types of inscriptions treated separately: as documents of the history of a building; as keys to its symbolism, decoration, and liturgy; or as sources on patrons and artists. What is more, the presence of inscriptions is often taken for granted. In fact, the “epigraphic habit” demands more scrutiny, as an historical phenomenon that warrants investigation, and a key to understanding the forms, texts, and display of inscriptions themselves.<sup>49</sup>

## THE INSCRIPTIONS OF GALICIAN ROMANESQUE CHURCHES

Galicia offers an excellent laboratory for a regional study of inscriptions in relationship to the Romanesque church. The varied inscriptions of the Romanesque cathedral of Santiago span nearly a century and a half, from its foundation in 1075 through its consecration in 1211, and they attest to the building’s place in a wider cultural world. In the countryside, more than eight hundred Galician churches preserve Romanesque remains, mostly from the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.<sup>50</sup> Nearly a hundred dated inscriptions from these buildings are known, many of them *in situ*. Numerous epitaphs are also dated, while scores of undated inscriptions

---

<sup>47</sup> Most important are the 22 volumes of the *Corpus des Inscriptions de la France Médiévale*, ed. R. Favreau et al., published since 1974. For additional publications, see Favreau, *Épigraphie médiévale*; Koch and Bornschlegel, eds., *Literaturbericht*.

<sup>48</sup> Schapiro, review of Deschamp, 103.

<sup>49</sup> The phrase is used by R. MacMullen, “The Epigraphic Habit in the Roman Empire,” *American Journal of Philology* 103 (1982): 233–46. For an interesting discussion of the variable quantity of inscriptions in Roman Spain see M. Kulikowski, *Late Roman Spain and its Cities* (Baltimore, 2004), 33–38. Verzar draws conclusions about the uneven regional distribution of Romanesque inscriptions: “Text and Image,” 139–40.

<sup>50</sup> For the Romanesque churches of Galicia see I. G. Bango Torviso, *Arquitectura románica en Pontevedra* (La Coruña, 1979); R. Yzquierdo Perrín, *La arquitectura románica en Lugo*, vol. 1, *Parroquias al oeste del Miño* (La Coruña, 1983); idem, *Arte Medieval*, 1: 160–465; idem, and C. Manso Porto, *Arte Medieval* (2), vol. 11 of *Galicia*, ed. F. Rodríguez Iglesias (La Coruña, 1995), 20–251; J. D’Emilio, “Romanesque Architectural Sculpture in the Diocese of Lugo, East of the Miño” (Ph.D. diss., Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London, 1988); idem, “The Romanesque Churches of Galicia: The Making of a Provincial Art,” in *Proceedings of the 4th International Conference on Galician Studies, University of Oxford, 26–28 September 1994*, vol. 2, *Literature and History* (Oxford, 1997), 547–72; *El arte románico en Galicia y Portugal/A arte românica em Portugal e Galiza*, ed. X C. Valle Pérez and J. Rodrigues (La Coruña, 2001). Additional churches appear in regional inventories: A. del Castillo, *Inventario de la riqueza monumental y artística de Galicia* (Santiago de Compostela, 1972); E. Valiña Sampedro et al., *Inventario artístico de Lugo y su provincia*, 6 vols.

include tituli, names of patrons or craftsmen, and verses on portals and fonts. The sheer quantity of inscriptions, Romanesque churches, and ecclesiastical documentation provides a context for interpreting these texts and assessing them critically as historical evidence.<sup>51</sup>

The inscriptions of the Romanesque churches of Galicia illuminate the relationships between cultural centers and the surrounding countryside, and the cultural and religious changes that followed the transformation of the Iberian church in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Recording the consecration of a church was more than a routine act following the recent imposition of the Roman rite, and the bishop's presence promoted the consolidation of diocesan territories and the parish network.<sup>52</sup> Bishops and clerics were not the only protagonists. As the proprietary church system came under increasing pressure in the twelfth century, lay patrons sought to protect their rights by earmarking revenues for construction and publicizing their acts with inscriptions. The explosion of Romanesque construction created a skilled corps of craftsmen who emulated their more famous counterparts at centers like Santiago by recording their names. In inscriptions of all types, formal variations reveal different levels of literacy and responses to new forms of writing, casting light on the roles of scribes and sculptors in writing these texts.

The inscriptions of Galician Romanesque churches await systematic publication. Eighteenth-century clerics and antiquarians like José Cornide Saavedra, Fr. Martín Sarmiento, and P. Juan Sobreira Salgado assembled transcriptions, preserving texts which have since vanished or deteriorated.<sup>53</sup> Many inscriptions have been published in local journals, but Galicia has lacked the good fortune of neighboring Portugal, the Asturias, or Zamora, where thorough catalogs have recently appeared.<sup>54</sup> Faulty transcriptions stand uncorrected, fading texts remain undeciphered, and others are yet unpublished, rendering vain their makers' aspirations.<sup>55</sup> Without a published corpus, the following remarks aim to highlight key issues and lines of research.

Dated inscriptions commemorating the construction, foundation, or consecration of churches are typically set as plaques in façades or by a chancel arch, written on tympana or lintels, or carved in more monumental letters along the pedestal of a church. Their placement relates them to key moments in the construction of the building or its preparation for the liturgy. In this local context, inscriptions that are dated or datable by their artistic or historical

---

(Madrid, 1975–1983); J. R. Soraluce Blond and X. Fernández Fernández, *Arquitecturas da provincia da Coruña*, 15 vols. (La Coruña, 1995–2002).

<sup>51</sup> For a summary inventory of the medieval documents see *Inventario das fontes documentais da Galicia medieval*, ed. X. R. Barreiro Fernández (Santiago de Compostela, 1988). Still useful is the once invaluable S. Jiménez Gómez, *Guía para el estudio de la edad media gallega (1100–1480)* (Santiago de Compostela, 1973).

<sup>52</sup> See the recent discussion in E. Carrero Santamaria and G. Fernández Somoza, "El conjunto epigráfico de San Miguel de Neila (Burgos) y el ceremonial romano de consagración de iglesias," *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 35 (2005): 385–402.

<sup>53</sup> The Biblioteca de la Real Academia de la Historia in Madrid holds Sobreira's treatise on inscriptions, *Método de recoger signos* (ms. 9/4041), Cornide's *Galicia Antigua* (ms. 9/3918), and a collection of inscriptions gathered by Antonio Rioboó y Seixas, *Antigüedades e inscripciones y epitafios de obispos de varios puntos de Galicia* (ms 9/3931–2). In the archive of Lugo cathedral, the *Colección diplomática y memorias para la historia de la ciudad e Iglesia de Lugo*. . . (5 vols) of José Vicente Piñeiro y Cancio includes some inscriptions.

<sup>54</sup> M. J. Barroca, *Epigrafía medieval portuguesa (862–1422)*, 3 vols. (Lisbon, 2000); Diego Santos, *Asturias; Corpus Inscriptionum Hispaniae Medievalium*, ed. V. García Lobo, vol. 1:1, *Zamora: Colección Epigráfica*, ed. Maximino Gutiérrez Álvarez (Turnhout, 1997).

<sup>55</sup> The cited texts (n. 50 above) on Romanesque churches include inscriptions, but many reproduce earlier transcriptions even when these are plainly at odds with the accompanying photographs.

context do offer a basic guide to the development of letter forms, and the examples at Cuntis (1078) and Prexigueiró (after 1266) frame these changes (Figs. 4, 5).<sup>56</sup> At the same time, epigraphs at Valverde (1124) and Toirán (1133) illustrate the range of styles or registers used in buildings of different status — a small Cluniac house and a proprietary church — for roughly contemporary inscriptions of similar content, each naming lay patrons and the titular saint (Figs. 6, 7).

