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The Cult of Santiago: The Images and Legends of Saint James and Their Significance in Modern Spain

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The Cult of Santiago:
The Images and Legends of Saint James
and Their Significance in Modern Spain

An Honors Project by
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Along with the pilgrimages to Jerusalem and Rome, the Camino de Santiago or the Way of St. James was one of the three most heavily traveled pilgrim routes of the Middle ages. Yet, I, too am a pilgrim. I feel it. I go in search of answers for which I have only hazily formulated questions: I do not understand my attraction to Santiago, so often depicted as a strikingly masculine warrior figure, who lacks a historical validity and with whom I do not even share a personal history of religious faith. Perhaps by the end, I will understand the beginning.

-Joan Myers, "A Pilgrim to Santiago de Compostela"
I was fortunate to experience the subject of my thesis firsthand. In the fall of 1996, I spent a semester studying in Spain through Syracuse University. One of the classes I chose to take was entitled, "Medieval Spain: The Pilgrimage Road to Santiago de Compostela". I was intrigued initially because the class was listed as a traveling seminar, and I was anxious to see as much of Spain as I could. I had never heard of Santiago de Compostela and had no inkling of the profound significance the legends of Saint James still have today.

As a history major, my college career has centered on the understanding of past events and the influence those events may possibly have on the present or the future. Yet I saw this class on the Camino de Santiago as the study of a historical phenomenon, and never once considered that the cult of Saint James was alive and flourishing, not only in Spain, but elsewhere in the world. I was amazed at the fascination and attraction the Camino still maintains in present-day Spain. I met numerous people from all over the world making their pilgrimage to Compostela. The identities and motivations of the pilgrims have obviously changed since the Middle Ages, but the spirituality of the pilgrimage still thrives along the Road to Saint James.

The question I am attempting to answer in this essay is: How has it been possible for the cult of Saint James to develop and maintain its strength through
the centuries? The popularity of pilgrimage reached its peak during the Middle Ages, and during that period faith in Saint James was extremely resolute. While the popularity of the saint did wane some at different points in history, it has remained relatively strong overall. The faith in Saint James has weathered military defeats, centuries of warfare, the exploration and conquest of the New World, and even competition from other saints. In the end, the power of Santiago won out and he remains, to this day, the patron saint of Spain.

How is this possible? How can a series of myths, which is all that really exists of Saint James, continue to produce such strength of faith, even today? I will argue that it is the multi-faceted nature of the saint's identity and his role in Spanish myth and history that allow for his continued popularity, particularly his role as an inspirational force during the Reconquest. The expulsion of the Moors from Spain in 1492 was the ultimate show of Spanish military and political strength, and many argue that it would not have been possible without the intervention of Santiago, particularly in the form of the "Moorslayer". During this period, religious faith was intimately tied to national power. The discovery of the burial place of Saint James in Galicia in 813 A.D. decisively demonstrated to the Spanish the exalted position they held in the eyes of God. This belief in their blessed state of grace contributed greatly to the development of Spanish nationalism and inspired the Spanish conquistadors to spread the Word of the Christian God to the New World.

The topic of Santiago and his significance in Spain also allows me to integrate my study of art history into the paper. The art and images of Santiago has been important in perpetuating the legacy of the Cult of Saint James. The study of the iconography developed to portray the saint was, and still is, necessary to achieving a complete understanding of the significance of Saint James in Spain.
INTRODUCTION

And when wars had nigh wasted our force,
All bright 'midst the battle we saw thee horse,
Fierce scattering the hosts, whom fury proclaims
To be the warriors of Islam, victorious St. James.

-Verse from ancient paean

This verse describes the Battle of Clavijo, in which Saint James succeeded in rallying weak Spanish forces in a battle that signified the first real victory of the Reconquest. He did this eight centuries after his death.

According to legend, the Battle of Clavijo took place in the Ebro Valley in 844 A.D. The Moslem princes, from their capital in Cordoba, had been in the habit of collecting one hundred Spanish virgins as an annual tribute. Ramiro I, King of Galicia, refused to submit to this demand and assembled an army to defend his people. In the first battle the small Spanish band suffered severe losses and retreated for the night, wondering if they had any chance of surviving.

That night, the king had a dream in which Saint James (Santiago in Spanish) appeared and promised that the Spanish forces would be victorious the next day. He even promised to appear himself to help fight the Moors. With restored faith, the Spanish army went into battle. Saint James appeared from the clouds on a

*I say 'real' here is reference to the battle only as it exists in the legends of Spain, for there is some doubt that this particular battle ever took place.
white horse, swinging his huge sword over his head and decapitating thousands of infidels with each mighty stroke. With a call of "Santiago!", the Christian forces charged and were victorious. From then on, the name Santiago became the battle cry and was voiced in every engagement with the Moors.

The legend of Saint James in Spain is one of the most important cultural developments in the history of the nation. Not only was the saint allegedly buried in the northwestern region of Galicia, which inspired the rapid growth of a huge religious following and the development of a great road to his burial place, but he "appeared", years after his death, to lead the Christian Spanish in a victorious battle against the Islamic Moors.

Whether we see the stories of Santiago as myth or a matter of "real" history, the legends of the saint had, and still carry, great cultural, political, and religious significance. One focus of this essay is to identify ways in which myth makes cultural meaning. We cannot, therefore, define myth as "unreal and fantastic" while we define history as "real and valid". Not everything that happened in the past is historical fact. History, as with any form of narrative, is very much influenced by the teller and the medium through which it is told. The myths of Saint James very much effected the people of Spain and their beliefs, yet we can be fairly sure that most of them did not actually take place. It is important to mention here that whether we believe the legends of Saint James or not has no bearing on his story or the cultural importance of that story in Spain. The Spanish people needed to believe those myths, and that fact makes them significant. The phenomenon of the cult of Saint James provides a fascinating study of the role of mythology and its importance in the history of a nation.

One of the most distinctive and interesting aspects of the legend of Santiago is that he has three distinct identities in Spanish history and mythology: the Apostle, the pilgrim, and the warrior. It is through the imagery that is used to
portray the saint and the legends told of him that we can understand the profound importance of Santiago to the culture and his ability to fulfill several roles in Spanish historical and religious belief.

The history of the saint and his proselytizing in Spain is a work that evolved slowly over nine centuries. The legend was created through the telling, retelling, and embellishing of the few "facts" we know of the life of Saint James. Legends of Saint James the Greater and his proselytizing abound in all regions of Spain, and these stories provide a basis of faith for the Spanish people. Saint James was adopted as the Patron Saint of Spain at a time when an inspirational and driving force was a cultural necessity. Yet what is remarkable about the cult of Saint James is its durability and endurance throughout history. The cult of Saint James is still powerful in modern-day Spanish culture and religion, and it is this fact that makes Saint James an important and fascinating figure to study.

