

**SCOTT B. MONTGOMERY
ALICE A. BAUER**

CASTING

OUR OWN SHADOWS

**RECREATING
THE MEDIEVAL PILGRIMAGE
TO SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA**

**UNIVERSITY PRESS
OF
THE SOUTH**

2021

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Published in France and the USA by Presses Universitaires du Nouveau Monde. Printed in France by Monbeaulivre.fr.

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Casting Our Own Shadows. Recreating the Medieval Pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela.

Second Edition in English.

First US Edition in English: ISBN: 978-1-937030-17-9, 2012.

210 Pages; 190 Photos, Maps, and Drawings.

1. History. 2. Medieval Christianity. 3. Medieval Religious Art. 4. France. 5. Spain. 6. Santiago de Compostela. 7. Pilgrimage Road. 8. Pilgrim's Experience. 9. Scott B. Montgomery. 10. Alice A. Bauer.

ISBN: 978-9-403645-71-1 European Edition, 2021.

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Acknowledgements

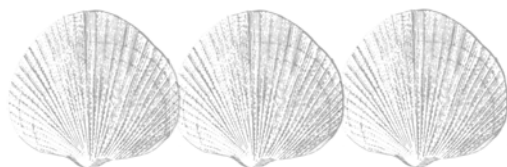
First and foremost, we acknowledge our fellow pilgrims – past, present, and future – for confluent camaraderie, inspiration and understanding. Our own personal thanks extend most emphatically to the Bauer and Montgomery families for years and years of love, support, and understanding (even if you thought this particular venture was just a bit over the line...). We love you – we cannot express our appreciation any more clearly and directly than this. We wouldn't be here without you. Particular note must be made of Helen Bauer's very special contribution in making our pilgrim hats – nagyon szépen köszönjük, Anyu. Thanks to Josh Rose for watching our house and our canine companion while we were away. Our dear dog Theodora waited so patiently for us while we were on pilgrimage. Thank you, sweet girl. We just wish that you could have waited around this earth long enough to have us balance a copy of the book on your head.

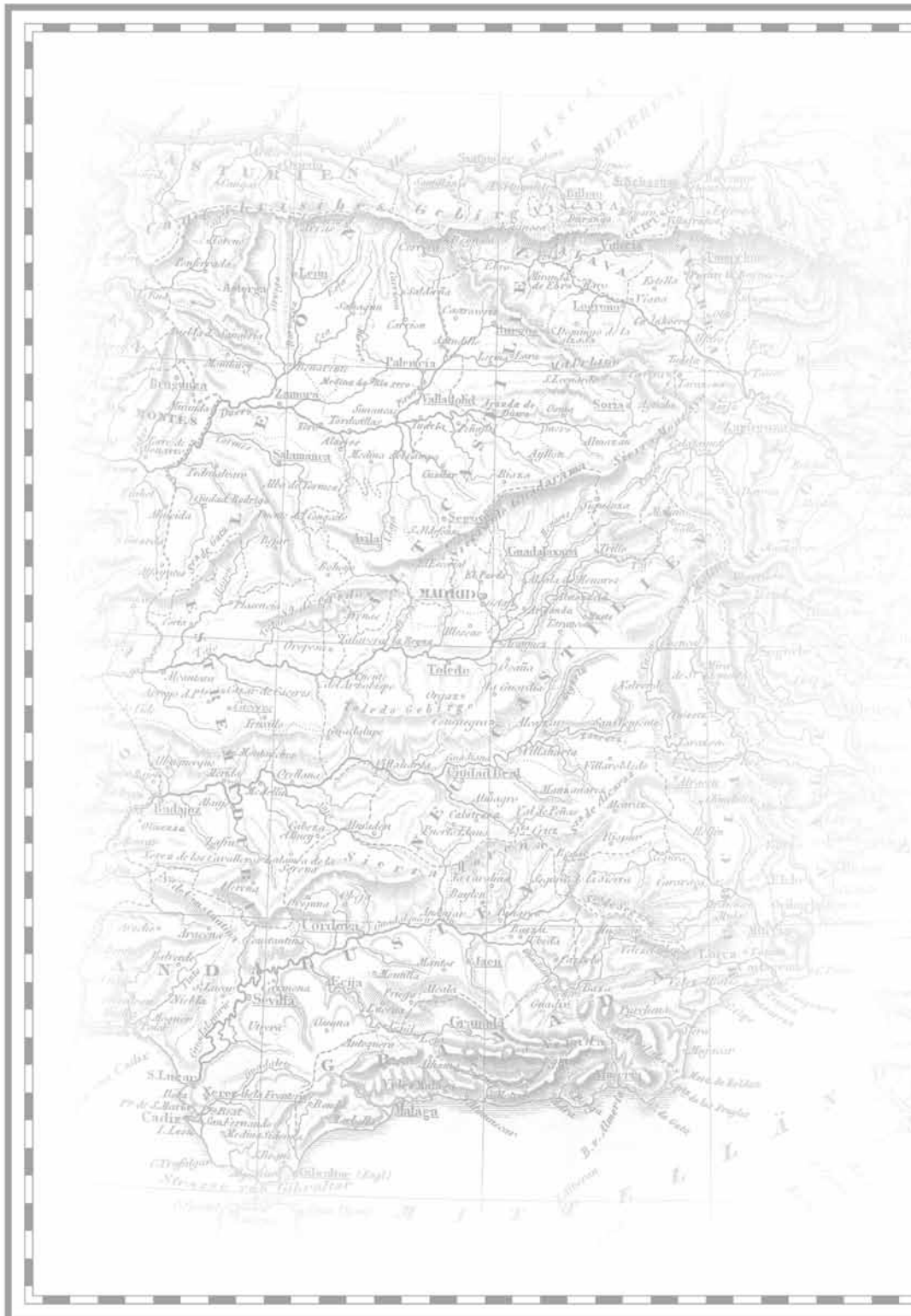
The scholarly interests of the book are inspired and informed by the work of numerous outstanding medievalists, many of whom are noted in the bibliography. For any one interested in acquiring a solid background on this material, we highly recommend the titles listed in the first three sections of the bibliography. For fine points of historical precision, we have relied upon the excellent *Gazetteer* by Paula Gerson and Annie Shaver-Crandell as our primary point of reference. We particularly thank Marilyn Stokstad, Paula Gerson, and Sarah Blick for reading and commenting upon the text. Their comments were extremely helpful in insuring greater historical accuracy. However, any lingering errors can only be ascribed to the authors. Toby Montgomery kindly read an early draft and offered helpful insight. Over the years, a number of colleagues have helped us gain an understanding of pilgrimage practices and culture. These most certainly include, but are not limited to, Elizabeth McLachlan, Jeremy Adams, Bonnie Wheeler, Conrad Rudolph, Paula Gerson, Sarah Blick, Rita Tekippe, Thomas Dale, Sally Cornelison, Tim Smith, Jacqueline Musacchio, Sally Metzlar, Laura Gelfand, Allison Palmer, Nancy Thompson, John Hanson, Nancy Siegel and Philip Earenfight.