The monumental lettering and layout of the inscriptions at Cuntis and Valverde have earlier local roots, and the format proved well suited to the ashlar blocks of Romanesque churches.<sup>57</sup> For their part, the square plaques at Toirán and Prexigueiró, with their dense texts, maintain a tradition represented in early medieval monasteries, known from the transcribed texts of lost inscriptions in Galicia and surviving tenth-century examples in neighboring regions at San Pedro de Montes (A.D. 919) and San Martín de Castañeda (A.D. 921).<sup>58</sup> Both forms were adapted to the architecture of the Romanesque church: the pedestal of the apse offered one place for foundational inscriptions; the tympanum lent itself to dedicatory texts, and, on occasion, its shape invited experimentation with their layout, as on the five concentric arcs on the tympanum and inner arch at Franqueán.<sup>59</sup>

Numerous inscriptions provide only a name, often in an unobtrusive place, or a date, more prominently along the pedestal of the chancel or on a tympanum. In these short texts, the contrast between the small, often minuscule, forms of irregularly laid out names and the monumental capitals of dates illustrates the different registers appropriate for contemporary inscriptions of different intent, and the perils of postulating a linear chronology even in one region.<sup>60</sup> Likewise, liturgical texts and tituli tap different traditions altogether with decorated letters that look to metalwork, painting, and the art of the book. Elaborate epitaphs on the tombs of nobles and abbots combine such display with the monumentality characteristic of the recording of dates.<sup>61</sup>

The earliest monumental inscription in the Romanesque cathedral of Santiago, the long text in the eastern chapel recording the foundation in 1075, likely inspired the swift appearance of similar epigraphs in modest churches. At Santiago de Ermelo, an inscription in three lines, flanking the former chancel arch, commemorates the restoration of the church in 1104

---

<sup>56</sup> For Sta. María de Cuntis see C. García Romero, “La inscripción de la iglesia de Cuntis,” *Boletín de la Real Academia Gallega* 15 (1926): 257–62; Bango Torviso, *Pontevedra*, 172. For San Salvador de Prexigueiró see J. L. Saco Cid, “O epigrafe de igrexa de S. Salvador de Prexigueiró,” *Porta da Aira: Revista de historia del arte orensano* 5 (1992): 243–59.

<sup>57</sup> E.g. a tenth-century epigraph at the hermitage of Cachón near Santo Estebo de Ribas de Sil see A. del Castillo, “Iglesias antiguas de Galicia: San Juan de Cachón,” *Boletín de la Real Academia Gallega* 19 (1929): 81–91.

<sup>58</sup> The format has Visigothic precedents in the inscription of King Reccesvinth at the Palencian church of San Juan de Baños. For this and other early medieval examples see A. M. Martínez Tejera, “Dedicaciones, consagraciones y monumenta consecraciones” (ss. VI–XII): testimonios epigráficos altomedievales en los antiguos reinos de Asturias y León,” *Brigecio: Revista de estudios de Benavente y sus tierras* 6 (1996): 77–102.

<sup>59</sup> The inscription at Franqueán was still hidden beneath plaster when the church was published in 1947: F. Vázquez Saco, “Iglesias románicas de la provincia de Lugo, papeleta 80: Iglesia parroquial de Santa María de Franqueán,” *Boletín de la Comisión Provincial de Monumentos Histórico-Artísticos de Lugo* 2 (1945–1947): 335–36. The date of ERA MCCXVI[II] (1216–1218, A.D. 1178–1180) is readable at the beginning of the long text.

<sup>60</sup> The huge inscribed date (ERA MCCVIII. . .) of 1171 on the exterior of the crypt at the monastery of San Lorenzo de Carboeiro exemplifies the monumental rendering of the date in a foundational inscription: J. Carro García, “Las inscripciones de San Lorenzo de Carboeiro,” *Archivo Español de Arqueología* 14 (1941): 387–96, here 395.

<sup>61</sup> Particularly noteworthy was the tomb of Abbot Fernandus of Carboeiro (1192), destroyed in the 1930s see Carro García, “Carboeiro,” 392–95. The best facsimile is in López Ferreiro, *Lecciones*, 427.





Fig. 4: Sta. María de Cuntis (Pontevedra), north wall, inscription (1078) *(photo: author)*

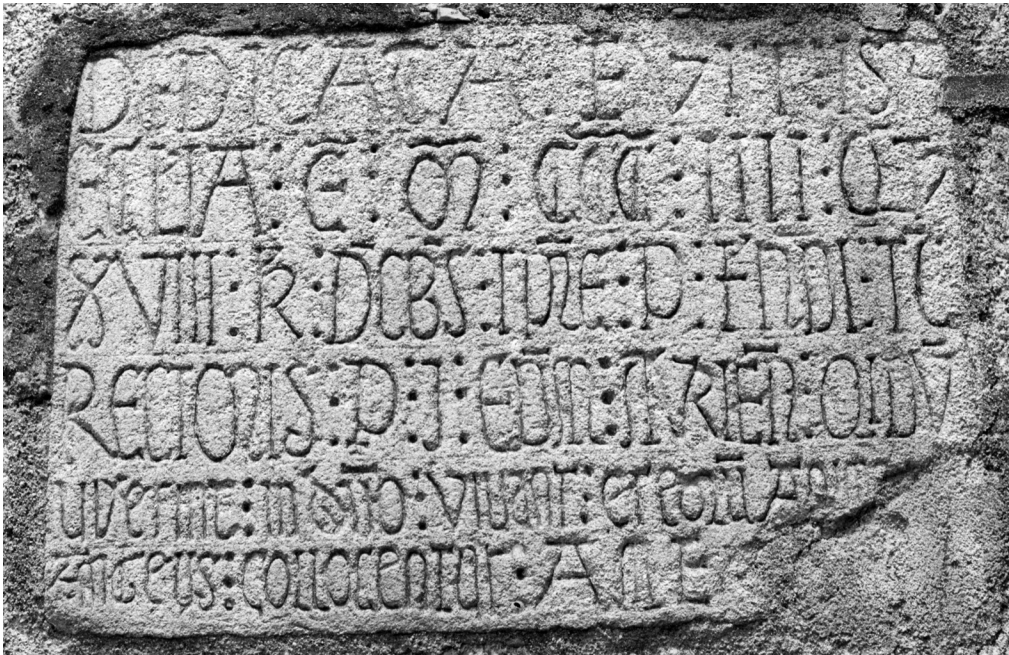


Fig. 5: San Salvador de Prexigueiró (Ourense), inscription set in west façade (after 1266) *(photo: author)*





Fig. 6: San Pedro de Valverde (Lugo), inscription set over south doorway (1124) (*photo: author*)



Fig. 7: San Salvador de Toirán (Lugo), inscription, north side of chancel arch (1133) (*photo: author*)



Fig. 8: Santiago de Ermelo (Pontevedra), inscription flanking chancel arch (1104) (photo: author)

(Fig. 8).<sup>62</sup> The calendar clause naming Emperor Alfonso, “reigning in Toledo,” Count Raymond, and Bishop Diego II (Diego Gelmírez), and the monogrammatic arrangement of the king’s name with nested letters points to Santiago — and the formulas of royal charters — as a source. In the calendar clause, the capital E with a vertical bar replaces the uncial or cursive form used in the rest of the text. This choice pays respect to the authorities named there, and is a small but telling example of the conscious variation of letter forms.<sup>63</sup> The inscription at Ermelo is complemented by a lengthy epitaph of 1105.<sup>64</sup> The conjunction could be fortuitous, but, like other clusters of inscriptions, it suggests that local models and a talented cutter of inscriptions encouraged their proliferation at individual sites, while resulting in an uneven distribution within Galicia.

