

Fédération Internationale des Instituts d'Études Médiévales
TEXTES ET ÉTUDES DU MOYEN ÂGE, 90

SECRETS AND DISCOVERY IN THE MIDDLE AGES



Edited by
José Meirinhos, Celia López Alcalde and João Rebalde

Barcelona - Roma
2017

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In memoriam
Oliviae Remie Constable

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MARIA LEONOR BOTELHO*

**DOMINUS EXERCITUUM. APOTROPAIC GUARDIANS
AT THE THRESHOLDS OF PORTUGUESE CHURCHES
OF THE ROMANESQUE PERIOD**

INTRODUCTION

The Greek etymology of the word apotropaic (αποτροπαικό, apotrēpaios) is linked with the idea of warding off evil¹. From earliest times, human beings have lived in a world full of *destructive forces* which, in a more or less dramatic way, and with different intensities in accordance with time and space, made themselves manifest in everyday life². Basic survival instinct informed humanity that it was necessary to acknowledge these *destructive forces* and start protective action against those elements capable of destructive action. However, humanity also came to acknowledge the invisible character of such forces, both unpredictable and incomprehensible. Accordingly, humanity felt the need to give them recognizable faces, making these *evil manifestations* tangible and easier to confront and control, thereby protecting people against their influence³. One can therefore understand the emergence of fantastic figures, hybrids, imbued with supernatural powers whose target would be the human species and consequently the need to create intercessors blessed with preventive and healing functions (Figure 1). Such evil entities were conceived in the human mind in the form of animals, with origins in Egyptian civilization, and hence could be dominated or frightened away in equal measure and by similar processes to those used on animals⁴.

In this context, one should not forget that churches are the monuments of a *new* religion, endowed with an ensemble of signs that are imposed not only on the followers of the faith and experts, but also used against demons, temptations, adversities or other influences that might occur⁵. Above all, these signs should ward off misfortune, illness, tempest and war, using a very well defined language. There is an evident

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¹ M. BARROCA, «Apotropaico, Símbolo», in J. ALARCÃO – M. BARROCA, *Dicionário de Arqueologia Portuguesa*, Figueirinhas, Porto 2012, pp. 32-33.

² C. R. AUGÉ, «Supernatural Sentinels: Managing Threshold Fears via Apotropaic Agents», *Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness*, April 4-8, 2007, Flathed Valley Community College – University of Montana: http://www.crossingthethreshold.org/welcome_files/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20Soc%20of%20Consc.pdf (site accessed 18th June 2013).

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ C. A. F. ALMEIDA, «Carácter Mágico do Toque das Campainhas. Apotropaicidade do Som», in F. C. P. LIMA (dir.), *Revista de Etnografia*, Museu de Etnografia e História, Porto [Abril] 1966, vol. 6, tomo 2, n.º 12, p. 340.

⁵ C. SÜTTERLIN, «Universals in Apotropaic Symbolism: A Behavioral and Comparative Approach to Some Medieval Sculptures», *Leonardo. Art and de New Biology: Biological forms and Patterns*, 22/1 (1989), p. 73: www.jstor.org/stable/1575143 (site accessed 18th June 2013).

concordance between figures assumed to be preventive or healing, initially directly placed over the portals, over the lintel of a window or on capitals inside a church⁶. Most of the adopted motifs are prior to Christianity itself. It is well known (as had already happened during the Paleochristian period), that appropriation of pre-existing signs with another meaning was a common mean of communicating with the uninitiated masses and at the same time drawing them in to the fold. The image portraying the Good Shepherd in the catacomb of Priscila (Rome, c. 235 a.C) is pertinent here, the model was the Moscophoros (c. 570 b.C., the Acropolis Museum in Athens), a man represented with a calf over his shoulders.

It is, therefore, through the most diverse means that the Romanesque Period seeks to ward off evil. The cult of relics, with absolute power, so dear to this period, is evidence of the will (and need) to ward off evil forces⁷. The relics were carried then through fields or villages as the most effective way to ward off the forces of the evil. Signs of Christianization and apotropaicization also appear on crosses, chapels and *amulet shaped* signs, carved in rocks and high points dominating the village, strategically positioned in those places considered to be likely sources of evil⁸.