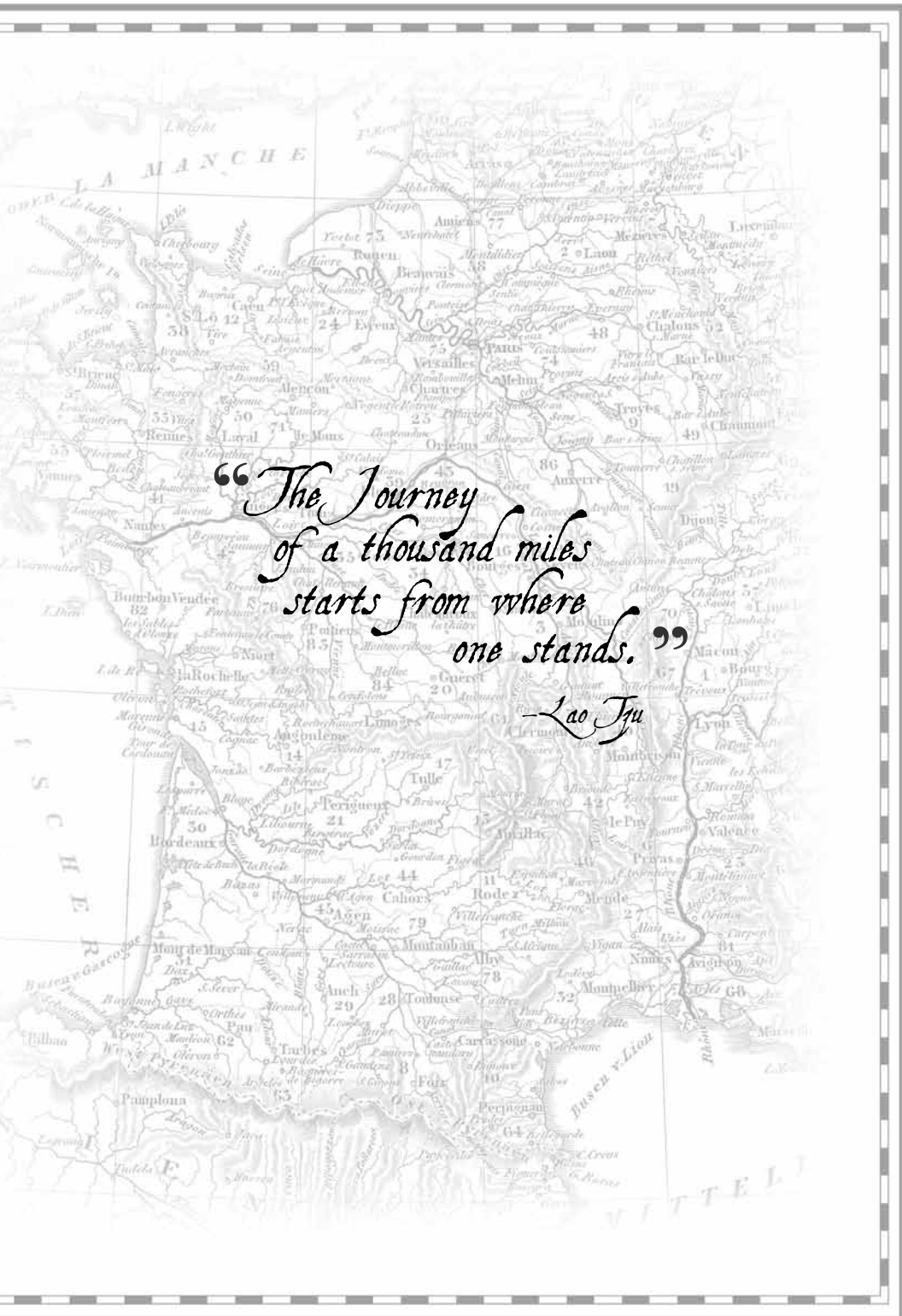
*W*e thank the University of Denver for generously helping to fund the publication of this volume and the University of North Texas for generously helping to fund our pilgrimage. This book grew out of a public lecture that we developed out of the experience. We thank those institutions that graciously invited (one or both of) us to present some form of this material in a formal context: The Martin d'Arcy Museum of Art, Loyola University, Chicago, IL; Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX; Denver Art Museum, Denver, CO; Meadows Museum of Art, Dallas, TX; The Medieval Congress in Kalamazoo, MI; University of North Texas, Denton, TX; University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK; Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX; St. Olaf College, Northfield, MN; University of Akron, Akron, OH; Holy Trinity Church, Dallas, TX; The Bede Society, Denver, CO.