In two other churches in nearby districts surrounding the Ria de Pontevedra, inscriptions named Bishop Diego Gelmírez. A badly worn inscription in the wall of the rebuilt church of Sta. María de Alba mentions him, and Antonio Rodríguez Fráiz has read a date of 1105 which, if accurate, would coincide with the bishop’s acquisition of the church from laymen the following year.<sup>65</sup> At San Miguel de Lores, the book of the fabric preserves a copy of 1649 of a

<sup>62</sup> For the inscription at Compostela, see n. 9 above. For Ermelo see Bango Torviso, *Pontevedra*, 175; M. Román Martínez and P. S. Otero Piñeyro Maseda, *El antiguo monasterio de Santiago de Ermelo: Estudio, documentación e índices* (Santiago de Compostela, 2005). The inscription is in the eastern wall of the church, once the eastern wall of the nave: the former chancel arch has been blocked and the choir demolished, as is evident from the arch’s size, the blocked, slit window above it, and the surrounding masonry on the exterior. On the left, it reads EC(c)L(esi) A: NEMPE: ISTA: OMN(i)NO: RESTAVRATA: ESSE: / CREDATVR: SICVT: IN PRESENTI: MANET: IACOBI: / AP(o) S(to)LI: AD FREDENANDVS: ABBA: ET AB: ARIAS: / SAVARIEZI. On the right, TOLETVM: REGNANTE: INPERATORI: ADEFONSO / GALECEA: LIMITE: RAIMVNDVS: DIDAGVS: S(e)C(vn)D(v)S / EP(iscopv)S: ERA: I<sup>a</sup>: C. XL<sup>a</sup> II: FREDENAND(vs) TE F.

<sup>63</sup> It would be possible — sensibly — to read “COMITE” instead of “LIMITE”, if we assume that the carver tried to render a capital C with a vertical bar instead of the cursive or uncial form used elsewhere.

<sup>64</sup> The badly worn text is difficult to decipher, but the date (ERA I<sup>a</sup> C<sup>a</sup> XL<sup>a</sup> III) and the “OBI” are plain: Román Martínez and Otero Piñeyro Maseda, *Ermelo*, 51–55.

<sup>65</sup> Bango Torviso, *Pontevedra*, 153–54. The reading of A. Rodríguez Fráiz, presented at the I Coloquio de Medievalistas Galegos in 1979, is cited in J. Barreiro Somoza, *El Señorío de la iglesia de Santiago de Compostela (siglos IX–XIII)* (La Coruña, 1987), 335, n. 615.



lengthy inscription — now lost — reporting Bishop Diego's consecration of the church in 1121 and listing the titular saints.<sup>66</sup> Both texts attest to the activity of Diego Gelmírez in acquiring and consecrating churches within the diocese, as described in the *Historia Compostellana*.<sup>67</sup> If the transcriptions correctly record the *anno domini* at Alba and Lores, this innovation is likely attributable to the oversight of Compostelan clergy, and it is a sign that the restoration of churches was part of a more thoroughgoing renovation of ecclesiastical life that included the introduction of the Roman rite.

The reconstruction of the churches at Ermelo, Alba, and Lores prevents an assessment of any artistic debt to Compostela. In the diocese of Lugo, however, two churches with dated inscriptions of the second quarter of the twelfth century have specific links with early work at Compostela, and are among the earliest Romanesque churches of Galicia. Seventy kilometers from Compostela, San Lourenzo de Pedraza displays a prominent, if worn, text of 1127 or 1137 on the east wall.<sup>68</sup> The shafted arch of the east window frames a much smaller opening with its own billeted hood. The singular arrangement reflects the windows and blind arcades on the upper part of the choir of Santiago cathedral. At San Salvador de Balboa, an inscription bears the date 1147 (ERA MCLXXXV), and the historiated capitals of the chancel arch are related iconographically and technically to those in the ambulatory of the cathedral.<sup>69</sup>

The pace of construction in the countryside remained slow for the first half of the twelfth century, but the first quarter of the century had seen the completion of the choir, transepts, and most of the nave of Santiago cathedral and the decoration of the transept façades on an unprecedented scale. Within this campaign, the door jamb of the south transept offers the simplest yet most debated inscription (Fig. 9).<sup>70</sup> Some have read the year as ERA ICXVI (Era 1116/A.D. 1078), the date given in the Pilgrim's Guide and *Historia Compostellana* for the commencement of the cathedral. Others prefer ERA ICXLI (Era 1141/A.D. 1103), a plausible date for the erection of the door jambs. Paleographically, the disagreement hinges on whether the strokes following the X trace a V with an oblique shaft making the ligature, or an "x aspada", the X topped with a tittle or diminutive L used in Iberian documents for forty (XL). Fermín Bouza Brey found such an XL in an inscription at the rural church of Tomonde, suggesting the same reading of XL (Era 1141) for Compostela.<sup>71</sup> His reading of the date at Tomonde, however, is itself debatable. At Santiago, one must reconcile the proposed XL with the unambiguous V just below which reproduces the sharply oblique left shaft of the disputed figure.<sup>72</sup> In addition, more contemporary Galician inscriptions support a reading of XV (Era 1116). Similar Vs appear in dates at Cuntis

---

<sup>66</sup> F. Bouza Brey, "El epígrafe románico fundacional de San Miguel de Lores," *Compostellanum* 13 (1968): 365–67; Bango Torviso, *Pontevedra*, 184–85.

<sup>67</sup> Barreiro Somoza lists twenty churches constructed by Gelmírez: *El Señorío*, 335–36.

<sup>68</sup> R. Yzquierdo Perrín, "El estilo de Bernardo el Viejo en el románico rural: S. Lorenzo de Pedraza," *Cuadernos de Estudios Gallegos* 31 (1978–1980): 347–56; idem, *Lugo*, 24–25, 243–44.

<sup>69</sup> Yzquierdo Perrín, *Lugo*, 27–30, 245. The date is inscribed in the west wall; an unpublished inscription, PELAGIO [I(O)H(ANNIS)], is at the east end of the north wall of the nave.

<sup>70</sup> For a summary of the extensive bibliography on the inscription and the contextual issues surrounding both dates see Moralejo, "The 'Codex Calixtinus,'" 210–11, n. 10.

<sup>71</sup> F. Bouza Brey, "El epígrafe fundacional de la iglesia de Tomonde y el de la Puerta de las Platerías de la Catedral de Santiago," *Cuadernos de Estudios Gallegos* 17 (1962): 175–81.

<sup>72</sup> The V below forms part of the date: V ID(vs) I(v)LII.



Fig. 9: Santiago de Compostela, cathedral, Puerta de Platerías (south transept portal), inscription on door jamb (photo: author)

(Era 1116/A.D. 1078) (Fig. 4) and San Pedro de Oza de los Rios (Era 1159/A.D. 1121) (Fig. 10).<sup>73</sup> At Ermelo (Fig. 8), the small superscript L forming the “x aspada” clearly differs from the strokes at Compostela. Reading 1078 in the Compostelan inscription makes it a commemorative text and a reminder that the date in an inscription may not be the date of the inscription.

Work slowed at Santiago in the middle third of the century, but lavish inscriptions in Compostela at the church of Santa María Salomé and on the statue columns and altar from the monastery of San Paio de Antealtares show that artistic contacts continued at the highest

---

<sup>73</sup> For Oza de los Rios see *Arquitectura románica de La Coruña*, vol. 1: *Faro-Mariñas-Eume*, ed. Departamento de Historia de la Arquitectura de la ETSA de La Coruña (Santiago de Compostela, 1983), 73. The date at Oza de los Rios clearly reads: ERA: T: C: LVIII ET Q(vot) IIII: ID(vs) F(e)BR(varii). On the left, the worn inscription begins SVARIVS ABBAS. Abbot Suarius of Oza witnessed documents of 1155: *Tumbos del Monasterio de Sobrado de los Monjes*, ed. P. Loscertales de G. de Valdeavellano (Madrid, 1976), 2: 449–52, 467–68, docs. 513, 515, 537.