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2 Coffey, Davidson, and Dunn, *The Miracles of Saint James*, pg. XXII
PART I: The Histories of Saint James

Saint James as Apostle

The life of Saint James the Greater is chronicled in only a few places in the New Testament. He was the son of Zebedee, brother of John, and he was one of the first Apostles chosen by Christ. The brothers were referred to by Jesus by the surname Boanerges, meaning "Sons of Thunder", which supposedly reflected their passionate and sometimes hot-tempered natures. James, John, and Peter made up the inner circle of Apostles. They witnessed several of the miracles of Christ, as well as the Transfiguration upon Mount Tabor and the agony of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. The next we hear of the saint concerns his martyrdom; he was beheaded by King Herod Agrippa in 44 A.D. James was the first of the twelve Apostles to be martyred.

It is believed by Christians that, after the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ, the Apostles were sent out to spread the Word throughout the world. There is some question, however, of where the Apostles, particularly Saint James, were sent. The accounts of the evangelizing of Saint James are unclear and confusing at best. Arguments generally support the notion that James went to Spain, although it has also been suggested that Paul or Peter went to Spain.

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3 See Matthew 4:21, 17:1, Mark 1:19, 3:17, 5:37, 10:41, Acts 1:13, 12:2
4 Melzcer, The Pilgrim's Guide- pg. 9-10 (For example, Paul's Epistle to the Romans: chapter 15, verse 24, speaks of Peter seeing his brethren "on his way to Spain," and later Peter states even more explicitly that he "shall set out for Spain.")
There are various ecclesiastical documents that support James's evangelizing in Spain. A Latin text derived from a Greek original, the *Breviarium apostolorum*, refers to the evangelizing, martyrdom and burial of James. Translated, it reads, "James, whose name should be interpreted as the one who follows, the son of Zebedee, the brother of John, preached in Spain and in western regions; struck with a sword, he died under Herod, and was buried in Achaia Marmarica on July 25". Ignoring for a moment the place of burial, this source keeps intact the basic facts of the life of Saint James.

In any case, the specific evidence of the assignment of Saint James to Spain is not necessarily what is important to the Spanish people. The important ideas are his burial in the region of Galicia, as well as the miracles associated with Saint James that occurred in Spain, both before and after his death. It is the existence of the vast array of legends involving the saint that offer proof worthy of a nation's faith.

One of the first legends to be told of Saint James allegedly occurred while he was evangelizing in Spain. He was having very little success converting the Spanish masses. Discouraged, he walked along the banks of the Ebro River near Zaragoza, in Northeastern Spain, and the Virgin Mary appeared to him on a pillar of jasper surrounded by a choir of angels. She encouraged him to continue his efforts and requested that he begin construction of a church in her honor. The church became known as Our Lady of the Pillar, and her image is still revered today. Thereafter, his missionizing in Spain met with much success.

Upon the return of James to Jerusalem, King Herod ordered his beheading. On the way to the court, one of the Jews taking James was touched by his gentle demeanor, became converted, and asked to die with him. The apostle gave him

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5Melzcer, pg. 10.
the kiss of peace, saying, "Pax vobis" (Peace be with you).\(^6\) They were both beheaded, and the kiss of peace has remained a ritual benediction in the church to the present.

The story of James' life as an Apostle is interesting and important, but the truly fascinating portion of the saint's history begins after his beheading in 44 A.D.

**Saint James as Pilgrim:**

*The Legend of Discovery*

It was nearly eight centuries after his death and burial that the body of Saint James was said to have been discovered in Galicia, the Northwestern region of Spain, by a lowly hermit who was following a star. According to the much-told tale, a hermit lived in an isolated area of western Galicia, near the river Sar, about 813 A.D. His solitude was disturbed one night by a brilliant light that seemed to be radiating from a star (The fact that a "guiding star" is a common Biblical phenomenon lends validity to the legend). The hermit decided to notify the local Christian bishop. The bishop was astounded by the news and rushed to the site. He ordered his men to begin excavation of the area where the star shone. The earth yielded two graves, flanking a tiny chapel erected over a crypt. One version of the story says that an angel revealed to the hermit the identity of the body buried there, while another says that the excavators did not know until they read the name of Saint James scratched into the rough stone.\(^7\) Inside the tomb, clothed and uncorrupted by the passage of eight hundred years lay the body of Santiago.

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\(^6\) Pierce, "Santiago Through the Centuries in Art", *Santiago: Saint of Two Worlds*, pg. 36

\(^7\) Ibid.
Upon hearing of the discovery, King Alfonso II, the Chaste, rushed to Galicia. The king examined the graves, corroborated the miraculous discovery, and established a church on the spot. Pope Leo III was notified of the event, and in a letter publicized the news to the world. Pilgrims began to arrive to venerate the holy remains, and the town of Santiago de Compostela rose around the church. Santiago was to become one of the great pilgrimage sites, equated with Rome and Jerusalem.

To say merely that the discovery was a landmark in Spanish history would be to vastly understate the profound importance of the event. Most historians agree that the myth of discovery, even without the historical validity they so value, was an event that changed the course of Spain and greatly influenced the development of a national character. It clearly demonstrated to the Spanish population that they were favored in the eyes of God because he saw fit to bury a member of the "inner circle" of apostles in their great country. The discovery also allowed for the creation of "Saint James the Moorslayer" (which will be discussed later), around whom the Spanish could rally, and the burial in Santiago de Compostela led to development of an extensive network of roads and a remarkable and important pilgrimage culture in Spain.

The question then asked is "How did Saint James come to be buried in Galicia?". Some argue that the saint requested to be buried there, while others offer Galicia as a symbol of James' evangelizing, as it was the farthest region reached by the saint. According to the story, after his beheading, the remains of Saint James were thrown over the city walls to be devoured by dogs. A few loyal disciples of the saint recovered his remains and had them embalmed. Before

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8Crow, Spain: The Root and the Flower, pg. 83
setting forth for Spain, the disciples opened the tomb and found the body of Saint James with his head firmly reattached.

The two disciples set out on a boat that, according to legend, had no sails or oars. They disembarked, sailed across the Mediterranean Sea, through the Straits of Gilbatrar, and reached Finistierre, or Land's End (the most northwestern point in Spain), in seven days. Obviously no ship at that time could make the journey in such a short time, so it thereby amplifies the miraculous nature of the saint's burial in Galicia.

Upon arrival in Galicia, the disciples had to appeal to the local pagan queen, Lupa, for a piece of land in which to bury Saint James. Queen Lupa apparently referred them to a Roman official who put the two disciples in jail. An angel liberated them; several miracles followed, including the conversion of Queen Lupa; and finally a funeral party succeeded in transporting the body to a deserted cemetery where an abandoned crypt was employed as the final resting place of Saint James.9 The band erected a little chapel over the site, and, years later, when the two disciples died, their two graves were placed on either side of the saint.

