

2007

### Iglesia de San Juan in Portomarín

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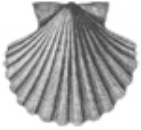
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#### Recommended Citation

Danford, Rachel. "Iglesia de San Juan in Portomarín." *Peregrinations: Journal of Medieval Art and Architecture* 2, 2 (2007). <https://digital.kenyon.edu/perejournal/vol2/iss2/20>

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### **Iglesia de San Juan in Portomarín**

Located in the Miño river valley, Portomarín has controlled a strategic crossing point for travelers since Roman times. To protect the bridge and the pilgrims as they crossed on their way to Santiago, first the Order of Santiago and then the Hospitallers maintained a garrison here during the Middle Ages. The Iglesia de San Juan was probably built in the late 12th or early 13th century upon the Hospitaller's arrival in Portomarín, and in keeping with their dual military and spiritual roles, it served as both fortress and church. The construction of the Embalse de Belsar in the mid 20th century flooded the old town and forced the inhabitants of Portomarín to relocate, at which time the Iglesia was disassembled and reassembled in the new town further up the gorge. It is now also known as the Iglesia de San Nicolás. Shaver-Crandell, Gerson, and Stones, 1995, 288-9; Gitlitz and Davidson, 2000, 322.

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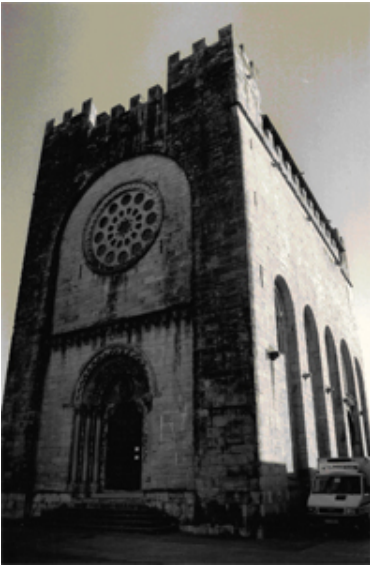


Approaching Portomarín from the modern Camino.  
Photographer: Rachel Danford.

Approaching Portomarín. Detail of the Iglesia de San Juan, late 12th/early 13th Century.  
Photographer: Rachel Danford.



Iglesia de San Juan, late 12th/early 13th century, Portomarín, Spain.  
Photographer: Rachel Danford



West doorway. First archivolt: the 24 elders of the Apocalypse. Tympanum: Christ in a mandorla. Iglesia de San Juan, late 12th/early 13th century, Portomarín, Spain. Photographer: Rachel Danford.



Like so much religious art in Western Europe at the time, the Last Judgment is a major theme in Portomarín. The 24 elders are introduced in the book of Revelation, where they are described as seated on thrones surrounding the throne of Christ, dressed in white with crowns of gold on their heads, (Revelation 4:4), harps, and golden bowls full of incense, “which are the prayers of the saints” (Revelation 5:8). Maestro Mateo’s late 12th century Pórtico de la Gloria in Santiago de Compostela, only a few days walk west of Portomarín, is perhaps the most outstanding and best-known representation of the 24 elders in Romanesque sculpture.

Detail of a demon on the left console on the west doorway. The opposing console depicts an angel. Iglesia de San Juan, late 12th/early 13th century, Portomarín, Spain.

Photographer: Rachel Danford.

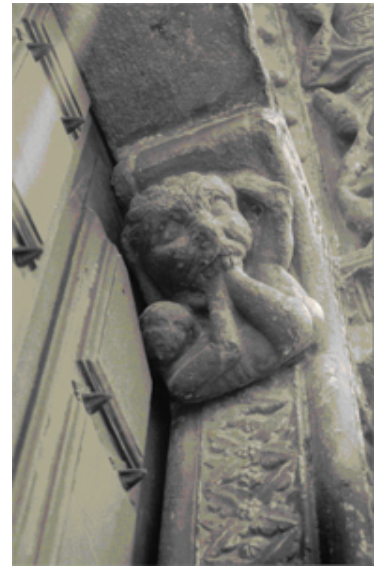


South doorway. Tympanum: a bishop flanked by two figures bearing a crosier and a book. Iglesia de San Juan, late 12th/early 13th century, Portomarín, Spain.  
Photographer: Rachel Danford.



Detail of left console, south door. A demon swallows a human leg. Iglesia de San Juan, late 12th/early 13th century, Portomarín, Spain.  
Photographer: Rachel Danford.

Detail of right console south door. A whole man dangles from a demon's mouth. Iglesia de San Juan, late 12th/early 13th century, Portomarín, Spain. Photographer: Rachel Danford.



Detail of the central portal, west façade. Cathedral of Leon 13th century, Leon, Spain. Photographer: Rachel Danford.

While fascinating images, the demons in Portomarín are not particularly unusual for the 12th and 13th century. Scenes of demons devouring sinners recur along the pilgrimage to Santiago. The great cathedral in Leon provides a particularly vivid example.

North doorway with Annunciation scene in tympanum. Iglesia de San Juan, late 12th/early 13th century, Portomarín, Spain. Photographer: Rachel Danford.







Detail of north doorway tympanum. Iglesia de San Juan, late 12th/early 13th century, Portomarín, Spain.  
Photographer: Rachel Danford.

Detail of column capital with harpies flanking the north door. Iglesia de San Juan, late 12th/early 13th century, Portomarín, Spain.  
Photographer: Rachel Danford.



Iglesia de San Juan, late 12th/early 13th century, Portomarín, Spain.  
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I would like to thank the Chappell-Lougee undergraduate research program at Stanford University for funding my project.