Fig. 10: San Pedro de Oza de los Rios (La Coruña), north portal, inscription (1121) (photo: author)

levels.<sup>74</sup> In these years, monasteries and the secular nobility provided other links with epigraphic practices outside the region. The inscription, now over a south doorway, at the Cluniac church of San Pedro de Valverde records the commencement of construction in 1124 under the patronage of Munio Romani and Maria Petri (Fig. 6).<sup>75</sup> The epigraph is consistent with their gift of the church to Cluny in 1125.<sup>76</sup> The early date of its sculpture — largely independent of Compostela — has escaped notice, because the best capitals, displaying large squatting beasts, are badly worn pieces re-used on the Gothic north portal.<sup>77</sup> The inscription is largely traditional in

<sup>74</sup> The inscription at Sta. María Salomé is reproduced in Yzquierdo Perrín, *Arte Medieval* (1), 262. For the statue columns and altar from Antealtares see W. Cahn and L. Seidel, *Romanesque Sculpture in American Collections*, vol. 1: *New England Museums* (New York, 1979), 200–4; Moralejo, *Camino de Europa*, 252–53, 392–95. An inscription in the stairway wall at the southeast corner of the nave, behind the cupboards in the sacristy, would surely add to our understanding of the epigraphy and building history of the cathedral. José Suárez Otero, then archaeologist of the cathedral, mentioned the discovery to me in December 2004 and the director of the cathedral museum, D. Alejandro Barral Iglesias, confirmed it in the summer of 2005. Both claimed no photographs were taken before the cupboards were put back in place.

<sup>75</sup> For San Pedro de Valverde see N. Peinado, “Epigrafía lucense: cinco interesantes inscripciones,” *Boletín de la Comisión Provincial de Monumentos Histórico-Artísticos de Lugo* 7, 61–62 (1964): 256–59. It reads: +IN ERA. T<sup>a</sup>. C<sup>a</sup>. LX<sup>a</sup> II<sup>a</sup> INCEPTA EST / HEC ECCL(esi)A. EDIFICARI. A. MVNIO RO / MANIT ET MARIA PETRIT PRO RE / MEDIV(m) ANIME EORVM IN ONORE S(ancti) PETRI AP(osto)L(i). Small lettering above the first line may give a precise date: III<sup>o</sup> K(a)L(endas) OC[TOBRIS].

<sup>76</sup> C. J. Bishko, “The Cluniac Priors of Galicia and Portugal: their Acquisition and Administration, 1075–c. 1230,” *Studia Monastica* 7 (1965): 305–56, here 326–27; repr. in idem, *Spanish and Portuguese Monastic History, 600–1300* (London, 1984), no. XI.

<sup>77</sup> The dimensions of the three-sided capitals — oversized for the portal at Valverde — are close to those of the interior responds of the nave, and they are likely from the chancel arch or responds of the rebuilt choir. They

format and lettering, but it is noteworthy that none of the Ts have the bow on the left, a feature of the Visigothic script common in early twelfth-century Iberia. Other examples of independent contacts outside the region include the florid tomb inscription of 1130 of Count Gutier in the monastery of Lourenz , accompanied by a delicately carved foliate scroll; the use, in 1139, of the year of the Incarnation at the small monastery of San Vicente de Barrantes with sculpture related to Tui cathedral; or the monumental inscription of 1145 on the tomb of Count Munio Pel ez of Monterroso, probably inspired by the Castilian pantheon of his kinsmen, the Banu-G mez, at the Cluniac house of San Zoilo de Carri n de los Condes.<sup>78</sup>

Laymen like Munio Romani or the counts, Munio Pel ez and Gutier, frequented the royal court and patronized monasteries of more than local importance, but lay patrons of lesser standing recorded their efforts with inscriptions as well.<sup>79</sup> The small church of San Salvador de Toir n holds two inscriptions.<sup>80</sup> One, on the left side of the chancel arch, names Diecus Pelagii and Xemena Erics and bears the date of 1133 (ER(a) C LXX I P(ost) M. . .) (Fig. 7). An inscription of 1132 on the tympanum of the north door confirms the date. Like the archaic and unadorned lettering of the inscription, the simple, bulky capitals and the unorthodox proportions of the columns and bases reveal an early Romanesque construction, removed from the mainstream of the style's reception in Galicia. At the end of the twelfth century, the knight Petrus Garsie commemorated his patronage of the church of San Xo n da Cova in a long inscription on the tympanum of the west portal (Fig. 11).<sup>81</sup> His presence at the court of King Alfonso IX, his participation in a military campaign, and his tenure of a local office in 1196 plausibly date the construction of this church.<sup>82</sup> In fact, booty, slaves, and the rewards of royal service may well have made this project possible.<sup>83</sup> At the same time, the use of minuscule lettering — unusual in an inscription of this length — hints at the independence of the lay patron and his scribes from the scriptoria of major ecclesiastical centers.

---

are related to early twelfth-century work at the nearby monasteries of Sta. Cristina de Ribas de Sil and San Paio de Abeleda, buildings whose robust crossing bays link them to Castile.

<sup>78</sup> For Lourenz  see N. Ares V zquez, "Inscripciones lucenses medievales en verso," *Bolet n do Museo Provincial de Lugo* 2 (1984): 119–34, here 130–31, 134. For Barrantes see Bango Torviso, *Pontevedra*, 216–18. For the tomb of Munio Pel ez see Vali a Sampedro et al., *Inventario art stico*, 3: 50. For the tombs at Carri n see C. J. Ara Gil, "Un grupo de sepulcros palentinos del siglo XIII: Los primeros talleres de Carri n de los Condes, Pedro Pintor y Roi Mart nez de Burueva," in *II Curso de Cultura Medieval Aguilar de Campoo 1990: Alfonso VIII y su  poca* (Aguilar de Campoo, 1992), 21–52, here 22–24; J. L. Senra Gabriel y Gal n, "Mio Cid es de Bivar e nos de los Condes de Carri n: Los Banu-G mez de Carri n a la luz de sus epitafios," *Quintana* 5 (2006): 233–67.

<sup>79</sup> For the careers of the two counts see S. Barton, *The Aristocracy in Twelfth-Century Le n and Castile* (Cambridge, 1997), 262, 268.

<sup>80</sup> R. L pez Pacho, "Dos inscripciones medievales en la Iglesia de Toir n (Lugo)," in *Estudios cl sicos*, 177–80. I do not accept his reading of the dates as Era 1103 and Era 1092; D'Emilio, "Romanesque Architectural Sculpture," 96, 98.

<sup>81</sup> For the church of San Xo n da Cova see Y zquierdo Perr n, *Lugo*, 140–46; D'Emilio, "Romanesque Architectural Sculpture," 279–81.

<sup>82</sup> Petrus Garsiae de Buval was among the witnesses of a document (5 April 1195) of King Alfonso IX during the military campaign of 1195; J. Gonz lez, *Alfonso IX* (Madrid, 1944), 2: 135–37, doc. 91. As "tenente" of nearby Temes, he made a settlement with the monastery of Santo Estebo de Ribas de Sil in 1196; E. Duro Pe a, *El Monasterio de San Esteban de Ribas de Sil* (Orense, 1977), 252–53, doc. 7.

<sup>83</sup> One may compare the case of Doz n where an inscription of 1154 on the apse records the building of the monastery (EGO GV(n)TRO(de) SVARII EDIFCAVI. . .), and the patron's endowment of the same year included fourteen Saracen slaves ("... ethiopibus quatuordecim inter sarracenos et sarracenas . . ."); see J. C. Valle P rez, *Iglesia del Monasterio, San Pedro de Villanueva de Doz n* (Lal n, 1983), 3, 12–13, 31–32.