Apotropaic elements are also used in domestic architecture in order to repel evil⁹. Doors give access to a space protected against the elements, physical threats and intruders, but at the same time they create a breach in the integrity of the structure of the wall. Hence, the very element that allows access to protected territory is, at the same time, that which invites major perils in. In the same line of thought, the light openings that enable those inside the household to have access to natural light and fresh air, also constitute a way for those outside to be able to see the movements, the possessions and the secrets of those inside. Therefore, those same openings that create a sense of well-being and safety, paradoxically, induce a sense of discomfort and vulnerability. As far as domestic architecture is concerned, the following were used, figuration/representation of plants, animals (or animal parts), metallic objects, abstract representations or simply the use of plain words¹⁰. There is, moreover, cultural transversality of apotropaic motifs designed to repel, stop, reverse and neutralize any supernatural threat.

It is therefore, no coincidence that it is in the portals erected by the architecture of the Romanesque Period that we find a powerful drive for apotropaic protection. A clear separation between sacred and profane spaces was created, the faithful passed through the *Door of Heaven* leading them to the interior of the church, performing in this way a sort of a solemn passage through that door which gave access to the way to salvation.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁷ C. A. F. ALMEIDA, *Arquitetura Românica de Entre Douro e Minho*, Porto 1978, vol. II, p. 223.

⁸ ID., «Território Paroquial de Entre-Douro-e-Minho. Sua Sacralização», *Nova Renascença*, 1/2 (1981), p. 207.

⁹ AUGÉ, «Supernatural Sentinels: Managing Threshold Fears via Apotropaic Agents», p. 2.

¹⁰ To know more vid. ID., «Guardians ate the Door: Apotropaic Remedies for Domicilic Perils», in *41st International Congress on Medieval Studies*, May 4-7, 2006: http://www.crossingthe-threshold.org/welcome_files/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20Apotropaia%20Remedies%20for%20Domicilic%20Perils%202.pdf (site accessed 18th June 2013).

In Romanesque churches it is through the crosses, terrifying animals and a wide range of elements placed at the doors (and sometimes at the light openings) that evil is repelled, or more precisely, kept outside this sacred space perceived to be the *Celestial Jerusalem*, the *City of God*. As is well known, the message in Romanesque sculpture is an invocation, especially concerning those represented on the outside of temples. The interpretation of the symbolism of historic themes is quite recent in Portugal. However, during the Romanesque Period, the connotation of the church with the House of God was inevitable, hence the care taken with ornamentation, which is usually seen at access openings, lending them a certain grandeur.

Not much has been written in Portugal about the apotropaic sense patent in the architecture of the Romanesque Period. However, the contribution of Carlos Alberto Ferreira de Almeida (1934-1996)¹¹ must be acknowledged. He started from an anthropological and ethnographic approach and became a pioneer of the valorization of the apotropaic character associated with Portuguese Romanesque. Although written over forty years ago, Ferreira de Almeida approached the apotropaic character of the tinkling of the hand bells¹², his text remains both fascinating and innovative¹³. The use of hand bells during religious functions has pagan precedents; it was during the Middle Ages that some hand bells became bigger, transformed into bells¹⁴. In this study, the author refers not only to the sacred nature of the bells but also to their use against thunderstorms and other evils, they were used as meteorological announcers, they were rung for someone's death or to signal the mother's relief after the end of labor. As well as this, bells were considered to be effective against wind, fog, hail and, particularly, thunderstorms, their power to exorcise extending, through their sacred nature, to as far as the sound could be heard¹⁵. One must also consider the fact that therapeutic and prophylactic properties in hearing pathologies were associated with the bells' sonority¹⁶. It is in this line of thought that one must understand the use of other idiophones such as hand bells and rattles as protective instruments against evil entities as well as distinctive emblems of ceremonial agents¹⁷.

Starting from this author's proposals, which are still up to date, scattered through his immense historiography consecrated to the Romanesque architecture, we intend to identify specific examples which show apotropaic power (Figure 0). After analysis,

¹¹ This author's global all-embracing vision (which had never been attempted before) renewed the historiography of the Portuguese Romanesque by introducing and accepting its anthropological and ethnographical elements. For a more profound knowledge of his contribution *Vd* what we have written about the subject in M. L. BOTELHO, *A Historiografia da Arquitectura da Época Românica em Portugal (1870-2010)*, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, Lisboa 2013, pp. 307-325 (Textos Universitários de Ciências Sociais e Humanas).

¹² ALMEIDA, «Carácter Mágico do Toque das Campainhas», op. cit..

¹³ BARROCA, «Nota Prévia», p. 10.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 342.