*W*e thank Dr. Alain Saint-Saens of University Press of the South for believing in this book and for allowing us to publish it here in this codex. We greatly appreciate our friends, colleagues, and former students, Rebecca D. Kelly and Kevin Kelly who provided indispensable and expert work in designing the manuscript's final layout. For kind and wonderful help with image scanning, we thank Leslie Trumble, Erin Cassidy and Heather Seneff. All photos were taken by the authors.

*F*inally, to our three wonderful girls – Francesca Isabella Montgomery, Gabriella Sophia Montgomery, and Serafina Mirabella Montgomery – this book is dedicated to you, lights of our lives – our own field of stars.



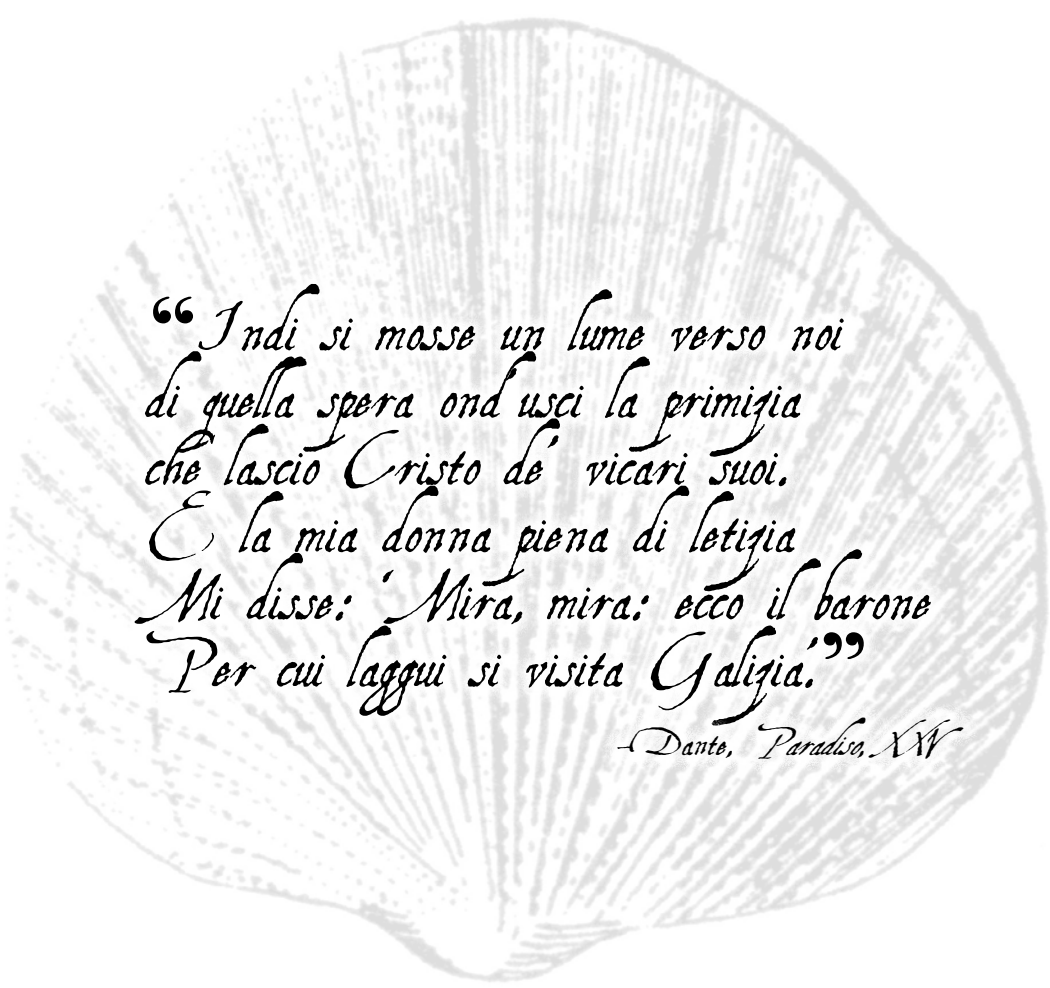