Fig. 11: San Xoán da Cova (Lugo), west portal, tympanum (c. 1200) (photo: author)

The inscription at Cova is explicit about the knight's gifts to the church, but all inscriptions commemorating lay patrons, like the Romanesque churches themselves, implicitly attest to their considerable investment of resources in the construction of churches.<sup>84</sup> These initiatives must be seen against the background of the slow implementation of the Gregorian reformers' drive to free churches from lay control. The proprietary church system remained strong in Galicia in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and the *ius patronatus* only gradually replaced the notion of direct ownership of the church.<sup>85</sup> Galician prelates participated in the system,

<sup>84</sup> "In honore(m): d(omi)ni: n(ost)ri: ih(es)u: x(rist)i: et b(ea)te se(m)p(er) u(i)rginis: marie et om(n)iu(m): s(an)c(t)or(um) petru[s] garsie milex ecl(es)iam [is]ta(m) suis su(m)ptib(us) et ereditibus." One might compare this abbreviated endowment with the extensive charters of endowment and donation in the eleventh-century Asturian church of San Salvador de Fuentes: Diego Santos, *Inscripciones*, 214–21.

<sup>85</sup> For the proprietary church system see S. Wood, *The Proprietary Church in the Medieval West* (Oxford, 2006). For its workings and evolution in Galicia see Fletcher, *Episcopate*, 159–74; J. D'Emilio, "Los documentos medievales como fuentes para el estudio de las parroquias e iglesias gallegas: el distrito de Monte de Meda (Lugo)," *Cuadernos de estudios gallegos* 43 (1996): 68–79. Most recently, A. M. Framiñán Santos, "Notas acerca de los derechos de los laicos en las iglesias parroquiales de Galicia (s. XII–XV)," *Estudios Mindonienses* 21 (2005): 315–78.



purchasing shares of churches and leasing churches to the laity. One extraordinary concession of life tenure over a church to a lay woman by the bishop of Lugo specifies terms for its construction, giving a glimpse of the arrangements that made traditional practices workable for prelates, proprietors, and parishioners.<sup>86</sup> Customs that exasperated legates, would-be reformers, and foreign clergy were not necessarily signs of a sluggish religious life, but lay patrons, responsible for the majority of Romanesque churches in Galicia, were evidently spurred to invest church revenues more conspicuously in the construction and embellishment of the fabric, and celebrate their efforts with inscriptions, as a way of forestalling changes in a proprietary system under increasing pressures from outside.

For their part, Galician bishops appear in inscriptions as consecrators of churches. Rocío Sánchez Ameijeiras has expertly highlighted the visual reminiscences of the rites of consecration on Galician Romanesque tympana, from the images of crosses and the Lamb of God (invoked in the opening litany of the rite of consecration) to the carved figures of a bishop flanked by deacons, or of episcopal titulars like St. Martin (Fig. 16).<sup>87</sup> There is less evidence that bishops supported construction. Arguably, the resources drawn away from the countryside for the building of urban cathedral complexes and the maintenance of large cathedral chapters thwarted construction of rural churches under direct episcopal control. Episcopal construction in the countryside was targeted at key sites, and notices of consecrations underscored diocesan authority in regions disputed with monasteries, military orders, and rival sees.<sup>88</sup>

In this respect, San Pedro de Portomarín is particularly interesting. The west tympanum records its consecration in 1182 by Bishop Rodrigo II of Lugo, and the sculpture of the portal attests to the work of craftsmen who built and decorated the church of San Paio de Diomondi and had links to Lugo cathedral (Fig. 12).<sup>89</sup> The church of Diomondi was listed in 1170 in a papal confirmation of earlier gifts from King Ferdinand II to the bishops of Lugo.<sup>90</sup> Evidently it was constructed under their patronage, since an inscription on the interior of the lintel of the west portal records its setting in 1170.<sup>91</sup> The south portal at Diomondi copies the cusped arch and tall, narrow proportions of the south transept portal of Lugo cathedral, while the west portal at Portomarín unites the cusped arch with the cusped lintel that decorates the north transept portal at Lugo. In a town that marked an important river crossing on the road to Compostela, this conspicuous citation is more than a mere workshop convention. By 1182, the Hospitallers had established a commandery in Portomarín, and the combination of the inscribed notice of an episcopal consecration and a visual reference to the cathedral had special meaning.<sup>92</sup> In

<sup>86</sup> The document of 1182 is published in Fletcher, *Episcopate*, 251–52.

<sup>87</sup> R. Sánchez Ameijeiras, “Ritos, signos y visiones: el tímpano románico en Galicia (1157–1230),” in *El tímpano románico*, 47–72, here 51–61.

<sup>88</sup> Such episcopal initiatives accompanied pressure on the monasteries of Samos and Pino in the late twelfth century: J. D’Emilio, “La formación de la parroquia en la Galicia medieval,” *Relaciones* 18 (1997): 59–86, here 69–71.

<sup>89</sup> For the artistic relationships between San Pedro de Portomarín and Diomondi see D’Emilio, “Romanesque Churches,” 552–58.

<sup>90</sup> D’Emilio, “Los documentos medievales,” 53–54.

<sup>91</sup> The finely carved and elegantly lettered text reads ERA CC: VIII: HOC: LIMEN: SITVM: EST:

<sup>92</sup> The Hospitallers had received property in Portomarín by 1158: C. Barquero Goñi, “Los Hospitalarios en el Reino de León (siglos XII y XIII),” in *El Reino de León en la Alta Edad Media* 9 (León, 1997), 447–52. A commandery was set up by 1182 when “Martinus Petri comendador de Ponte Minei” witnessed a royal document: J. González, *Regesta de Fernando II* (Madrid, 1943), 486. In 1188, the rival Order of Santiago ceded its properties there to King Alfonso IX: González, *Alfonso IX*, 2: 15–16, doc. 6.



Fig. 12: San Pedro de Portomarín (Lugo), west portal (1182) (photo: author)

fact, a document cites an episcopal complaint about the Hospitallers' new construction of a church.<sup>93</sup> The documentary trail of this dispute has disappeared, but the Hospitallers evidently answered with their own ambitious building program. The tall battlemented nave of their church, the portals evoking the west doorway at Compostela, and the carved baptismal font underscoring their administration of the sacrament speak eloquently of their defiant response to the assertion of local diocesan authority in the portal of the parish church of San Pedro.<sup>94</sup>

Prelates and patrons were not the only figures involved in construction or remembered in inscriptions. There were, of course, the craftsmen themselves. For these artists, Compostela provided a singularly powerful model. By the late twelfth century there were many artistic competitors within Galicia, but Compostela's importance remained as a site with famed craftsmen, from the first masons led by Bernardus and memorialized in the Pilgrim's Guide to the fabled Magister Matheus.<sup>95</sup> Matheus' bold inscription, carved beneath the lintel of one of the most visited shrines in Europe, was accompanied by his own kneeling figure at the base of the

---

<sup>93</sup> "Item conquirir adversus Hospitalarios quod in Ponte Minei novam construunt ecclesiam, in loco ad nos pertinente iure proprietatis et possessionis longo tempore . . ." It is published in M. Mosquera Agrelo, "Algunhas referencias documentais da diocese de Mondoñedo na documentación medieval da catedral de Lugo (séculos xi-xiii)," in *El legado cultural de la iglesia mindoniense*, ed. M. J. Recuero Astray, F. Díez Platas, and J. M. Monterroso Montero (La Coruña, 2000), 255–69, here 259–62. The document was written before 1195 when a cited dispute with the monastery of Samos was settled.

<sup>94</sup> For the Hospitallers' church at Portomarín see Yzquierdo Perrín, *Lugo*, 125–40.

