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# “The Rattle of Time and Travel: The Acoustics of Medieval Pilgrimage”

George D. Greenia, *William & Mary*

# The Rattle of Time and Travel: The Acoustics of Medieval Pilgrimage

George Greenia

William & Mary. Institute for Pilgrimage Studies

Xosé M. Sánchez Sánchez<sup>1</sup>

Archivo-Biblioteca de la Catedral de Santiago

UNED (C.A. Pontevedra)

## El traqueteo del tiempo y el viaje. Aspectos acústicos de la peregrinación medieval

**Resumen:** El silencio parece la base de la vida medieval, y sin embargo el sonido acaba tomando cuerpo en cada resquicio. Este estudio indaga la alternancia de silencio y resonancia acústica, su presencia, ausencia y convivencia a lo largo del camino de la peregrinación. En la Edad Media, los peregrinos cristianos realizaban sus caminatas sagradas principalmente en un arduo silencio, interrumpido por entretenidas recitaciones, canciones de caminata rítmica e himnos latinos cantados de memoria. En cada parada, los peregrinos rompían el silencio con la reconfortante y predecible música de la liturgia. Melodías y conocidas canciones comunitarias marcaban el fluir del día hacia la sacralidad sónica de capillas e iglesias con paredes de piedra. La música y el lenguaje eran los sonidos emanados de la vida que campaban contra el ritmo de la naturaleza y testimoniaban el decidido esfuerzo humano. Este paisaje acústico de la vida medieval cambiaba en el transcurso del viaje. Cada ciudad y núcleo constituían la llegada a tierra en una “isla acústica” donde había nuevas formas de canto y habla, diferentes señales sonoras para el trabajo e incluso la ley, como llamadas al refugio, comercio y toque de queda. El silencio sagrado podía imponerse al enemigo: los musulmanes conquistadores se llevaron las campanas de las iglesias cristianas como trofeos de guerra para silenciar sus llamadas infieles al culto, mientras que los cristianos ascendentes transformaron minaretes en campanarios. No todo fue piedad silenciada, pues la estridente fiesta de los peregrinos podría incluso detener tormentas.

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<sup>1</sup> George Greenia, Professor Emeritus of Modern Languages, William & Mary, [gxgree@wm.edu](mailto:gxgree@wm.edu). Xosé M. Sánchez Sánchez, Archivo de la Catedral de Santiago de Compostela, *Profesor-tutor* of Medieval History, Universidad Nacional de Educación A Distancia (C. A. Pontevedra), [xossanchez@pontevedra.uned.es](mailto:xossanchez@pontevedra.uned.es)

Este estudio pretende categorizar algunos de los sonidos, silencios y sus significados durante las peregrinaciones medievales basándose en las artes plásticas, la arquitectura y documentos de la época.

**Palabras clave:** acústica de la peregrinación medieval, canto sagrado, silencio, paisaje sonoro medieval.

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## *The Rattle of Time and Travel: The Acoustics of Medieval Pilgrimage*

**Abstract:** Silence was the baseline for medieval life. In the Middle Ages, Christian pilgrims made their sacred treks mostly in an arduous hush, punctuated by entertaining recitations, rhythmic walking songs, and Latin hymns chanted from memory. At each stop pilgrims broke the silence with the comforting, predictable music of liturgy. Well-known communal music and song marked the day's progress toward sonic sacredness in the echoey holiness of stone walled chapels and churches. Music and language were the crafted sounds of life that played against a backbeat of nature and purposeful human effort. The acoustic landscape of medieval life changed in the course of the journey. Every city and settlement was a coming ashore on an "acoustic island" where there were new forms of song and speech, different sonic signals for labor and even law, such as calls to shelter, commerce and curfew. Sacred silence could be imposed on an enemy: conquering Muslims carried off Christian church bells as war trophies to silence their infidel calls to worship, while ascendant Christians transformed minarets into bell towers. It wasn't all muted piety: raucous pilgrim partying could even stop storms. This study categorizes some of the sounds, silences and significance of medieval travel as witnessed by art, architecture and documentary sources.