*"The Journey
of a thousand miles
starts from where
one stands."*

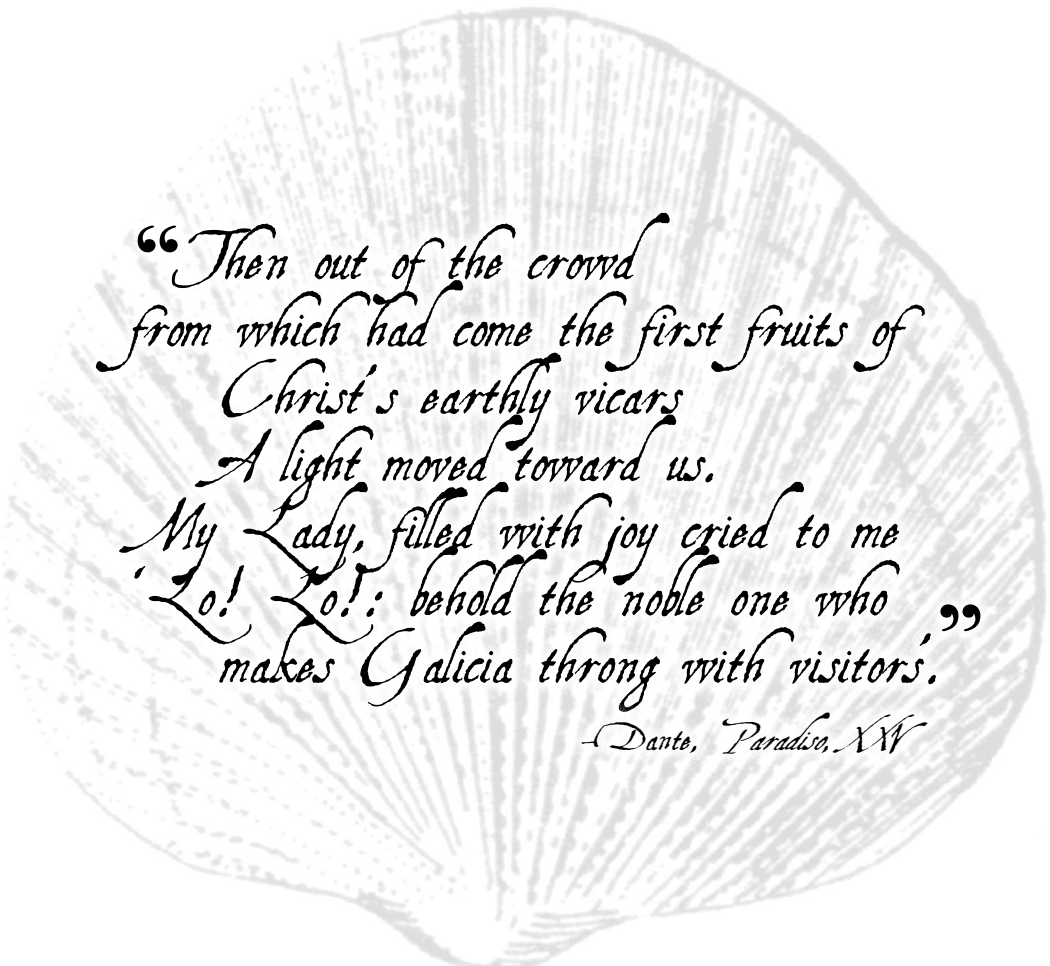
Lao Tzu





“Indi si mosse un lume verso noi
di quella spera ond'uscì la primizia
che lascio Cristo de' vicari suoi.
E la mia donna piena di letizia
Mi disse: 'Mira, mira: ecco il barone
Per cui laggiù si visita Galizia.'”

-Dante, *Paradiso*, XIV



“Then out of the crowd
from which had come the first fruits of
Christ's earthly vicars
A light moved toward us.
My Lady, filled with joy cried to me
'Lo! Lo!': behold the noble one who
makes Galicia throng with visitors.”

—Dante, *Paradiso*, XXV



Rays of light shine into the nave of the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela

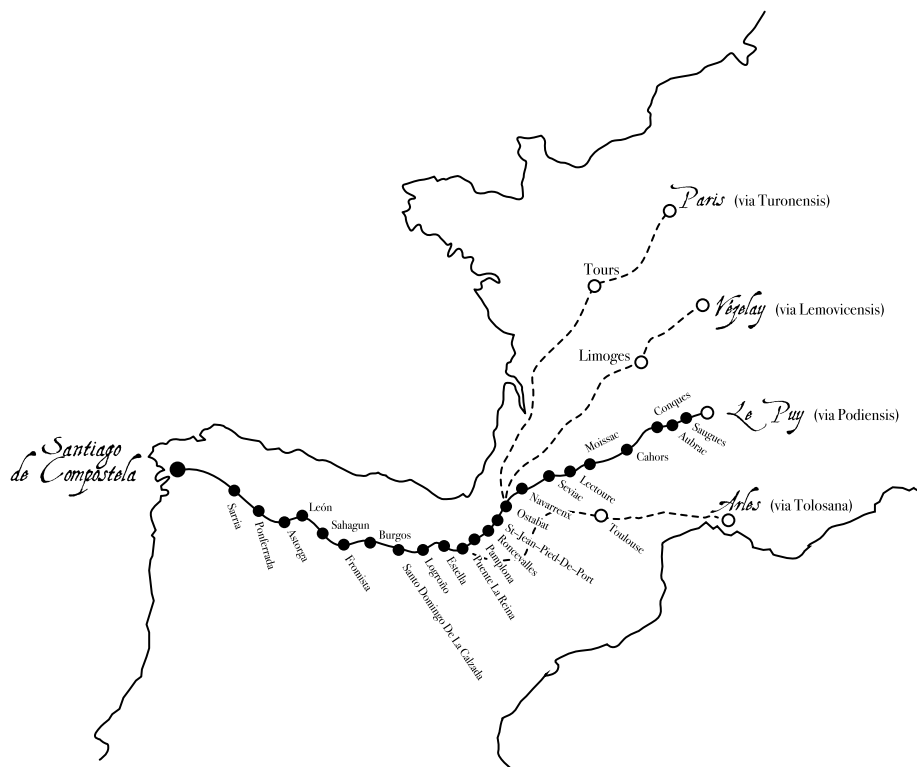


Incipit
A Venture

*U*pon reaching Heaven, the noted fourteenth-century pilgrim, Dante Alighieri marvels at the luminous figure of St. James, who draws pilgrims to him, as a light does moths. This exquisite passage encapsulates many important aspects of the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela: The stature of St. James as one of Christ's apostles, his role as a link between Heaven and earth, the crowds that flock to his tomb, and the joy that these pilgrims feel upon arriving in his presence. Dante's passage underscores the nature of this joy by the implicit connection made between the pilgrim's arrival in Santiago and the vision of St. James among the heavenly hosts. Pilgrimage therefore offers one a glimpse of Heaven. If the pilgrimage process can be understood metaphorically as the soul's journey toward Heaven, the road itself provides the bodily and mental purgation necessary to prepare one for this arrival. As in quotidian (daily) life, the pilgrim traverses a varied physical and emotional landscape – from mountains to desert-like flatlands, from torrential rain to scorching heat-waves, from hope and joy to exhaustion, pain, and occasionally despair. Though one may be experienced with all these states, the pilgrimage process exists within a unique admixture of the realms of normative, daily life and a rarified world of its own – it literally transcends normal time and space while also embracing and working within them. This fusion of known and new sensations allows the pilgrim to move through this distinct, varied, yet occasionally familiar geographical and temporal experience. However familiar this may be, some of the sensations are not pleasantly so. Fatigue, disappointment, fear, pain – especially pain – are reiterated with such ferocity that one could say that not a day passes on pilgrimage that isn't somehow colored by at least one of these. Yet equally, not a day passes that is not marked by some marvel – a sunrise of epiphanic beauty, a visit to a magnificent shrine, a heartily nourishing meal, much needed shelter. These “little miracles” offset the hardships and reinforce the overarching, meta-experience of the pilgrimage as something extraordinary in the very literal sense of the word. This pilgrimage world might thus be said to be predominantly characterized by two consistent,

overriding emotions – hope and joy. Hope drives one onward. Joy accompanies the gift, be it the sublime spectacle of sunset or the final arrival at the destination. Perhaps no other aspect of the medieval world encapsulates the vast, dynamic realm of emotions as does the phenomenon of pilgrimage. If emotions, however varied, are one way that we can seek to connect with the objects of our study (in this case medieval pilgrims), then why not attempt to at least experience as much as possible the emotional landscape, as well as the geographical, temporal, and cultic aspects? Not just an emotional journey, such an undertaking would be intellectual, social, spiritual, and adamantly physical.