¹⁵ L. SEBASTIAN, *Subsídios para a História da Fundição Sineira em Portugal. Do sino medieval da Igreja de São Pedro de Coruche à actualidade*, Museu Municipal de Coruche, Coruche 2008, p. 82.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

we will try to probe the preponderant role of this drive to repel evil, through sculpture, within the architectural heritage of the Romanesque Period extant in Portugal.

APOTROPAIC GUARDIANS AT THE ENTRANCES OF PORTUGUESE CHURCHES OF THE ROMANESQUE PERIOD

As far as we can judge (apart from those elements concentrated around the main portals), there seems to be a particular propensity to place the apotropaic elements on the north portal of churches of the Romanesque Period. It is well known that Christianity has a range of doctrinal and ritual reasons justifying the orientation of Christian churches which allow us to establish parallels with both mosques and synagogues as far as geographic aspects are concerned¹⁸. The Romanesque is intimately connected to «solar theology» theory, the symbolic importance of sunrise and sunset. This being the case and in this context we must not forget the connotation that links the north side to the world of the dead for 6th century Germanic peoples: according to popular belief, the palace of Hel, queen of the dead, raised in Nastrand, was the meeting place of all of the dead, a place far from the sun. Its doors are open to the north¹⁹. Ferreira de Almeida also draws our attention to the fact that in the north of Portugal, during the Romanesque Period, there was fear of spirits from the North, bringing cold and darkness, this phenomenon has also been observed in certain regions in France²⁰. This fact explains why there is greater concern with the choice of themes on the north portals, «more often, compared to those on the south side. And that, due to regular building next to the church, usually on the sunny side, these south portals were less visible and therefore less cared for. Where there was no such building development, the south portal took on greater importance than the north, which sometimes did not even exist»²¹.

It is no accident therefore that in the north lateral portal of the chapel de São Pedro das Águias (Granjinha, Tabuaço, Viseu) we can see in the exterior archivolt an apotropaic and propitiatory inscription, which transcribes, with adaptations, the text of Psalm 121.8 – «The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore»²² (Figure 2).

D(Omi)M(Us) Exercitum : Custo[Di] / At : Huius : Templi : Introi / Tum Et Exitum

This inscription then which asks the *Lord God of Hosts* to guard the coming in and going out from the temple takes us back to a type of ambivalent epigraph, since at the same time as it protects, it also punishes those who do not respect this sacred space. The fear of divine justice is, without doubt, the belief that is most frequently referred

¹⁸ On this topic vid. M. GUERRA, *Simbología Románica. El Cristianismo e otras religiones en Arte Románico*, Fundación Universitaria Española, Madrid 1986.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 214-215.

²⁰ C. A. F. ALMEIDA, «Primeiras Impressões sobre a Arquitectura Românica Portuguesa», *Revista da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto – Série História*, 2 (1971), p. 110.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 110, footnote nr. 28.

²² M. BARROCA, *Epigrafia Medieval Portuguesa (862-1422)*, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisboa 2000, vol. II-I, pp. 600-604 (Textos Universitários de Ciências Sociais e Humanas).

to in testaments of the Romanesque Period²³. All religions, natural or revealed, either from the west or the east, highlight the role of personal and collective devotion and its importance in the obtaining of aid and miracles²⁴. In the Middle Ages, religious devotion gained strength and gave the Christian religion a human dimension and a utilitarian and pragmatic spirit, which easily approaches the superstitious²⁵. The «word» became one of the apotropaic resources that were used in the search of divine aid, either through words with no clear meaning, codified abbreviations, divine names, acronyms or repeated letters. It is in this category that one should include the silver votive ring of prayer, recently unearthed, placed between the first and the second layer of ash-lars in the north wall of the Chapter Room of the Monastery of São João de Tarouca (Viseu)²⁶. The ring was preserved embedded in mortar. The inside of the ring has an inscription made up of eighteen letters, each letter corresponds to the beginning of a line from a propitiatory prayer against the plague and contagion. Its symbolic weight, allied to the place where it was found in an archaeological context leads one to believe in the existence of a ceremony of some apotropaic and exorcising nature, ensuring that evil influences would be permanently expelled from that space, the most important one for the monastic community after the temple itself: the chapterhouse and burial ground of those abbots who died in office²⁷.

Besides the «word», the Romanesque Period used guardian figures which were placed at the bases of the portals or over their impostes and clearly protected the entrance to the sacred space. Designed to be repulsive, these figures illustrate the pagan, diabolical forces that haunt the House of God and tempt the faithful without rest or respect²⁸. At the same time, when placed at the feet of a saint or at the base of a column, supporting pulpits or fountains, they testify to their loss of power confronted with the great edifice of the Christian faith.