In the period of confusion after the Moors invaded Spain in the early eighth century, the location of the burial place was forgotten until the miraculous occurrences of 813 A.D. After the rediscovery of Saint James, the aforementioned King Alfonso II of Asturias (792-842) built a church over the tomb, and it became a pilgrimage center. When Iria (in Galicia) was sacked by Norsemen (c. 850), the tomb was moved to nearby Compostela, and Alfonso III (866-911) built a larger church.10 Consecrated in 899, this later church, built of

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9 Simmons, "Santiago: Reality and Myth", Santiago: Saint of Two Worlds, pg. 6-7
10 Pierce, pg. 37-38
stone to replace the old wooden structure, became a national shrine for the new kingdom of Leon and kings were crowned there. In 997 the Moorish caliphate Al-Mansur of Cordoba destroyed Compostela, but did not damage the tomb. A new church was consecrated in 1003. The existing church was begun in 1075.

The development of the pilgrimage route to the burial place of Saint James began almost immediately after the news of the discovery became known. Saint James eventually became known as a pilgrim himself. Throughout the Middle Ages, various miracles were reported as occurring in different locations along the Camino de Santiago. James continued to appear throughout history to aid pilgrims who were on their way to pay homage to him in Santiago de Compostela.

One such legend involves a German family traveling along the Road. A man, his wife, and teenage son stopped for a night in Santo Domingo de la Calzada. According to the tale, the young daughter of the innkeeper there developed a crush on the son of the German couple. When the boy spurned her advances, the daughter concealed her father's silver cup in the knapsack of the young boy. The next morning, the innkeeper discovered the cup missing and the boy's knapsack was searched. Upon finding the cup, the innkeeper appealed to the local judge and the boy was sentenced to be hung. The German couple was devastated and prayed to Saint James that he might help them. Their son was hung, and the broken hearted couple continued their journey to Santiago de Compostela.

On their journey home thirty-six days later, the couple passed the gallows where the son was hung and found him still there. As they stood weeping before him, the boy opened his eyes and spoke. He explained to his parents that Saint James had appeared to him and had been supporting the boy on his shoulders for thirty-six days. The couple ran to the judge and described the miracle to him. The judge, who was in the process of eating lunch, rejected the idea, stating "If
that boy is still alive, then this chicken I am eating is alive as well." Immediately, the chicken stood up on the judge’s plate and crowed.

The boy was cut down, and the miracle was documented and is now widely told. Today, if you visit the cathedral at Santo Domingo de la Calzada, you can observe a chicken residing in a chicken coop above a small altar. The chicken is symbolic of the events that took place, which is now referred to as the Miracle of the Fowls.

While several of the miracles of Saint James occurred along the Camino de Santiago, the miracle with the most resounding cultural and political significance is that of the Battle of Clavijo and the creation of Santiago Matamoros.

Saint James as Matamoros

...Don Quixote smiled, and desired the men to show him the next image which appeared to be that of the Patron of Spain on horseback, with his sword bloody, trampling down Moors, and treading over heads.

“Ay, this is a knight indeed,” cried Don Quixote when he saw it, “one of those that fought in the squadrons of the Savior of the World. He is called Don Sant Iago Matamoros, or Don St. James the Moor-killer, and may be reckoned one of the most valorous saints and professors of chivalry that the earth then enjoyed, and Heaven now possesses.”

The importance of the legend of St. James in Spain centers on a very real historical event: the invasion and conquest of Spain by the Islamic Moors, who first surged north in 711 A.D. The Spanish population was very disorganized and quite unprepared to put up any sort of military resistance. Within a year, the Moorish forces had subdued most of the peninsula, leaving only small Spanish Christian forces in the Cantabrian Mountains of the far north. It was out of this situation that great events would come.

11Cervantes, Don Quixote, pg. 829
At the start, Christian resistance was feeble at best. Very few Christian victories can be found, and those that can are generally insignificant. The astounding news of the discovery of Saint James allowed for renewed faith and restored hope in the intensification of the war against the infidels. The saint provided a rallying point for the Spaniards hiding in the mountains of Northern Spain, and the faith in his power is what they argue enabled them to defeat the Moors and ultimately expel them from Spain. Santiago became the battle cry and the patron of the Reconquest.

The interconnectedness of myth and history can be most clearly observed here. The creation of Santiago Matamoros comes from a legend, a fantastic story with no historical validity. Yet it is Santiago Matamoros that is considered the inspiration for the Reconquest and the driving force behind the Spanish military. The people of Spain had, and still possess, a resolute faith in Saint James the Moorslayer, and his role in the defeat of the Moors. The image inspired Spanish nationalism and religious pride. The rediscovery of the long-forgotten tomb towards the end of the eighth century, as well as the creation of Saint James the Warrior, occurred, tellingly enough, at a time when the Christian political fortunes in the land were at their lowest ebb. I believe the myth of Santiago Matamoros was created in a time when a driving force was a political and cultural necessity. It seems fairly convenient that, just as the Spanish Christian forces had been pushed by the Moors into the far north of Spain, a member of the inner circle of Apostles was discovered to be buried in the one region not controlled by infidels.

The legend of the battle of Clavijo decisively changed the image of Saint James into a militant and invincible saint. It was from this battle that the apostle became "Santiago Matamoros" or "Saint James the Moorslayer". His "appearance" at this battle also signified an important contribution to the changing
of the course of Spanish history because the Battle of Clavijo is always labeled as the turning point in the struggle against the Moors.

The struggle against the Moors was not easy, and Santiago Matamoros was not always successful. As previously mentioned, the Moorish caliphate, Al-Mansur, sacked Compostela in 997. While he did not disturb the tomb of Saint James, he did destroy the cathedral. These events caused a break in the once unconditional confidence the people placed in Santiago Matamoros. "Many of those who returned to their ruined city must have doubted the warlike prowess of their patron Saint."12 Saint James regained his strength and popularity, though, and mainly due to a story told in the Chronicle of the Cid concerning the deliverance of Coimbra from the Moors in 1064.13

In short, the town of Coimbra had been conquered by Al-Mansur in 987. The inhabitants of Coimbra called upon Ferdinand I, King of Leon and Castile, to come to their assistance. The envoys came to the king, and it was the famous warrior, Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar (later called El Cid), who convinced the king to send an army to liberate the city. The Cid was eager to fight, and hoped to be knighted in the field of battle by the king. He was to become the mightiest hero of Spain.14

According to legend, El Cid, with the help of the apostle, gathered a great army and marched over the mountains and laid siege to Coimbra. Month after month he fought in vain, and all appeared lost. But, according to the chronicle,

12 Starkie, The Road to Santiago, pg. 28-29
13 Ibid.
14 However, in the case of El Cid as with the stories of Saint James, we see the connection between myth and history. The Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar most likely did not live up to the legendary status of El Cid. The legendary status of El Cid was allegedly a creation of his biographer, Ramon Menendez Pidal. He was apparently a mercenary soldier. He does retain status as the national hero of Spain. - Fletcher, The Quest for El Cid, pg. 4-5
Santiago came to the rescue, reviving the spirits of the army to the point that, within a week, the Moors surrendered the city to El Cid, and Santiago. The king not only knighted the Cid, but he journeyed to Compostela to thank the apostle. Already, Saint James had recaptured the prestige which he had lost as a result of the devastation by Al-Mansur.