**Keywords:** medieval pilgrim acoustics, sacred songs, silence, medieval soundscape.

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## O troupeleio do tempo e a viaxe. Aspectos acústicos da peregrinación medieval

**Resumo:** O silencio parece a base da vida medieval e, porén, o son acaba tomando corpo en cada oportunidade. Este estudo pescuda na alternancia de silencio e resonancia acústica, a súa presenza, ausencia e convivencia ao longo do camiño da peregrinación. Na Idade Media, os peregrinos cristiáns realizaban as súas camiñadas sagradas principalmente nun arduo silencio, interrompido por entretidas recitacións, cancións de camiñada rítmica e himnos latinos cantados de memoria. En cada parada, os peregrinos rachaban o silencio coa reconfortante e predicible música da liturxia. Melodías e coñecidas cancións comunitarias marcaban o fluír do día cara á sacralidade sónica de capelas e igrexas con paredes de pedra. A música e a linguaxe eran os sons emanados da vida que campaban contra o ritmo da natureza e testemuñaban o decidido esforzo humano. Esta paisaxe acústica da vida medieval cambiaba no transcurso da viaxe. Cada cidade e núcleo constituían a chegada a terra nunha "illa acústica" onde había novas formas de canto e fala, diferentes sinais sonoros para o tra-

ballo e mesmo a lei, como chamadas ao refuxio, comercio e toque de queda. O silencio sagrado podía impórsele ao inimigo: os musulmáns conquistadores levaron as campás das igrexas cristiás como trofeos de guerra para silenciar as súas chamadas infieis ao culto, mentres que os cristiáns ascendentes transformaron minaretes en campanarios. Non todo foi piedade silenciada, pois a estridente festa dos peregrinos podería incluso deter treboadas. Este estudo pretende categorizar algúns dos sons, silencios e os seus significados durante as peregrinacións medievais baseándose nas artes plásticas, a arquitectura e documentos da época.

**Palabras clave:** acústica da peregrinación medieval, canto sagrado, silencio, paisaxe sonora medieval.

“The modern town hardly knows silence or darkness in their purity,  
nor the effect of a solitary light or a single distant cry”<sup>2</sup>  
“Every empty space sings, if you listen”<sup>3</sup>

### *The Medieval Sensorium*

Our lives are the sum of our bodily sensations. Sound is the one sense we cannot abstain from, we cannot switch off. Lawrence Kramer holds that “Sound is the primary medium through which the presence and persistence of life assume tangible form”, and that sound “acts as a general background to sense perception”<sup>4</sup>. Listening is the sense that is self-aware, a sensory attentiveness that is forcibly cognitive. We cannot listen without thinking and making memories.

In a modern world of constant racket, our acoustic environment has become an unfriendly landscape of pelting, even wounding noise. In the 1990s American universities, at least those outside urban settings, became aware of their stewardship of a unique “acoustic landscape” they could craft as a setting conducive to learning. Contemporary churches, shopping malls, hotels and spas are increasingly aware of their capacity to curate an acoustic environment that can enhance and subtly direct. Across the historical spectrum, and now across the world, pilgrimage

2 Huizinga, Johan, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, ed. Garden City (New York), Doubleday Anchor, 1954, p. 10, and *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, ed. Rodney J. Payton and Ulrich Mammitzsch (transl.), Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Also quoted by Iris Shagrir (Shagrir, Iris, “Vox Civitatis: el paisaje sonoro en la Jerusalén del siglo XII”, *Ad Limina, revista de investigación del Camino de Santiago y las peregrinaciones*, 8 (2017), pp. 63-84, esp. 63 [accessed November 15, 2020. [https://www.caminodesantiago.gal/documents/17639/362257/Ad\\_Limina\\_VIII.%2004\\_Iris%20Shagrir.pdf](https://www.caminodesantiago.gal/documents/17639/362257/Ad_Limina_VIII.%2004_Iris%20Shagrir.pdf)])

3 Oliver Beer, in Gopnik, Adam, “If You Listen”, *The New Yorker* (August 19, 2019), p. 15.

4 Kramer, Lawrence, *The Hum of the World A Philosophy of Listening*, Berkeley (California), University of California Press, 2019, p. 1.

offers a sonic environment where certain sounds are cultivated and celebrated, others forsworn.