<sup>95</sup> Nodar Fernández has suggested that Bernardus might be identified with an artist who signed an early capital at Conques, "Bernardus me fecit": *Los inicios*, 103–11.

trumeau.<sup>96</sup> On the inscription — whoever its author —, carefully ruled lines and neatly aligned lettering, precisely carved serifs, tiny buttons on the shafts of Ts and Is, gracefully curving stems on As and Ts, tiny curls embellishing the tips of diverse letters, and the pleasing variation of letter shapes proclaimed the artistry of a skillful hand, consonant with the monument's status, its wide-ranging connections, and the remarkable architectural and sculptural achievement of the Westwerk and Pórtico de la Gloria.

The carved inscription's place ensured its prominence, but it was not alone in the west porch where numerous texts were painted on scrolls in a program reflecting the liturgical drama of the *Ordo Prophetarum*.<sup>97</sup> Such texts, of course, most closely link lettering, sculpted images, and the literate arts of manuscript painting and church treasures, and pose questions about the craftsman's role in their preparation and execution. Several figures on the early twelfth-century transept portals had elaborate tituli including large letters on halos, texts bordering monumental marble reliefs, and the nested and enframed letters tightly inscribed on narrow projecting pedestals beneath the Temptation of Jesus. There, the curious turn of the pedestal suggests the kind of supporting colonnette one might find in metal furnishings, and the carefully rendered censer shows more than a passing acquaintance with those arts.<sup>98</sup>

In more modest Galician churches, tituli seldom appear, but some rare examples accompany other evidence of ties to Compostela, and hint at the use of pattern books or drawings from manuscripts, sources in which texts and images circulated together. The richly decorated apse of the nunnery of Ferreira de Pantón was built between 1158 and 1175, under the patronage of a noble widow, Countess Fronilde Fernández.<sup>99</sup> Some capitals quote much earlier ones from Santiago cathedral, and others present unusual iconographic formulas possibly derived from the bestiary or aviary.<sup>100</sup> No carved tituli appear at Pantón, but they do appear in nearby

<sup>96</sup> The inscription reads +AN(n)O: AB INCARNACIONE: D(omi)NI: M°Cº:LXXXº:VIIIvo: ERA I°CCª:XX:VIª: DIE: K(a)L(endas): / APRILIS: SVPER: LIMINARIA: PRINCIPALIVM: PORTALIVM: / ECCLESIE: BEATI: IACOBI: SVNT: COLLOCATA: PER: MAGISTRVM: MATHEVM: / QVI: A: FVNDAMENTIS: IPSORVM: PORTALIVM: GESSIT: MAGISTERIVM: For the identification of the kneeling figure see Claussen, "Nachrichten," 23–25.

<sup>97</sup> S. Moralejo, "El Pórtico de la Gloria," in *Patrimonio artístico*, 2: 281–84. For discussion of the *Ordo Prophetarum* and other liturgical sources for the inscribed scrolls of prophets on Italian portals see D. F. Glass, "Otage de l'historiographie: l'Ordo prophetarum en Italie," *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 44 (2001): 259–73.

<sup>98</sup> Castiñeiras, *La catedral románica*, 70.

<sup>99</sup> D'Emilio, "Romanesque Architectural Sculpture," 103–10; R. Yzquierdo Perrin, "La iglesia del monasterio cisterciense de Ferreira de Pantón," in *Actas: Congreso Internacional sobre San Bernardo e o Cister en Galicia e Portugal 17–20 Outubro 1991* (Ourense, 1992), 2: 859–75; T. C. Moure Pena, "Precisiones históricas sobre el monasterio cisterciense de San Salvador de Ferreira de Pantón (Lugo) a partir de nuevos testimonios documentales y arqueológicos," *Cistercium* no. 231 (2003): 365–90; eadem, "El programa iconográfico de la cabecera románica de San Salvador de Ferreira (Ferreira de Pantón, Lugo)," *Goya* no. 304 (2005): 4–20. This church will be discussed in a study in preparation: J. D'Emilio, "Widows and Communities: The Cistercian Nunneries of León and their Architecture (1150–1250)," for *Studies in Cistercian Art and Architecture*, ed. M. Parsons Lillich, vol. 7.

<sup>100</sup> A prominent capital with youths reclining on the backs of lions in the north arcade of the north transept is simplified on a respond capital at Pantón: Durliat, *La sculpture romane*, 323. The parallel was noted by Yzquierdo Perrin, "Ferreira de Pantón," 866. For the use of the bestiary see R. Sánchez Ameijeiras, "Las artes figurativas en los monasterios cistercienses medievales gallegos," in *Arte de Cister em Portugal e Galiza*, ed. J. Rodrigues and X. C. Valle Pérez (Lisbon, 1998), 99–104; Moure Pena, "El programa iconográfico." The aviary was popular in the late twelfth-century Cistercian houses of neighboring Portugal: see M. A. Miranda, "Imagens do mundo nos manuscritos Alcobacenses — O Bestiário," in *San Bernardo e o Cister*, 2: 810–12, 821–23. An unusual capital with ten birds perched upon branches may reflect the aviary's characteristic use of birds nesting in the cedar as an image of the repose of the cloistered community.

churches with related decoration. At the monastic church of San Salvador de Asma, two corbels bear tituli.<sup>101</sup> One identifies a bull, possibly alluding to the zodiacal sign, easily transmitted through drawings from manuscripts. The other identifies the popular figure of Samson, whose frequent representation on local tympana suggests the circulation of drawings.<sup>102</sup> At San Miguel de Eiré, the singular image of two evangelist symbols as human-headed animals bears an abbreviated titulus identifying Luke, with the horns of the bull, and Mark, with a lion's mane (Fig. 13); an inscription accompanies the Lamb of God on the same arch.<sup>103</sup>

The church at Eiré presents lettering in a very different context as well: an alphabetical sequence of large capital letters, resembling masons' marks, marks off each voussoir on the inside of the arch of the doorway. Masons' marks present thorny problems of interpretation, and the set at Eiré are most likely positional markers for the voussoirs.<sup>104</sup> They are, however, comparable to the finely wrought letters in the transepts of Santiago cathedral where the selection of letters, among other symbols, corresponds with the most common initials of Christian names in Galicia and in the communities of *Franci* along the pilgrimage road. Paired letters match those one might expect if their purpose was to distinguish names with the same initial, like Petrus or Pelagius, Garcia or Gonzalo.<sup>105</sup> Discrete versions of the same letter, evidently indicating different craftsmen, are faithfully reproduced scores of times.<sup>106</sup>

These carefully rendered capital letters are characteristic only of the early twelfth-century work at Santiago, when itinerant craftsmen of considerable prestige participated in the project and executed the sculpted façades of the transepts with their finely wrought tituli. Later, local craftsmen in the western bays of the nave used smaller, more rudimentary letters, scarcely distinguishable from the geometric shapes that also served as marks. In short, the critical variable in determining the character of these marks was not the patron, but the workshop itself.

A scattering of churches in Galicia and northern Castile invites us to pursue the links between sculptors and the lettering of inscriptions. The most notable set of tituli in the Galician countryside is at Santiago de Breixa, a richly decorated church with several titled

---

<sup>101</sup> For the close artistic links between Asma and Pantón see D'Emilio, "Romanesque Architectural Sculpture," 106–7; Yzquierdo Perrín, *Lugo*, 46–49.

<sup>102</sup> For an illustration of the corbel and an appreciation of its links with the series of tympana see Yzquierdo Perrín, *Arte Medieval* (1), 378–83. For the tympana and earlier bibliography see C. Sastre Vázquez, "Os sete tímpanos galegos coa loita de Sansón e o león: a propósito da posible recuperación dunha peza do noso patrimonio," *Anuario Brigantino* 26 (2003): 321–38. R. Sánchez Ameijeiras' identification of the tympanum figures with David is not convincing: "Algunos aspectos de la cultura visual en la Galicia de Fernando II y Alfonso IX" in *El arte románico*, 156–75, here 165–71.