The main portal of the church of the Monastery of Tarouquela (Cinfães, Viseu), has become known as one of the most intriguing exemplars of Romanesque architecture in Portugal, particularly through the quality of its sculptures²⁹ (Figure 3). Above all it is the two guardian figures at the portal, popularly known as *the dogs of Tarouquela*, which have drawn most attention from experts. Placed over the extension of the impostes, on either side of the portal, these major sculptures show two quadrupeds with

²³ ALMEIDA, «Primeiras Impressões sobre a Arquitectura Românica Portuguesa», p. 107, footnote nr. 15.

²⁴ G. C. DIAS, «As devoções na Idade Média», in M. F. EUSÉBIO, *Arte, Religião e Poder nos Tempos Medievais. A Identidade de Portugal em construção*, Exhibition Catalog, Museu Grão Vasco, 14th August to 14th November 2009, p. 60.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

²⁶ L. SÉBASTIAN – A. S. CASTRO – M. BARROCA, «A sacralização dos espaços no séc. XII-XIII no mosteiro cisterciense de S. João de Tarouca – a deposição votiva de um anel de oração e uma panela», in *Arte, poder e religião nos tempos medievais: a identidade de Portugal em construção*, Câmara Municipal de Viseu, Viseu 2009, pp. 208-219.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 208-219.

²⁸ SÜTTERLIN, «Universals in Apotropaic Symbolism», p. 67.

²⁹ Architecture decorated? with choricled capitals, where both human and animal figures are to be identified, the right proportions of the bodies, the fidelity patent on the representation of their movements and the balanced distribution of their figures accuse the hand of a great master. G. N. GRAF, *Portugal Roman. Le Sud du Portugal*, La Nuit des Temps, Zodiaque, Paris 1986, p. 273.

naked human bodies hanging from their jaws, held by the legs. As Armando de Mattos (1899-1953) reminds us, it is to the Eastern and Syrian tradition that one should look for the origin of the devouring posture of these animals. The decorative and initially symbolic ensemble of the animals presented, arrived in the west via Byzantium, and its use in the service of the Romanesque symbolic derived from the fantastic zoological world of medieval bestiaries³⁰. Although these figures are on a different scale, they are clearly apotropaic and repeat the theme of the capital on the aperture of the main-chapel, sheltered in the Saint John the Baptist chapel.

In fact, the type of composition (and iconography) of the *dogs of Tarouquela* links up with a theme from Braga which was popular in the Romanesque churches built in the area around the Tâmega and Douro river basins. It is a composition where monsters appear in the act of devouring naked figures hanging by the legs, hanging from their mouths. This motif can be found in São Martinho de Mouros in Resende (main portal and capital of the former arch of the first nave bay of the church), in Veade in Celorico de Basto (in assorted capitals preserved in the annexes of the church) and in Travanca in Amarante (main portal, external capitals of the north side-chapel, capital next to the apse of the former arch of the last nave bay on the side of the architrave) or on the portico of the Monastery of Santa Maria de Pombeiro (Felgueiras). Through this representation of the fight between the virtuous soul and diabolic temptation, symbolically represented by the beasts, it reminds the Christian, at the entrance into the temple, that one must be virtuous, fight sin, and not succumb to temptation.

Parallels for the guardian figures can be found in the guardian lions on the main portal in São Pedro das Águias (Tabuaço, Viseu). With eyes wide open, heads alert, gazing outwards, these lions guard the entrance of the church and the sacred space in its interior, which is also protected on the north face by the propitiatory inscription mentioned above³¹ (Figure 4). The south portal of Sanfins de Friestas (Valença) has a tympanum above two lion heads with sharp fangs menacingly bared (Figure 5). These show us that the sculpture of the portals does have a symbolic function: to protect the entrance of the temples, because the sacred is ambivalent, it protects but also punishes those who do not respect it³². The same function is fulfilled by the atlantes beasts that support both lateral columns of the South portal at São Pedro de Rates (Póvoa de Varzim) (Figure 6). All these guardian figures have a clearly apotropaic function, to ward off evil...

³⁰ A. MATTOS, «Arqueologia artística (estudos, notas e comentários)», *I. Douro-Litoral*, 4 (1949), pp. 50-83, p. 67.