Historiography focused on wars and politics until the Annales School helped it veer toward “mentalities”. Later history began to document a widening range of minority experiences like those of women, slaves, children, craftsmen, witches and lepers. Microhistories emerged from diaries and account books. Accounts of historical foodways added their own spice to the mix, stirring the pot with chronicles of commodities often robed in imperial terms<sup>5</sup>. The economic outcomes of medieval travel, especially pilgrimage, have produced valuable studies. Both Wharton’s *Selling Jerusalem: relics, replicas, theme parks*<sup>6</sup> and Mackintosh’s *Selling the Sights*<sup>7</sup> are shrewd assessments of the commodification of marketable sites of visitation, including pilgrimage<sup>8</sup>.

The surge in interest in sensory experience and sensory environment, and charting its span across the centuries, took off in the 1990s<sup>9</sup>. The intimately physical nature of this new arena of study stimulated efforts to capture the texture of lived experience in the past. Scholars imagined a more complete range of bodily awareness within an ecosystem of sensations and now speak of the “medieval sensorium” as a plenum of physical awareness that frames and determines one’s existence in the world<sup>10</sup>. The web of physical perception was moral as well. Value systems, especially

5 Representative titles include *Empire of Cotton; Oil, Power and War; King Corn; Plantation Kingdom; Energy Kingdoms: Oil and Political Survival in the Persian Gulf; Rum: The Epic Story of the Drink That Conquered the World; and Red Meat Republic. A Hoof-to-Table History of How Beef Changed America*.

6 Wharton, Annabel Jane, *Selling Jerusalem: relics, replicas, theme parks*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2006.

7 Mackintosh, Will B., *Selling the sights: the invention of the tourist in American culture*, New York, New York University, 2019.

8 Studies of selling sites of visitation, including the goals of traditional pilgrimage, have seen an upsurge at professional conferences and in national campaigns prompted in part by the success of the Camino de Santiago, whose catchment is now global. For medieval studies, see the seminal work of Bell and Dale, “The Medieval Pilgrimage Business”. As representative expressions of surging interest in the acoustic environment of modern life, see Lawrence Kramer, *The Hum of the World...*, *op. cit.*, and R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape. Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*, Rochester (Vermont), Destiny Books, 1994.

9 Shane Butler and Sarah Nooter shrewdly observe in the introduction to the volume of essays dealing with “Hearing” in their series on *The Senses in Antiquity* that, “in antiquity, sound was often said to be everywhere, whether or not anyone heard it: it was in the heavenly spheres ... it gave contours to the landscape of the universe and fathomed the depths of the soul”. (Butler, Shane; Nooter, Sarah (eds.), “Introduction”, in *Sound and the Ancient Senses (“The Senses in Antiquity”)*, Abingdon, Oxon / New York, Routledge, 2019, pp. 1-11) These same authors recommend that “for the student encountering such work and its theoretical concerns for the first time, a convenient place to start is *The Sound Studies Reader* (2012), edited by Jonathan Sterne, whose own work has done much to shape the field. Similarly influential has been the work of French composer and writer Michel Chion [*Sound: An Acoulogical Treatise* (2016)]. John Mowitt’s *Sounds: The Ambient Humanities*, University of California Press offers, 2015, 184 p., a self-reflective take on the discipline of sound studies within the field(s) of the humanities” (Mowitt, 9).

10 Much work has been devoted to medieval visual experiences including navigating and looking at interior sacred spaces, for example by Georgia Frank. For settings in England see: Wells, Emma J., “Making ‘Sense’ of the Pilgrimage Experience of the Medieval Church”, *Peregrinations: Journal of Medieval Art and Architecture*, 3.2 (2011), pp. 122-146, esp. p. 143. [accessed March 21, 2020. <https://digital.kenyon.edu/perejournal/vol3/iss2/6>]

Christian ones, regarded sensory experiences as avenues for grace or corruption<sup>11</sup>. The symbolic power of sounds was surely more resounding than the echoes that faded on the wind.