<sup>103</sup> J. Delgado Gómez, "Un tetramorfos en Eiré (Lugo) extraordinario 'unicum' románico," *Archivo Español de Arte* 53 (1980): 57–68; Yzquierdo Perrín, *Arte Medieval* (1), 360–66; T. C. Moure Pena, "El discurso figurativo del templo monástico de San Miguel de Eiré: maestros, filiación e iconografías," *Goya* no. 316–17 (2007): 4–20.

<sup>104</sup> For a recent discussion of masons' marks, with extensive bibliography, see T. Martin, "Reading the Walls: Masons' Marks and the Archaeology of Architecture at San Isidoro, León," in *Church, State, Vellum, and Stone: Essays on Medieval Spain in Honor of John Williams*, ed. eadem and J. A. Harris (Leiden, 2005), 373–412.

<sup>105</sup> For personal names in medieval Iberia see *Antroponimia y sociedad: Sistemas de identificación hispano-cristianos en los siglos IX a XIII*, ed. P. Martínez Sopena (Valladolid, 1995). The combinations include AR, CI, GA, GI, MI (or WI), PE, and SA, plausibly matched with the names, ARnaldus/RAimundus, CÍprianus/CÍti, GArcia and GÍlbertus (distinguished from Gonzalvus), MÍchael (distinguished from Martinus or Munio), PÉtrus/PElagius, and SAncius (distinguished from Suarius or Stephanus).

<sup>106</sup> There are, for instance, two distinct Bs: one with each bow reaching the stem of the letter and the other with a double stem and intersecting bows.





Fig. 13: San Miguel de Eire, north portal, corbel beneath tympanum, evangelist symbols (*photo: author*)

representations of animals and fabulous beasts — *Sagitaris*, *Arpia*, *Falconarivs*, *Serena* — on the capitals of its arcaded chancel (Fig. 14).<sup>107</sup> At this small church the distinctive style, the unusual repertory of figures, and the choice of a softer serpentine, more suitable for fine carving than the prevalent local granite, all point to the presence of an artist from outside the region. In fact, the richly textured surfaces suggest the hand of a miniaturist or metalworker. Tituli like these are rare — though the loss of painted decoration must be remembered — but their links with manuscript illumination are made clearer by a remarkable Castilian example on the south portal of the church of San Andrés de Soto de Bureba (Fig. 15). There a unicorn is titled *unicornium*, alongside unmistakable reproductions of the decorated letters of illuminated manuscripts. The finely rendered inscription of 1176 in raised letters, suggestive of metalwork, includes the names of the makers of the portal, Petrus da Ega and Iohannes Michaelis.<sup>108</sup>

<sup>107</sup> For Santiago de Breixa see Bango Torviso, *Pontevedra*, 105–7. R. Yzquierdo Perrín, “La iglesia románica de Santiago de Breixa,” *Compostellanum* 23 (1978): 193–214.

<sup>108</sup> For San Andrés de Soto de Bureba see G. Boto Varela, *Ornamento sin delito: Los seres imaginarios del claustro de Silos y sus ecos en la escultura románica peninsular* (Abadía de Silos, 2000), 258–60. **Sculpture on this portal is commonly related to the second campaign in the Silos cloister, but the inscription, the decorated letters, the unicorn, and other pieces are attributable to artists active at Bercedo, Almendres, and Miñon. The awkwardness of the archivolt suggests that the portal was later reworked or completed by the sculptor familiar with Silos.**





Fig. 14: Santiago de Breixa (Pontevedra), chancel, detail of capital (*photo: author*)



Fig. 15: San Andrés de Soto de Bureba (Burgos), south portal, archivolts (*photo: author*)

The quality of the lettering, the unusual technique, the references to manuscript illumination, and the inclusion of the artists' signature at Soto de Bureba suggest to me that these artists were quite capable of designing their own inscriptions. Even humbler signatures hint at the same conclusion, because of their close connection with accompanying images. At the Galician church of San Martiño de Moaña, three saints under arcades are named in the inscription above; a signature (*Arias fecit*) tops the smaller right arcade, and the figure within may represent the craftsman (Fig. 16).<sup>109</sup> This can only be conjectural, but there is no doubt about the self-portrait that accompanies a signature at the Castilian church of San Cornelio y San Cipriano de Revilla de Santullán, a figure that has been well-known since Beatriz Mariño highlighted its importance almost twenty years ago (Fig. 17).<sup>110</sup> The signature of Michael identifies the artist chiseling the very image of the Last Supper that decorates the arch. Seated with an open book and paired with a figure displaying a book on the other side of the arch, this image — and the accompanying signature — asserts the mastery of the craftsman, perhaps over letters as well.

This singular piece is not isolated, for it appears in a part of northern Castile where churches related artistically to one another offer numerous inscriptions that include artistic signatures. At Piasca, Master Covaterius — whose unusual name suggests the identification of a trade — is named with the ecclesiastics who assisted at the consecration of the church in 1172.<sup>111</sup> Much of the rich sculpture at Piasca can be matched with pieces at Rebolledo de la Torre.<sup>112</sup> There Juan de Piasca named himself in an elaborate inscription of 1186. Whether this is the same "Master Covaterius," now using a Christian name, is uncertain, but what is clear is that the inscription is thoroughly integrated with the ornate carving of a window and visually highlights the artist's signature. On other portals decorated by this circle of sculptors, most notably that at Santiago de Carrión de los Condes, craftsmen of diverse kinds were depicted.

The superb artists who carved the façade at Carrión executed fine inscriptions in the niches of the apostles. They are generally credited with work across northern Spain, including the sculpture, probably in stucco, on the north transept portal of Lugo cathedral in Galicia.<sup>113</sup> There they also carved one of the most distinctive Galician inscriptions above the pendant

<sup>109</sup> For San Martiño de Moaña see Bango Torviso, *Pontevedra*, 186–88; Sánchez Ameijeiras suggests that the small figure is more likely to represent a scribe who authored the inscription: "Ritos," 59–61. One might compare the tympanum at the parish church of Mervilliers (Eure-et-Loir) where a scribe writes the inscription recording the gifts of the donors who are also represented there: see E. Vergnolle, *L'art roman en France* (Paris, 1994), 39.

<sup>110</sup> B. Mariño, "Artistic Self-Portraiture in Medieval Spain," unpublished paper presented at the 23rd International Congress on Medieval Studies, 5–8 May 1988, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan; M. L. Mero Moneo, "Überlegungen zur Ikonographie des 'Bildhauers' in der romanischen Kunst: Beispiele aus der spanischen Bauplastik," in *Studien zur Geschichte der Europäischen Skulptur*, 1: 163–74, 2: 59–61.

<sup>111</sup> For Sta. María de Piasca see M. A. García Guinea, *El románico en Santander* (Santander, 1979), 1: 470–543.

<sup>112</sup> J. M. Rodríguez Montañés, "Rebolledo de la Torre, San Julián y Santa Basilisa," in *Enciclopedia del Románico, Provincia de Burgos*, 1: 443–56. For the problems of attribution at Piasca and Rebolledo de la Torre see J. L. Hernando Garrido, "Escultores en el románico del Norte de Castilla: itinerancias y anonimatos. Reflexiones sobre Rebolledo de la Torre (Burgos) y Santa María de Piasca (Cantabria)," in *Los protagonistas de la obra románica* (Aguilar de Campoo, 2004), 151–85.