Wishing to experience and understand this process with every muscle and bone, we walked the Pilgrimage Road to Santiago de Compostela during the summer of the year 2000. We departed from Le Puy en Velay in eastern France on May 18 and walked steadily toward the shrine of St. James in western Spain until our arrival on July 23. (This is approximately the distance from Denver to Chicago or Dallas to Madison). During our thousand mile, sixty-seven day odyssey, we lived inside the rich, varied, intense, yet strangely calming realm of the Pilgrimage Road. As such, we became part of a stream of pilgrims that dates back over a thousand years. In some aspects the world and the process have changed notably since the height of the pilgrimage in the Middle Ages. In other ways, we were privy to glimpses of an older world – literally walking through history, as



Map showing our route

participants, not spectators. Sweating, suffering, laughing, aching, eating, drinking, sleeping as thousands have before us, we learned through our bodies historical lessons that no book could teach us.

The shadows we cast were not metaphorical, but very much real in the multidimensional, corporeal, and temporal ways that come of solid bodies moving through space upon which light falls over time. The shadows we cast were like the shadows cast by those solidly sculptural figures frescoed in the Fifteenth Century by Masaccio on the walls of the Brancacci Chapel in the church of Santa Maria del Carmine in Florence. Light seems to beat harshly against the imposing mass of the bodies in the “Expulsion,” wringing crisp shadows from their bodily bulk. Masaccio’s figures convince us of their reality because they seem to stand in space – our space – and feel the same light that caresses our own faces and forms. These figures cast shadows, hence they are real, as we all cast shadows. In one of the frescoes, St. Peter walks down a street casting a shadow that falls upon the ill and maimed as an elixir, healing all with its petrine *potentia*. The miracle is made to appear all the more real as Peter’s figure casts a shadow that aligns with the actual streaming of afternoon light through the window on the altar wall of the Brancacci Chapel. If seeing is believing, how much more so is feeling? Such a question one might ask of the Apostle Thomas. We feel the light, or envision its feeling when looking at the fresco, and in doing so become more attached to the experience of the scene as real. In short, the shadow becomes a signifier for the sensory experience of four-dimensional reality. We cast our own shadows as we walked this pilgrimage trail in real time and space. We did this so as to understand on a very cellular level how the experience of walking such a pilgrimage feels. As our shadows cast upon a plethora of groundscapes in the strikingly bold silhouette of the early afternoon on the *meseta* or the warm orange penumbra of the late afternoon on the Grande Draille, they were always very much part of our physical and perceptual movement through time and space. As our endeavor was to comprehend the experience of others, the metaphor of the shadow also came into focus as being appropriately not about us but referring to something that we all cast on pilgrimage – something connected to yet also outside us. If nothing else is the same on pilgrimage, this much is certain – we all cast shadows, as we move our bodies across great distances (real or imaginative) over time.