The last Moorish caliph was expelled from Granada in 1492 by Ferdinand and Isabella. The discovery of America in the same year created a feeling of religious destiny and prowess for the Spanish that carried over to the colonization of the Americas during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The popularity of Santiago Matamoros carried over as well. Saint James helped the Spanish defeat indigenous populations from Acoma, New Mexico to Cuzco, Peru. The cry of "Santiago!" could be heard as it once was in battles versus the Moors when the Spanish conquistadors went to battle with the Indians of the New World.

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15 Ibid., pg. 31  
16 Coffey, Davidson, and Dunn, pg. XXII
PART II: The Development of the Road

A History of the Camino de Santiago

With the discovery of the remains of Saint James in Galicia and the spread of the legends of his miracles through the nation and the rest of Europe, there arose a great rush to travel to the apostle's burial site and witness the miracle firsthand. The development of the Camino de Santiago, or "Road to Saint James", was a process that spanned several centuries and that, in some respects, is still ongoing. The evolution of the Camino created an inlet for international trade and the transmission of prevailing stylistic trends in art and architecture, particularly from France.

The French had a pronounced influence on the cultivation and development of the Camino de Santiago. To begin, the great French emperor, Charlemagne, was allegedly the first pilgrim on the Road to Saint James. The legend begins with a dream in which Saint James appears to Charlemagne, just as he appeared to King Ramiro I before the Battle of Clavijo. The emperor dreamt for a week that Saint James came to him, promising him possession of Galicia. In the dream, Charlemagne sees a starry way on the sky (the Milky Way) and is told to follow it in order to get to the saint's tomb. The message of the dream is apparently unclear to the emperor at first, which is why the dream recurs each night for a week. At this time the Road to Saint James was controlled by infidels and Charlemagne realized that Santiago was calling on him to open the way. So he
gathered his forces, including his son Roland, and made his way to Compostela.17

Charlemagne became a legend in Spanish history, remembered for opening the Camino de Santiago and becoming the first pilgrim of Saint James. The stories of his journey and the battles fought by his forces are documented in the Codex Calixtinus, which will be discussed in detail shortly. In brief, it is the primary guide to the Camino de Santiago. The story of Charlemagne reads that, on the journey home from Compostela, after fighting several battles against massive Moorish forces, Charlemagne and his armies were ambushed in the Pyrenees mountains. The emperor's rearguard fought valiantly, but all were slain. However, their resistance enabled the bulk of the army to make it back down the mountains into France. This importance of this famous battle has been magnified by the magnificent epic-poetic masterpiece, the Chanson de Roland, or "Song of Roland". The Chanson de Roland took a relatively small skirmish and made it the representative battle between the Spanish and the Moors, or good versus evil.

Charlemagne has since held an exalted position in Spanish history and legend. He is remembered as the safeguard of Christianity. Numerous sites along the Camino display sculpted images of Roland battling the infidels. Charlemagne's double-link to Saint James- his place in the struggle against the Moors and the miraculous dream- went a long way to providing a convenient historical and mythical connection for later French interests in Saint James and in the pilgrimage road to his burial place.

17The information regarding the dream of Charlemagne is taken from notes on lectures by Flint Smith during the traveling seminar entitled "Medieval Spain: The Pilgrimage Road to Santiago de Compostela". (October 2, 1996)
The French had long been providing support for the Christian Spanish administration, both through monetary and military means. During the period of Islamic rule in Spain, the country became the focus of pro-Christian, anti-Islamic energy. The cult of Saint James came to represent the Christian battle against the infidel and drew support from outside sources, particularly France. The French abbey of Cluny was the driving force behind French involvement in Spain. As most of the pilgrims passed through southern France on their way to Santiago, the Order of Cluny took over the management and protection of the pilgrimages.

Not only did the Cluniac monks have a religious desire to support the cult of Santiago, but they also recognized the opportunity for financial gain from the Spanish along the Camino and the pilgrims making the journey. The monks of Cluny set up monasteries and shelters all along the route. The French settled in certain quarters of several towns along the Camino. They enjoyed several economic advantages granted them by the Hispanic administration. In return, the French helped maintain the Camino de Santiago and supported the cult of Saint James.

The support of the French, in combination with the military action of the Knights of Santiago, who were created to protect pilgrims along the Road, enabled the Camino de Santiago to become a traversible route to Santiago de Compostela. For the first pilgrims, the four-hundred-mile route from Roncesvalles in the Pyrenees to Compostela was treacherous and often deadly. Those traveling had to worry not only about the Moors, but also wild animals, hazardous

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18 These privileges consisted of the granting of land, exemption from taxes, exception from the requirement of giving tithes to the church, and, in some cases, promotion to the title of hidalgo, which was the lowest level of nobility.-Melzcer, pg. 17-18 and notes from lecture by Flint Smith (October 10, 1996)
route conditions, hunger, and the elements. As the numbers of pilgrims grew, the Road to Saint James became more developed and easier to travel.

The way also became more accessible after the publication of the previously mentioned Codex Calixtinus, sometimes referred to as the Liber Sancti Jacobi, in 1172. The manuscript provides a detailed history of the Cult of Saint James and the development of the Camino de Santiago, as well as practical advice for pilgrims making the journey. It is made up of five books. Books I, II, and III contain information on the Cult, forms for Masses, the miracle texts, and the legend of the translation of the body of Saint James. Book IV contains the early version of the legends of Charlemagne and Roland. Book V is the Pilgrim's Guide, which provides the practical information of the Camino. The exact authorship of the codex is obscure; part of it was falsely attributed to Pope Calixtus II and another part to "Turpin" a legendary knight under Charlemagne. Modern research has shown that the codex was written by the powerful French abbey of Cluny to promote pilgrimage to Compostela. The codex played an important role in the enormous popularity enjoyed by the Camino de Santiago during the Middle Ages.

In the beginning, during the ninth and tenth centuries, the pilgrims to Santiago de Compostela were members of the clergy or nobility. The elite members of society were the only ones at first who had the ability to leave their land and responsibilities at home. They also were the only ones who had the financial means to make such a journey. The numbers of pilgrims increased during the ninth and tenth centuries as the middle echelon of the clergy began to make the journey, as well as growing numbers of the general populous.

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19Coffey, Davidson, and Dunn, pg. XXXIV
Eventually, people from all places and socio-economic positions began to make the pilgrimage, and for all kinds of reasons. Soldiers, who had promised Saint James that if they survived the battle they would come to Compostela to thank him, made the journey. There were also those looking for salvation, particularly in the form of indulgences. There were criminals on the Road who had been sentenced to either serve time or make a pilgrimage. There were also merchants, musicians, and vagrants along the Camino, adding to the cultural mix along the route.