<sup>113</sup> For the links between Lugo and Carrión see J. D'Emilio, "Tradición local y aportaciones foráneas en la escultura románica tardía: Compostela, Lugo y Carrión," in *Actas: Simposio internacional sobre 'O Pórtico da Gloria e a Arte do seu Tempo'* (Santiago de Compostela, 1991), 83–91, here 88–90. For a recent, thorough study of these artists see D. Rico Camps, *El románico de San Vicente de Ávila (estructuras, imágenes, funciones)* (Murcia, 2002), 160–84.





Fig. 16: San Martiño de Moaña (Pontevedra), west portal, tympanum (*photo: author*)



Fig. 17: San Cornelio y San Ciprián de Revilla de Santullán, south portal, figure and signature of Micaelis (*photo: author*)



Fig. 18: Lugo cathedral, north transept portal, pendant capital (*photo: author*)

capital of the Last Supper (Fig. 18).<sup>114</sup> Lugo cathedral still preserves interesting examples of early medieval inscriptions including an episcopal tomb of 1056 and acrostic verses referring to an eighth-century bishop.<sup>115</sup> The inscription on the capital, however, looks further afield to the places where its artists had worked. The epitaphs in the noble pantheon at the Cluniac house of San Zoilo of Carrión de los Condes offer comparable inscriptions on a monumental scale, and the related Premonstratensian church at Aguilar de Campoo provides parallels in a context like that at Lugo.<sup>116</sup> Preserved within the thirteenth-century Gothic choir, the earlier imposts of the Romanesque chancel arch retain nested letters closely comparable to those at Lugo (Fig. 19).

<sup>114</sup> The inscription, regularly mistranscribed, correctly reads DISCIPVLVS D(OMI)NI PLACIDE DANS / MEMBRA QVIETI DUM CUBAT IN CENA / CELESTIA VIDIT AMENA. The leonine verses link the resting St. John with the vision of God above. It is catalogued in C. B. Kendall, *Allegory*, 235, and discussed in Sánchez Ameijeiras, "Ritos," 62–64.

<sup>115</sup> Ares Vázquez, "Inscripciones lucenses," 123–28.

<sup>116</sup> For the tombs at Carrión, see Ara Gil, "Un grupo de sepulcros," and Senra Gabriel y Galán, "Mio Cid." For Aguilar de Campoo see J. L. Hernando Garrido, *Escultura tardorrománica en el monasterio de Santa María la Real en Aguilar de Campoo* (Aguilar de Campoo, 1995), esp. 46–68; and J. D'Emilio, "The Royal Convent of Las Huelgas: Dynastic Politics, Religious Reform and Artistic Change in Medieval Castile," in *Studies in Cistercian Art and Architecture*, ed. M. P. Lillich, vol. 6 (Kalamazoo, 2005), 191–282, here 233–38.





Fig. 19: Santa María la Real de Aguilar de Campoo, imposts in situ from chancel of former Romanesque church (*photo: author*)

The inscriptions at Aguilar were part of a learned program of which only fragments remain. Normally this would be ascribed to the monastic patrons, and the sculptors would be credited only with its execution. Their itinerancy, however, and the isolated appearance of the inscription at Lugo suggest that designing such texts formed part of the repertory of the talented sculptors whose work was solicited for important commissions. It is noteworthy, too, that their project at Lugo included stucco and painted decoration: the bodies of angels, for example, must have been painted between the carved wings framing the corbels of the portal.

The examples of highly skilled itinerant artists, familiar with painting or book illumination as well as sculpture, highlight the role of the material craftsman in the design and use of inscriptions. In response, lesser craftsmen may also have designed their own signatures. A prominent inscription on the tympanum at San Cristobo de Novelúa credits the work to Master Martinus: ARTES MAGISTER MARTINUS: FECIT MEMORIA (Fig. 20).<sup>117</sup> This church is no earlier than the 1170s, based upon its close artistic relationships to the nearby churches of Ponteferreira and Bembibre, dated by inscriptions of 1177 and 1191. The inscription at Novelúa is strikingly archaic: the Ts have a loop on the left and their crossbar hardly passes to the right of the shaft; the framing lines of the M slant sharply and are joined by a tiny v; the loop of the R remains open, and the G has a short horizontal crossbar. Other letters have been simplified, like the As without the crossbar; and curves, like those of the S, have been angled.

Are these simple and archaic forms the work of a local sculptor himself in a region where documents written by parish priests and local scribes attest to the long persistence of Visigothic forms in the late twelfth century?<sup>118</sup> One cannot be sure, but the case is strengthened by

<sup>117</sup> For San Cristobo de Novelúa see D'Emilio, "Romanesque Architectural Sculpture," 208–16; Yzquierdo Perrín, *Lugo*, 68–73.

<sup>118</sup> On the variety of scripts and the persistence of archaic forms in twelfth-century Lugo see J. D'Emilio, "Writing is the Precious Treasury of Memory: Scribes and Notaries in Lugo (1150–1240)," in *La collaboration dans la production de l'écrit médiéval. Actes du XIIIe colloque du comité international de paléographie latine*, ed. H. Spilling (Paris, 2003), 379–410, here 380–81. There is no Magister Martinus among the clergy of Lugo at this time, but in 1212 a Magister Martinus signed two documents of Lugo, among the laity. Petrus Paredarius, a man associated with the cathedral works, also appears in these two witness lists: Archivo Histórico Nacional, sección de Clero, carp. 1326F



Fig. 20: San Cristobo de Novelúa (Lugo), west portal, tympanum (photo: author)

the marked contrast with the lettering of the dated inscription (1177) on the tympanum at San Martiño de Ponteferreira (Fig. 21), a church with close artistic relationships to Novelúa.<sup>119</sup> The unusual use of the year of the Incarnation instead of the Spanish Era goes hand in hand with ornate lettering, similar to contemporary designs at major sites like Compostela. The difference in the writing style for two inscriptions produced by the same workshop reinforces the hypothesis that a local artist designed his own signature in a simpler and old-fashioned hand at Novelúa, but followed a pattern provided by a cleric for the inscription using the year of the Incarnation. Other signatures of craftsmen appear in minuscule letters; several remain unpublished; others are undeciphered; many more are surely to be found.<sup>120</sup>

Epigraphs like these take us far from Mateus' calligraphic inscription at Compostela, but the self-conscious assertion of authorship and status that led to this proliferation of signatures is partly due to the prestige of the artists who came and went from Compostela and other great projects of the pilgrimage road. The talented itinerant artists who worked at Compostela, Lugo,

11, 14. If this is the Magister Martinus responsible for the church at Novelúa, it would push his work there to the end of the twelfth century.

<sup>119</sup> For San Martiño de Ponteferreira see Yzquierdo Perrín, *Lugo*, 113–16; Sánchez Ameijeiras, "Ritos," 53–54; J. D'Emilio, "Working Practices and the Language of Architectural Decoration in Romanesque Galicia: Santa María de Camporramiro and its Sources," *Arte Medieval* 10 (1996): 69–90, here 78–80, 83.

<sup>120</sup> Among unpublished Galician signatures known to me, the most explicit is on an impost of the chancel arch at Sta. María de Herbón: HVIVS FABRICATOR OPERIS PETRVS PELAGI F(e)C(i)T. Minuscule letters are used in examples at Atán, Cambre, Esporiz, and Verselos, among other sites. Above the signature of Pelagius on a plinth at Verselos, the spur of the base is decorated with a human head. Another portrait, perhaps?



**Fig. 21:** San Martiño de Ponteferreira (Lugo), south portal, tympanum (c. 1177) (*photo: author*)

and other major sites not only brought new forms of lettering and new types of inscriptions to Galicia. They also brought a taste for inscriptions that credited craftsmen with their work and conferred upon them the status and mastery associated with writing in a region with its own rich epigraphic heritage. With this, artists joined prelates and patrons as partners in the profound transformation of the Iberian church that the Romanesque revolution represented and commemorated with its inscriptions.