³¹ Until now, we have found no justification whatsoever for this multiplication of apotropaic elements as far as the protection of its portal is concerned. However, bearing in mind the peculiar implantation of this Cistercian coenobium, we may question whether there is a connection between the preoccupation of casting away evilness and the peculiar character of the surrounding landscape. About this matter vid. what we've written in M. L. BOTELHO, «Cister e Território na Época Românica. O Espírito do Lugar nos Mosteiros Cistercienses», in J. A. CARREIRAS, *Mosteiros Cistercienses. História, Arte, Espiritualidade e Património*, Tomo II, pp. 95-98.

³² L. M. C. ROSAS, «Mosteiro de Sanfins de Friestas», in J. M. PÉREZ GONZÁLEZ (dir.) – L. M. C. ROSAS – M. L. BOTELHO (scientific coordination), *Arte Românica em Portugal*, Fundación Santa María la Real – Centro de Estudios del Románico e Fundación Ramón Areces, Aguilar de Campoo 2010, p. 302.

Just as we have seen happening in domestic, vernacular, architecture, symbols were used to ward off evil in light apertures. The *beak-head* motif, of Anglo-Saxon origin, was particularly well received in Portugal, being widely disseminated through the Benedictine Monastery of São Pedro de Rates³³. This is a motif of animal heads all facing front, with a low profile molding and complex designs, biting the torus voussoir. One can find this imported Anglo-Saxon motif on the surrounding arch of the south lateral aperture of the chapel at Fandinhães de Paços Gaiolo (Marco de Canavezes) and on the aperture of the Resendes' Pantheon at Cárquere (Resende) (Figure 7). This clearly shows familiarity with the figures represented on the triumphal arch at Tarouquela (where instead of the traditional bird heads there are tiger or wolf heads), on the portal of the tower at Travanca and on a voussoir in the cloister at Paço de Sousa, Gerhard N. Graf says that as far as Cárquere is concerned we stand before «des sortes de chats munis, en dessous de leur tête, d'une protuberance indéfinissable, semblable à une barbe»³⁴.

There is a high relief *Agnus Dei* with a cross, edged with leaves, on the tympanum of the portal at Rates under a poly-lobed arch (Figure 6). The cross is decorated with bezants, imitating precious stones, and it is towards the cross that the Lamb of God turns his gaze. The apotropaic character of this theme which is so common in (and so specific to) the Portuguese Romanesque decorative repertoire is much more questionable³⁵, «particularly since this animalistic motif seems to reject the idea of a terrifying animal, offering us instead an apocalyptic image and the idea of heavenly protection». The Lamb of God is a very common apocalyptic theme in early Romanesque in Portugal due to the powerful Mozarabic tradition. This image is seen in a wide variety of different forms. Nevertheless, we must note the specific significance of the wide dissemination of this motif, whose ultimate meaning was understood by few. On the north portal of São Pedro das Águias there is a portrayal of the *Agnus Dei* with a cross, of such a disproportionately large size for the frame available that there is scarcely room for its legs, whereas in São Martinho de Cedofeita (Porto) it is set in a poly-lobed circle which has been said to be of Muslim origin³⁶ (Figure 8).

This family of animalistic motifs, (immediately identifiable to the uninitiated), must include the fierce dog with collar, sculpted in low relief on the tympanum of the north portal of the Igreja Matriz de Melgaço, reinforcing care and attention in the minds of those entering into the body of a church³⁷ (Figure 9). The tympanum of the main portal of Sanfins de Friestas (Valença) is decorated with a superficially engraved band of geometric themes and a serpent (Figure 10). This decorative graffito is similar to specimens in Rubiães (Paredes de Coura) and Galicia, such as Santiago de Breixa (Pontevedra)³⁸. It is important to remind ourselves of the force of apotropaic symbols

³³ M. R. REAL, «O românico condal em S. Pedro de Rates e as transformações beneditinas do séc. XII», *Boletim Cultural Póvoa do Varzim*, 21 (1982), 59-60.

³⁴ GRAF, *Portugal Roman. Le Sud du Portugal, La Nuit des Temps*, p. 86.

³⁵ ALMEIDA, «Primeiras Impressões sobre a Arquitectura Românica Portuguesa», p. 111.

³⁶ Vid. what we've written in BOTELHO, *A Historiografia da Arquitectura da Época Românica em Portugal (1870-2010)*, pp. 535-537.

³⁷ C. A. F. ALMEIDA, *O Românico. História da Arte em Portugal*, Vol. 3, Publicações Alfa, Lisboa 1986, p. 149, legend.

³⁸ ROSAS, «Mosteiro de Sanfins de Friestas», p. 302.

that seem to adopt abstract forms: spirals, circles³⁹ and other geometric forms, such as swastikas⁴⁰.