The peak of the pilgrimage culture in Spain occurred during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. During this period, the religious nature of the pilgrimage and the need for penance was emphasized. The road was full of pilgrims making the journey to Compostela and special laws were passed to ensure the protection of those traveling. The eleventh and twelfth centuries also marked the peak of the Romanesque era and its influence in Spain. The importance of this period, the art and architecture it produced, and the resounding effects of period through history are an integral part of the Camino de Santiago and its significance in Spanish history.

**The Images of Santiago**

With the development of the Camino de Santiago, or Road of Saint James, came the growth of a pilgrimage culture in Spain. Santiago de Compostela became a religious center equivalent to Rome and Jerusalem. Churches sprang up all along the road to provide guidance and shelter, as well as to educate pilgrims about the stories and legends of Saint James. A unique iconography of the saint was created. It was important, in Spanish culture, for those traveling to
Compostela to understand the depth and multi-faceted nature of the saint's cultural significance and influence. Because many of those who were making the pilgrimage were not educated in religious matters, or even literate, painted and sculpted images were employed to portray life, legends, and miracles of Saint James. In fact, it is through many of those images that we learn about Santiago today.

The iconography of Saint James in Spain is unique because the saint takes on three different personas. Not only is he portrayed in the usual manner as an Apostle of Christ, but he also appears as the warrior saint, Santiago Matamoros, and as a pilgrim on the Camino.

There exist two different typologies of iconography portraying Saint James as an Apostle. One figures James the Greater as a member of the college of the Apostles. He appears in the context of the other eleven. The Apostles appear as a group either in the usual flanking of the glorified Christ, or in reference to specific scenes like the Last Supper, in which all twelve are necessarily present. Rarely is Saint James the Greater distinguishable from the other saints, except when he appears with his pilgrim's staff. While Saint James cannot be readily distinguished, we infer his presence as one of the twelve. Most often, each of the saints are portrayed with a scroll, and on each is written the separate parts of the Apostles creed. The scroll of James the Greater reads, "Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary."20 (Fig. 1)

The second typology depicts the individual image of Saint James, particularly in portrayals of the Transfiguration on Mount Tabor or Christ's agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. The Bible describes James the Greater as being

20De Bles, Saints in Art, pg. 58
present at each of these occurrences, and, therefore, he is necessarily required to be depicted in visual portrayals of the events.

The individual portrayal of saints did not become prominent until after the sixth century, when the apostles were assigned specific symbols and acquired distinct attributes. The symbols were representative of some abstract quality of the saint or were emblematic of their martyrdom. The attributes were designated as a reference to the historical or legendary positions or careers of the saint. Saint James was assigned the pilgrim's staff because he was the first to go forth and preach the gospel. He was also sometimes depicted with the sword, which was symbolic of his martyrdom. Both of these symbols gained various other meanings after the discovery of James' body in Galicia in 813.

It was the Romanesque centuries that lent the powerful and decisive turn to the iconography of Saint James. The eleventh and twelfth century Romanesque culture was responsible for the revival of the cult of Saint James and for the development of the pilgrimage road to his tomb in Galicia. The symbol of the staff was originally assigned to James well before the discovery of his body in Spain. As the pilgrimage culture grew, especially in Spain, the staff came to represent not only the symbol of James' proselytizing there, but also became an attribute of his legendary position along the Camino de Santiago and the universal symbol of the pilgrim. The sword was to become an attribute of Santiago Matamoros, and his legendary position as a warrior saint.

The iconography of Saint James as Santiago Matamoros is generally believed to be the first to develop from the initial depiction of James as an Apostle of Christ. The earliest examples date back to the first half of the twelfth century. Santiago Matamoros was a distinctly Spanish creation, and, while the image does

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21 Melczer, pg. 65
appear in the Americas after 1492, the iconography appears nowhere outside of Spain until then.

Saint James, as the Moorslayer, is very important to the development and endurance of Spanish nationalism and military pride for all the reasons stated earlier. The image became symbolic of the Spanish victory over the Moors, the success of the Reconquest, and the triumph of Spanish Christianity. It was later employed in the New World as a symbol of the conquistadors and their dominance of the indigenous populations in South and Central America.

Santiago Matamoros appears as an invincible and militant saint. He appears with a sword and often a banner which is snow white and displays a red cross. Saint James the Moorslayer is always shown mounted on a white charger. He sometimes appears in armor, and is generally depicted with sword overhead and trampling the headless bodies of the infidels. The images of Santiago Matamoros can be considered the integration of Saint James as an Apostle and as a great warrior, representing the interconnectedness of Spanish government and nationalism with its religious faith. The image of Santiago Matamoros either appears alone or in the context of a depiction of the Battle of Clavijo. (Fig. 2, 3)

The iconography of Saint James as a pilgrim developed as the pilgrimage culture grew in Spain. James is depicted in pilgrim attire on his way either to or from Santiago de Compostela. The image began with the pilgrim's staff as the symbol of Saint James. During the Romanesque period, the apostle was portrayed in full pilgrim dress, complete with cloak, broad-rimmed hat, and gourd, as well as a scallop shell. (Fig. 4)

The scallop shell became the universal symbol of pilgrimage, and there are various legends concerning the background of this tradition. Some say it is related to the legend of a young bridegroom whose runaway horse took him into the sea. Sure that death was imminent, the young man cried out for Saint James
and was raised up by scallop shells and deposited safely on land. Others argue that the scallop shell was chosen because pilgrims ate shellfish when visiting Compostela and used the shells as eating and drinking utensils.22 Regardless of the exact connection, pilgrims to Santiago de Compostela wore cockleshells on their hats and cloaks as a badge of their journey, and the imagery of Saint James from this period often presents him so dressed.

The most significant fact of the iconography of James as a pilgrim is that no other saint appears with the specific iconography of his/her devotees. Saint James is the only Apostle to be depicted in the same dress and in the same style as the images of those who worship him by traveling to his burial place. The image is unprecedented, a theological anomaly, unlike those of James as the apostle of Christ or as the Moorslayer. It remains unclear as to why Saint James began to be portrayed in the same manner as his followers, but the iconography was possibly inspired by James' "unusual and essentially altruistic and self-effacing identification with his devotees..."23 It can also be ascribed to the mass devotion that has followed Saint James throughout Spanish history. I believe that it was this form of iconography that allowed for the accessibility of Saint James. He was able to be seen not only as a great Apostle and a military hero, but also as a beneficent protector of his followers. James appearing as a pilgrim erases the hierarchy of Spanish Christian ideology, putting the saint on the same level as his devotees.

A few variations and combinations did develop from the three initial iconographical groups. One example of this is a sixteenth-century stone sculpture from the Museo del Camino at Astorga. (Fig. 5) This image shows

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22 Pierce, pg. 39
23 Melzcer, pg. 67
Santiago in pilgrim clothes, riding on horseback and carrying a banner (and also probably carrying a sword at one time. The sculpture is under life-sized, and meant to be approached from a side viewpoint, therefore allowing the viewer to see in figure of Saint James and the horse facing left. The image combines the iconographical characteristics of both Saint James as the pilgrim and Santiago Matamoros. This combining of images is very significant, and only appears in two or three places.