Among other things, we longed to experience, glimpse, and hopefully grasp, the emotional, cognitive, and physical aspects of such an endeavor. Yes, this included pain. We expected pain. We thought that we could imagine the pain as it would appear, where it would appear, when it would appear. It does not take long before it becomes painfully apparant that one is mistaken in such an assessment. No matter how you cut it, how you plan it, how you do it, there WILL be pain – lots of it. But it will probably never be what or where you expect. The same is true with tears of joy. They will surely come. They will have unusual prompts – a wayside cross, a water fountain, a particularly lovely vista. This capacity to marvel, along with the casting of shadows, the breathing of fresh Aubrac air, the taste of cool Galician water, the rumblings of hunger, or the soporific qualities of an evening meal after a long walk, connect us across chronological and geographical parameters.

Rather than trying to document the historical experience of a twelfth or fourteenth-century pilgrim, we sought to force ourselves into a position where we might be able to feel something of what these peregrinatioous predecessors experienced. We can document from whence they came, which roads they trod, what churches and shrines they visited and in what numbers, what they

ate, and where they slept. This knowledge, the result of extraordinary research by many superb scholars, tells us a great deal about the shape of the pilgrimage experience. But, it cannot tell us much about the daily emotional sensations experienced by these same pilgrims. To be sure, some mention of the great joy of pilgrims and those miraculously healed is noted with rather trope-like regularity in many hagiographic texts. However, these accounts need to be understood as written to shape understanding as much as to reflect reality. As such, the emotions expressed, oftentimes by nameless throngs, seem to be like literary devices rather than journalistic narratives. So, how do we access the emotional database of the medieval pilgrim? Rather than throw up our arms in surrender because we cannot actually document the totality of the medieval pilgrimage experience, we felt it to be worthwhile to try a very old line of inquiry, one as old as the practice of pilgrimage itself: Walk the walk.



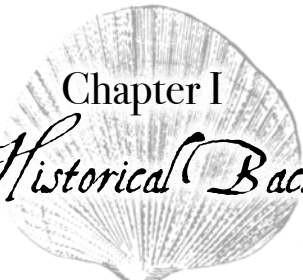
Alice on the road



The Way of St. James



Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela



Chapter I
The Historical Background

As noted in a colophon (addendum) at the end of an English manuscript of Felix Fabri's account of his pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, "the further ye go, the more ye shall see and know." Acknowledging the link between vision and gnosis, seeing and believing, as well as their augmentation through the pilgrimage process, Fabri's commentator posits a paradigm for viewing the pilgrimage process as a metaphor for life. Life is a pilgrimage, therefore pilgrimage is life. The road that we travel is the path to our ultimate goal – be it Stairway to Heaven or Highway to Hell. Pilgrimage offers a means of physical understanding, visual revelation, and spiritual illumination in regard to who we are and where we are going. Given its central role in medieval life, and indeed in the human experience in general, we strove to grasp this as fully as possible. We wanted to go further, to see more, and to know more. If, as Gregory the Great noted, "ipsa scientia potestas est" (knowledge alone is power), we tried to understand the power of pilgrimage in the medieval and modern experience.

Pilgrimage is connected in some way to virtually all aspects of life in the Middle Ages, not only for the countless thousands who undertook the pilgrimage, but also those along the routes, as well as those who remained home. Pilgrimage reflected, and was shaped by, religious concerns – in both its organized, institutional forms and its manifestations in individual, personal piety. Additionally, visual culture, political ideologies, economic realities and other factors conversed within the larger realm of faith and action. Pilgrimage itself might be seen as a mirror of medieval culture – encapsulating all facets of life. The metaphor of the pilgrimage of life, undertaken by all, was common, as evidenced by medieval plays such as *Everyman*, which dramatizes each person's terrestrial sojourn as a pilgrimage from vice to virtue, sin to salvation.

Details of the medieval Pilgrimage Road are enumerated in the so-called *Pilgrims' Guide to Santiago de Compostela* – the twelfth-century description of the pilgrimage route. This important document of medieval pilgrimage, written by a French monk, is included in the *Codex Calixtinus* or *Liber Sancti Jacobi* (Book of St. James). The author's identity is not known. While we do not know for sure who he was, we know that he was French, a cleric [as revealed by his learning and familiarity with many texts], and wealthy enough to be able to travel on horseback – which he did around 1135, following the Paris route. As presented in this text, the Pilgrimage Road is essentially a great string of shrines honoring and containing the living presence of the saints who effect a plethora of miraculous thaumaturgies (cures) and blessings along the way to St. James: The Virgin at Le Puy, St. Foy at Conques, St. Peter at Moissac, Santo Domingo de le Calzada, St. Isidore at León, the Virgin at O Cebreiro, to name but a few. (Chapter 8 of the *Pilgrims' Guide* lists and describes “the Saintly Remains on this Road.”) Finally, at the end of this long string of pearls, St. James awaits the stalwart pilgrim. As Chapter 9 of the *Pilgrims' Guide* describes:

“in the basilica lies...the revered body of the blessed James beneath the high altar which was magnificently made in his honour...Furthermore, that the body is said to be immovable, is attested by Saint Theodimir, bishop of this city, who discovered it and could not move it from this place. May transmontaine rivals blush, therefore, who claim to have any part of him or his relics. The whole body of the Apostle is there, the body divinely illuminated by heavenly carbuncles, endlessly honoured by divine fragrant odours, decorated with the brightness of celestial candles, and unceasingly honored by angelic adoration.”



Reliquary bust of St. James - Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela (1332)

Like Dante's vision of St. James in Heaven, the pilgrim to Santiago de Compostela is able to come face to face with St. James precisely because the saint is held to be present in his relics. Saints' relics – their bodily remains – are at the core of the cult of the saints and thus the pilgrimage to be in their living presence. The triumph over exhaustion and pain that our bodies experienced on a daily basis could be hyperbolically read as a shallow reflection of the martyr's triumph over death, as embodied in the belief in the living presence and miraculous efficacy of holy relics. Yet such a reading would maintain conceptual continuity with such long-established practices as *Imitatio Christi*, *Imitatio Sancti*, the Stations of the Cross, and the penitential hair shirt.

The *Liber Sancti Jacobi* was probably assembled between 1140-72. An introductory letter fraudulently ascribes it to Pope Calixtus II, hence the moniker Book of Calixtus (*Codex Calixtinus*). The authorship of the book is rather less interesting than the well-conceived intention of the volume. At first glance, the codex appears to be a somewhat haphazard collection of diverse texts related to St. James. Book 1 contains liturgical material and music related to the various feast days of St. James, including the liturgy for three major feasts of St. James, the sermon *Veneranda dies* (Book 1, chapter 17), and music to be performed as part of the liturgy. Book 2 lists twenty-two miracles of St. James (occurring from 1080-1135, therefore relatively recent miracles at the time of the volume's composition). Book 3 details the *translatio* (movement) of St. James' body – the miraculous boat trip from the Holy Land to Galicia. Book 4 offers the Pseudo-Turpin chronicle of Charlemagne's exploits in Spain. This includes the episode of Charlemagne's Dream in which St. James appears and promises emperor Charlemagne possession of Galicia. The Emperor sees a starry path in the sky and is told to follow it to the saint's tomb. This tale thus relates not only to the crusading spirit of the *Reconquista* of Spain, but also to both the discovery of the body (Book 3) and the pilgrim's path (Book 5). It therefore links the arrival of James' body with the arrival of the pilgrim to visit it. Book 5 contains the *Pilgrims' Guide* – eleven chapters providing details of the road, food, water, dangers, hospices, and shrines along the way. Addenda to the text contain polyphonic songs, accounts of additional miracles, and fragments of other writings related to the saint. Taken together, these seemingly disparate texts provide a complete dossier of St. James' cult. The history of the saint and how he got to the site are detailed in Book 3. This authenticates the presence of the relics. Miracles prove the saint's power and the efficacy of the relics, thus of the pilgrimage. These are enumerated in Book 2 in which miracles (and recent ones at that!) provide proof of the ongoing power of the saint. The offices, sermons and songs, contained in Book 1, provide the liturgical formulae for veneration of the saint. Charlemagne's Dream (Book 4) adds a historical dimension and provides a link to the Crusading element, the birth of the *Matamoros* aspect of St. James, and the *Reconquista* of Spain. The Moors invaded Spain in 711. The famous Battle of Clavijo purportedly occurred in 844, during which St. James appeared on a white charger to overcome the enemies of his faith. The Charlemagne account falls squarely between these dates, and precisely at the time in which the relics were discovered in Galicia. All this points to a conscious desire to link the arrival (and presence) of St. James' body in Galicia with the establishment of Spain as a new Holy Land. *The Pilgrims' Guide* (Book 5) tells one how to get there, and in doing so links the past to the present, and the individual pilgrim to the sacro-heroic history laid out in the rest of the codex.

As outlined in the *Pilgrims' Guide*, the Pilgrimage Road encapsulates the Medieval experience, as it reveals the variety of human behavior – from the philanthropy and piety of some to the avarice, viciousness and villainy of others, and perhaps even the potential for both extremes in most of us. It also encompasses pain and pleasure – from the physical and mental