The folk origin of the apotropaic symbols is clear, but this in no way invalidates the hypothesis of more erudite motives being used, recognizing in them the same propitiatory mission. On the tympanum of the lateral north portal of Nossa Senhora da Orada (Melgaço), there is a representation of the *Tree of Life*, flanked by a harpy and another animal, perhaps a lion, encircled by graffiti of Solomon knots and foliage that seems to have been inspired by the motif that can be seen on the limestone frieze at Paderne⁴¹ (Figure 11). In an identical manner, in São Cláudio de Nogueira (Viana do Castelo), two animals are face to face before the cross on the western tympanum (Figure 11). Is it a confrontation like the griffon and the dragon on the north portal of Rio Mau, Vila do Conde, or are they guarding it like the lions on the tympanum of the north portal of São Salvador de Bravães (Ponte de Lima)? The dominant idea here is that of guardian figures and/or the respect that the House of God imposes upon these fantastic beings, subduing them.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this brief excursion through Portuguese Romanesque architecture, in the search to identify the representatives of a hypothetical *Dominus Exercituum*, we have confirmed that we could well be face to face with an endless task. Having adopted apotropaic symbols of folk origin, clearly illustrated by the propitiatory inscriptions and the guardian figures, the Romanesque period tended towards a more deeply erudite semantics in the elements chosen to protect the entrances of the Houses of God it raised. The proliferation of the *Agnus Dei* bears witness to this. The representation of other motifs with clearly intended invocations such as the tympanum of Orada, São Cláudio de Nogueira and Rio Mau also bear witness to this.

³⁹ *The circle has a magical, defensive value. Those practicing exorcisms, in order to avoid the devil, should place themselves inside a circle made on the ground. An encirclement – how many festive ceremonies, in the ancient Entre Douro e Minho, motivated in this!... prevented the entrance of evil influences in the Parish.* Cf. ALMEIDA, «Carácter Mágico do Toque das Campainhas», p. 21.

⁴⁰ AUGÉ, «Supernatural Sentinels: Managing Threshold Fears via Apotropaic Agents», p. 6.

⁴¹ ALMEIDA, *O Românico*, p. 150.



Figure 3 Monastery of Tarouquela (Cinfães, Viseu). Main portal – «Dogs of Tarouquela».



Figure 4 Ermida de São Pedro das Águias (Granjinha, Tabuaço, Viseu). Main Portal (detail).



Figure 5 Monastery of Sanfins de Friestas (Valença). South Portal (detail).



Figure 6 São Pedro de Rates (Póvoa de Varzim). South Portal.



Figure 7 The «beak-heads» motif. Paços de Gaiolo (Marco de Canavezes): south window detail and Monastery of Tarouquela, triumphal arch detail.



Figure 8 São Martinho de Cedofeita (Porto).
North Portal (detail).



Figure 9 Melgaço's Church.
North Portal (detail).



Figure 10 Sanfins de Friestas (Valença).
Main Portal (detail).



Figure 11 Nossa Senhora da Orada
(Melgaço). North Portal (detail).



Figure 12 Two animals affronting or guarding a cross. São Cristóvão de Rio Mau (Vila do Conde): north portal (detail) and São Salvador de Bravães (Ponte de Lima): north portal (detail).

FIDEM's 5th European Congress of Medieval Studies took place in Porto, Portugal, from 25th to 29th June 2013 under the title *Secrets and Discovery in the Middle Ages*. The Congress set out to discuss the presence and importance of secrets in the spheres of imagination, culture, thinking, sciences, politics, religion, and everyday life during the Middle Ages (from the onset of the 6th to the middle of the 16th century). The Congress was designed to promote discussion on secrets and discovery in all the domains of Medieval Studies, in any medieval language, and in a wide array of subjects: Confession and Intimacy; Conspiracy and Betrayal; Government and Diplomacy; Health and Life; Hermeticism and Transmutation; Holiness and Relics; Knowledge and Scepticism; Mysticisms and Kabbalah; Nature and the Supernatural; Past and Future; Planets and Harmony; Prophecy and Divination; Sermons and Preaching; Symbols and Dreams; Truth and Fakes; Unknown Worlds and Lost Places; Warfare and Strategy. In the tradition of FIDEM's meetings, the Congress enjoyed a very high attendance, with addresses delivered on all these domains, of which the present volume includes only a part submitted to and selected by a specialised committee.

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This volume is dedicated to the memory of the late Olivia Remie Constable (1961-2014).

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