This particular example was sculpted in the sixteenth century, during the time of the Reformation. The image was sculpted in reaction to the questioning of the Catholic faith and its institutions. The firm believers in the power of Saint James wanted to emphasize the significance of Santiago and his role in the success of the Spanish over the Moors, as well as his personal tie to the people of Spain. The combination of the images of Saint James as the pilgrim and as Matamoros represents the artist's desire, which most likely reflected the opinion of the people, to empower Santiago once again, in the face of criticism. The image is uniquely Spanish, making the Warrior-Saint a hero of the Spanish people. This idea is carried over in a slightly different style in the images of Santiago produced in South and Central America. (As seen in Fig. 9) The Spanish conquistadors there incorporated the dress of the colonial farmer into the combined image, again emphasizing the connection of Saint James to the common man.

As a pilgrim or as Santiago Matamoros, the image of Saint James appeared either alone or in the context of one of his miracles, such as the previously mentioned Battle of Clavijo. There are several visual depictions of the miracles of Saint James, particularly the Miracle of the Fowls and the miracle of Our Lady of the Pillar. (Fig. 6)

The various forms of Saint James appear all along the Camino de Santiago, particularly in the sculpture. The image of Santiago as a pilgrim is by far the most
popular, however. The churches along the way place an emphasis on the pilgrim image of Saint James, because, as mentioned earlier, that is the identity of the saint with whom the common people are most able to identify. Saint James is known as the patron saint of pilgrims, and, again, the people making the journey on the Camino de Santiago like seeing him as a beneficent protector of his followers.

The popularity of these images of Santiago peaked during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, which saw the introduction and spread of Romanesque art and architecture along the Camino de Santiago.

The Romanesque Era:

*Art and Architecture on the Camino de Santiago*

The Romanesque era of the eleventh and twelfth centuries marked the peak of the pilgrimage culture in Spain. The Camino de Santiago was packed with travelers from all over the world, making the journey to Compostela. Along with the movement of people from all over Europe came the movement of ideas and trends, particularly in the area of art and architecture along the Camino de Santiago. There was a desire for styles of art and architecture that was specifically anti-Islamic. The influence of Medieval French art, particularly the Romanesque style, spread along the pilgrimage route during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. This external influence can be seen in several cathedrals along the Camino, but the most obvious and relevant example is the Cathedral of Saint James in Santiago de Compostela.
The huge influx of pilgrims created a need for a larger and more elaborate cathedral in the city of Compostela. Saint James had become an international phenomenon, and he required a shrine worthy of his legend. The construction of the Cathedral of Saint James in Santiago de Compostela was an event that was very much influenced by the French and its Romanesque pilgrimage churches. Construction of the present cathedral was begun in 1075. It was meant to be an impressive and awesome culmination to the long and dangerous journey made by the early pilgrims, but even to the unknowing tourist the cathedral is an inspiring sight.

The cathedral is shaped in the form of a cross. The four entrances to the cathedral are each set off by its own plaza. The interior of the cathedral of Santiago is as decorative and complex as the exterior is immense and majestic. While additions have been made since the twelfth century, the cathedral is pure and stately Romanesque. The Romanesque entrances are relatively unadorned, and the building exudes density and heaviness. The cathedral is "the successful culmination of a series of attempts to design a church which would accommodate vast crowds of pilgrims on high feast days, allowing them to move between the many sacred relics without hindrance."24 The church also provided the religious services required of a large cathedral. (Fig. 7)

The cathedral of Saint James was built very much in the style of such churches as the Abbey Church of Sainte-Foy at Conques in Rouergue, France.25 It has two stories, as is usual with pilgrimage churches. The upper level gallery was built to house the many pilgrims who came to Santiago with no place to stay. At times, the entire area would be crowded with pilgrims sleeping, eating,

24Kunstler, Romanesque Art in Europe: Architecture and Sculpture, pg. 104
25Stokstad, Art History, pg. 512
washing clothes, and basically going about their day-to-day activities while Masses were said below and people ambled through the many chapels.

The interior of the cathedral inspires awe and wonder. It is immense, and because of the separation of the entrances and the difficulty in fully viewing the cathedral from the outside, the hugeness of the space seems all the more overwhelming. "At Compostela the interior is about what it should be, if one thinks of this building as the spiritual center of a religious nation." The cathedral was built to be the focus of the cult of Santiago.

Saint James is omni-present both inside and outside the cathedral. Inside, at the intersection of the nave and transept (the arms of the cross), is the sacred chapel of Saint James. Behind the chapel is the chancel, under which the remains of Saint James reside. The spot is marked by an over-life-sized seated figure of the saint, richly decorated with jewels and brightly colored. A small stairway leads to the figure, and allows those visiting the cathedral to pay homage to Saint James by touching or kissing the figure without disturbing Mass. It is interesting visiting the chancel now because the marble stairs leading up to the figure of Saint James are warped and sloping after being worn by the vast amounts of pilgrims wishing to praise the saint at the end of their journey.

Saint James also appears as the central figure in what is quite possibly one of the greatest sculptural displays ever created. I am speaking of the Portico de la Gloria, which is the work of genius by a sculptor known only as "Master Mateo". The Portico de la Gloria is located just inside of the western entrance. The massive stone wall is broken by three large arches which give entrance to the nave and aisles of the cathedral. The central and largest arch represents the Catholic church, displaying Christ and the apostles; the arch to the left symbolizes

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26Michener, Iberia, pg. 905
the Jewish church, depicting many of the prophets of the Old Testament; the arch to the right represents the church of "wrong believers", displaying various animals that symbolize Islam, Confucianism, etc. One of the most famous images of Santiago rests on the trumeau, or central column, and is one of the most visited sculptures in the cathedral. The image of Santiago is majestic, portraying him in pilgrim attire complete with staff, and placing a scallop-shaped halo behind his head. (Fig. 8)

The Cathedral of Saint James displays French Romanesque influence in both its architecture and its sculpture. The Portico de la Gloria exemplifies this, featuring elongated figures in relatively low relief. The figure of Saint James is more detailed and in bold relief, emphasizing his importance there. Master Mateo worked on the Portico for fifteen years (1168-1183). He placed a small figure of himself behind the pillar which rises up to the center of the main arch. This figure crouches on the floor, facing the inside of the church. The Portico was originally richly colored, as was nearly all Medieval Spanish sculpture, but now only traces of the coloring remains.

The legends of Santiago are very much alive in and around the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. The interplay of history and myth is tangible there. At Compostela, one can reacquaint herself with the past and become part of it. Santiago de Compostela is the one city where the faith of the people in the power of Saint James has remained constant.

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27Crow, pg. 87
While the popularity of the Cult of Saint James remained fairly constant throughout history, there have been times when the faith in the Apostle was challenged. The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries created a feeling of skepticism toward the Catholic faith and its institutions. It disrupted the unity of belief in Europe and resulted in an institutional decline in the church. There was also a negative effect on pilgrimage and a dampening of the previous religious enthusiasm. The Reformation challenged the authority of the Catholic clergy and, particularly, the system of Catholic penance. The ideas of Martin Luther questioned the ability of the Catholic clergy to bestow salvation on their followers based on good deeds such as donations or pilgrimages.

Despite this skepticism toward the Catholic faith that developed throughout Europe, the Cult of Saint James maintained its strength relatively well. This occurred for two reasons. The first was the colonization by Spain of the New World. The Spanish conquistadors were instrumental in the support of the Cult of Santiago and the promotion of Saint James and his legends. Throughout the process of colonization in the New World, the conquistadors invoked the strength and military leadership of Santiago Matamoros and named several cities in the conquered territory after the apostle. The colonization of the New World was also a reminder to the Spanish people of their national power, which was intimately connected to their faith in Catholicism.
The second event that strengthened the Cult of Santiago was, surprisingly enough, the movement during the seventeenth century to replace Saint James as the patron saint of Spain. Saint Teresa of Avila had become hugely popular and her advocates argued for her designation as the new patron saint. Letters, appeals, and sermons from both sides were produced. Concerned members of the clergy and of the political realm found it necessary to write long tomes about the life and miracles of Saint James. The people's faith and belief in Saint James won out, and he has remained the patron saint of Spain since. This conflict gradually reawakened strong interest in Saint James and allowed for a new growth of writing on the saint.

Even with these strong sources of support, the popularity of the Cult of Saint James and the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela did not reach the levels enjoyed during the Middle Ages. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries saw greatly reduced numbers of pilgrims along the Camino de Santiago.

The interest of the people in the Cult of Santiago received another boost, though, in the mid- to late nineteenth century. At this point in European history, there was a trend of Gothic revival and a Romantic renewal of interest in the Medieval Period among European intellectuals. Coinciding with this, late in 1878, a group of cathedral personnel in Santiago de Compostela decided to excavate under the altar of the cathedral, expressly to rediscover the tomb of the Apostle. After several false starts, the crew finally found what it was looking for on January 28, 1879: a sarcophagus filled with earth and what, after more examination, were determined to be the bones of three skeletons. One of the workers on the

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28Coffey, Davidson, and Dunn, pg. XXXI
project, Juan Nartallo, upon looking at the bones and smelling the sweet odor emanating from the tomb, was blinded for several days.29

The fortuitous finding of the saint's relics, along with those of his two disciples, led to further study by Vatican officials, and finally, in 1884, Pope Leo XIII issued to the world the Apostolic Letter, Deus Omnipotens, confirming the translatio of Saint James and the authenticity of the bones at Compostela.30 This declaration spearheaded the efforts to return the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela to its former merited fame and glory. Because of those endeavors and because of the burgeoning fascination in medieval art at the beginning of the twentieth century, scholars turned their investigations toward the Liber Sancti Jacobi, and the faithful began to return to the pilgrimage in greater numbers.

**The Pilgrimage Today**

"There is in the place, and in the road, a singular poetry. ...One is, as perhaps never before, emotionally stimulated. Chords of the memory, long unused, are set vibrating. The actuality of the pilgrimage, like a cosmic phenomenon, overwhelms with the sense of its force, its inevitability." 31

On July 25, 1993, Spain and the world celebrated the feast day of Saint James during the first Holy Year in eleven years.32 Reports of the event describe the huge Plaza de Espana crowded with people, including King Juan Carlos,

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29Ibid., pg. XXXIII
30Starkie, pg. 59
31Porter, Romanesque Sculpture of the Pilgrimage Roads, 171
32Holy years occur when July 25 falls on a Sunday. This follows a regular pattern of occurrence of 6, 5, 6, and 11 years. The next Holy Year is 1999.
Queen Sofia, and other important politicians. About a thousand cameras were there to record the event. Pilgrims from all over the globe wandered around the plaza, along with the townspeople of Compostela. The moment was important for several reasons. It was important for the Catholic Church as a celebration of an Apostle's special day; important for Spain, as it venerated its patron saint; important for Catholic believers; important to the pilgrims who actually walked the road sometime during 1993, because it signified the achievement of the official goal. Records indicate that more than 99,000 pilgrims from Spain, Europe, and the Americas made it to Compostela sometime during 1993.

The word "pilgrimage" generally calls to mind images of Medieval Europe. But the phenomenon of pilgrimage is not limited to the Middle Ages. Throughout the world and throughout history people have made pilgrimages to many places and for many reasons. Pilgrimage remains active today. "Pilgrimage is in vogue. New sites and new places where persons may receive some direction and blessing and sense of connectedness are emerging." "Old" sites as well are experiencing a resurgence of interest. Santiago de Compostela is no different.

The pilgrimage to Compostela is recovering importance. Some people walk for exercise, others for religious reasons, others for curiosity, others out of boredom, others to study Medieval art and architecture, others to fulfill a vow, and some walk just to be part of something so historically alive. The Camino de Santiago is alive with history. This is mostly due to the efforts of members of the Spanish community who have dedicated their lives to maintaining hostels and

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33Michener, pg. 915
34Records from studies by the Compostela University personnel and the number of Compostelas (which are the certificates signifying the completion of pilgrimage) awarded. Statistic found in Michener, pg. 916.
35Coffey, Davidson, and Dunn, pg. XI
churches along the Camino, as well as the perpetuation of the legends of Saint James. The mythology of Saint James creates a way of life for those living on the Camino de Santiago. For some, Saint James represents their life work, he is their provider and protector.

One of the most primitive stops along the Camino de Santiago is the small village atop Mount Cebrero in Galicia. From this point, Santiago de Compostela is still 140 kilometers away. The hostel there is built of stone, and it has not been altered since the Middle Ages. There is a small chapel adjacent to the main building. An older couple runs the hostel, making a dinner of Spanish tortillas, paella, and a special drink for pilgrims (much like moonshine) every night for the pilgrims staying there. Here the travelers gather and share stories of their journey, pass along advice to other pilgrims, and get a good night's sleep in a warm bed sheltered from the cold and snow. Mount Cebrero is covered in snow much of the year, and remains one of the more difficult portions of the journey to Compostela. Staying in the hostel at Cebrero and attending a Mass in the chapel there allows the pilgrim to forget for a moment the real time and place. He or she becomes a pilgrim of the Middle Ages, eating the same food and sleeping in the same bed as his or her predecessors.

The historical consciousness of Northern Spain is one of the region's most distinguishing features. The area is devoted to the maintenance of the Camino de Santiago and the preservation of the legacy of Saint James. For the people there, Saint James still travels as a pilgrim along the Road to Compostela. Mythology and history are one and the same.

The influence of Saint James is not limited to Northern Spain; the Apostle is also an important figure elsewhere in the world. Throughout Spain, the importance of Santiago to the military, particularly in the role of Matamoros, is recognized and remembered. The influence of Santiago can be seen in other
cultures, in the countries of Haiti, Peru, Chile, Guatemala, Ecuador, Mexico, as well as the state of New Mexico in the United States. The people of New Mexico venerate Saint James as Matamoros for he allegedly appeared over the Anasazi village of Acoma and helped defeat the indigenous population there during a battle in 1598. Saint James the Moorslayer appeared to the New Mexicans up until the 1850's. By the late nineteenth century, the dangers New Mexicans faced from hostile Indians, which had plagued the Hispanic people for three hundred years, disappeared, the enthusiastic devotion to Saint James declined as it had in Spain after the Reconquest.

July 25 used to be celebrated in New Mexico as a sort of Spanish national holiday. Elaborate ceremonies and non-religious activities, which were intended to emphasize the glory of Saint James as the warrior, were carried out. After the decline in faith, Santiago "remained in the New Mexican mind an emblem of persistent Hispanidad and a model of potent and knightly manhood." The image of Saint James continues as a popular subject of folk art and a scattering of public spectacles in his honor still occur. Santiago offers one of those visible links that still ties Spain to her "lost children" in the New World. (Fig. 9)

The Cult of Santiago is very much an international phenomenon. The three personas taken on by the saint, I believe, allow for his accessibility to a wide variety of cultures and beliefs. Saint James has come to be recognized as a saint of the people.

36 Simmons, pg. 28
37 Ibid.
Conclusion

Since the time of the Scientific Revolution, it has been extremely important to humans that information be backed up by fact. Proof is important. Even in the study of history, scholars try to determine what events really happened and, from there, catalogue historic "facts". The legends of Santiago and their influence in Spain are a source of frustration for historians looking for historical fact. Most likely, the events that led to the creation of the identities of Saint James and that truly changed the historic course of the Spanish nation did not actually occur. The ways in which we separate history from myth are challenged by the existence of the cult of Saint James in Spain and elsewhere in the world.

The fantastic nature of the legends of Santiago pose an interesting dilemma. How can a series of myths and legends generate such strong belief? One could argue that people living during the Middle Ages, at the peak of the pilgrimage culture in Spain, were unenlightened and prone to believing false ideas because they had not yet discovered the truth. That response could reasonably account for the mass devotion to Saint James during the Medieval Period. But what about today, in 1998? 99,000 pilgrims from all over the world journeyed to Compostela just five years ago. Surely we cannot still be unenlightened! We know that it is scientifically impossible for a boat with no sails or oars, and without the modern form of engines, to sail from the Middle East, across the Mediterranean Sea, and up to the Northwestern coast of Spain in just seven days. We know that dead men do not ride horses in the sky, or swoop down a decapitate thousands of men with each stroke of a magical sword. Yet these legends are believed, and have
profound influence over the people of the Spanish nation, as well as those outside of Spain.

It is important to understand that we do not need to believe that the events described by the legends actually took place in order to recognize their profound cultural importance. Many argue that the Bible itself is simply a collection of Christian myths, stories of the parting of seas and dead men coming back to life. Yet even the skeptical cannot ignore the huge impact that Christian ideology has had on world culture.

I believe the iconographical identities of Saint James were created at a time in Spanish history when they were very much needed. The nation had been invaded by and under the control of the Islamic Moors for one hundred years before the discovery of James' body in Galicia. All that remained of the Spanish Christian military were small forces in the Cantabrian mountains. The discovery of a saint's body in the region was surely a positive sign. From there, Santiago Matamoros appeared and rallied the troops to victory. Those traveling to Santiago de Compostela experienced miracles along the way, and the Spanish people knew they were blessed.

Saint James appearing as an influential Apostle who chose Spain to evangelize, a brave and heroic warrior who chose Spain to defend, and a benevolent pilgrim who chose Spain through which to travel and perform miracles gave the Spanish people a new confidence, a new faith. This new strength was particularly important through the Middle Ages, as the battle against the infidels raged on. The significance of Saint James in the Middle Ages can be observed in the artistic iconography created and displayed all along the Camino de Santiago. Those images inspired the Spanish during the Middle Ages and educate us now of the legends of Saint James.
The cult of Saint James developed into an international phenomenon. Throughout South and Central America, as well as parts of the United States, Santiago Matamoros lives on in ceremonial and folk art. His appeal to the people is documented throughout the world. Saint James is truly a likable saint. I believe that one of his most attractive features is his apparent connection with his devotees. Saint James performs miracles for those who worship him. The legends of his miracles allow for people to believe in a higher power, someone who has the ability to change things. For those who feel as if they have no control in their lives, I believe this faith is deeply meaningful. I also believe that this faith is what drives many to pilgrimage today.

The phenomenon of the cult of Saint James provides a fascinating study of the role of mythology and its importance in the history of a nation. The cult of Santiago and the power of his legends are representative of one of the great historical mysteries, which is the determination of how myth makes cultural meaning. I have argued that the multi-faceted nature of the saint's identity is the most important and influential factor in this case. We may never fully understand the complexity of mythology and its ties to history and cultural development, but maybe there are some things we should simply take on faith.

Give me my scallop-shell of quiet,
My staff of faith to walk upon,
My scrip of joy, immortal diet,
My bottle of salvation,
My gown of glory, hope's true gage,
And thus I'll take my pilgrimage.

-Sir Walter Raleigh
Fig. 1
Santiago de Compostela- Colonettes in convent of Benedictine nuns. St. Andrew, St. James the Greater, St. Matthias. (12th c.) L.W.P phot. from cast.

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**Fig. 2**

La Coruna, Spain. The tympanum of the western portal of the Church at Bentazos. Saint James as Matamoros. (12th c.)

*Photo by A.K.P.*
Fig. 3
Villafranca del Bierzo, Spain. Carving on the doors of the Church of Saint James show Santiago as Moorslayer. (18th.)
Photo by Joan Myers.
Fig. 4
Villafranca del Bierzo, Spain. Carving on the doors of the Church of Saint James show Santiago as pilgrim. (18th.)
Photo by Joan Myers.
Sculpture from the Museo del Camino at Astorga (16th c.)
Photo by Joan Myers
Sangüesa, (Navarra), Santa Maria la Real. Southern portal, western jamb.
St. Peter. L. W. P. phot.

The Youth who was hanged and miraculously kept alive by St. James.
L. W. P. phot.

Compostela. Cathedral of Santiago. Transept. Late XI–early XII C.

Fig. 8

Figure 9 - Contemporary New Mexico
Santiago. Small retablo carved and painted on wood by Richard H. Montoya
BIBLIOGRAPHY

*Notes taken from lectures given by Flint Smith, program director for Syracuse University in Madrid- Fall, 1996.