Focusing on senses and sound, pioneering Latin American scholars mainly from Mar del Plata, Argentina have made notable contributions at the crossroads of the anthropology, sociology and archaeology<sup>12</sup>. David Howes of the Centre of Sensory Studies has offered helpful overviews for approaching to these new frontiers of medieval studies<sup>13</sup>. Mark M. Smith observes that this kind of sensorial history shows us how the people of the past understood their world within specific historical contexts:

Los historiadores de los sentidos rara vez argumentan que el foco en el análisis de los sentidos cambie por completo las interpretaciones actuales sobre lo que ya sabemos acerca del lugar y tiempo estudiados. En cambio, tienden a afirmar que la atención al pasado sensorial nos permite una apreciación más profunda de la textura, significado y experiencia humana de ese pasado y que esto en sí mismo es lo que a veces nos ayuda a reinterpretar de formas modestas pero importantes lo que ya conocemos. En general, la historia sensorial trata, en buena medida, de texturizar, profundizar y complicar cuestiones que ya nos son familiares pero que, no obstante, requieren una comprensión e interrogación más profunda<sup>14</sup>.

If mere sonic perception is passive, listening is active, seeking out sounds in order to interpret their meaning. We listen to human speech, a cognitive form of reaching out. In the world of medieval Christianity, receiving the word of God started with

11 One of the earliest philosophers to locate virtue in the senses was Ibn Gabirol (11<sup>th</sup> century) in his *Ibn Gabirol. The Improvement of Moral Qualities*, in Stephen S. Wise (ed.), New York, AMS Press, 1966. Richard Newhauser cites William of Peraldus's *Treatise on Temperance* (1512) which drew in turn on Aristotle's *Libri naturales*. According to Peraldus, taste and touch were senses engaged in sustaining life and required the "proximity of the object". Smell, sight and hearing deployed at a putatively more chaste distance. "But from the perspective of pastoral concern for the senses" all five demanded oversight for these "essential elements for both the life of the individual and the life of the community. They reveal the importance to the preacher of the immediacy of sensation and the ethical task of regulating the body". Richard Newhauser also affirms that "the Christian moral tradition reacts with suspicion towards the sense as the potential portals of sin," and that "...sensation was not just guarded, but guided. Guarding the senses is a fairly static situation; education is progressive. Advancing from sensation to cognition involves an interpretive process that always implicates the edification of the senses" ("Introduction: The Sensual Middle Ages", in Richard Newhauser [ed.], *A cultural history of the senses. Vol. 2. In the Middle Ages*, London, Bloomsbury 2014, pp. 1-22 [esp. 10-12]). Christian Beth Williamson in "Sensory Experience in Medieval Devotion: Sound and Vision, Invisibility and Silence", *Speculum*, 88 (January 2013), pp. 1-43, esp. p. 43, argues that "...even while accepting that the actual recovery of medieval sound is impossible, we should surely accept and embrace the possibility of reintegrating a consideration of the effect of sound...". Rasmussen discusses modernist literary approaches.

12 Fabián Rodríguez, Gerardo; Coronado Schwindt, Gisela (dirs.), *Abordajes sensoriales del mundo medieval*, Buenos Aires, Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata, 2017.

13 Howes, David, *The Varieties of Sensory Experience*, Toronto, University of Tonto Press, 1991; *Empire of the Senses*, Oxford and New York, Berg, 2004; and *A Cultural History of the Senses in the Modern Age, 1920-2000*, London, Bloomsbury, 2014.

14 Fabián Rodríguez, Gerardo; Coronado Schwindt, Gisela (dirs.), *Abordajes sensoriales...*, *op. cit.*

missionizing and evangelization, which meant above all live preaching. St. James in particular was often displayed in a preacher's stance<sup>15</sup>. It is more than merely living among ambient sounds – hearing is the one sense that cannot be “turned off” the way we can close our eyes or refuse to touch or taste. Attentive listening is an active skill negotiated within a society and part of its social contract. Permission to speak and turn-taking within communities is the first index of rank and right.

In this essay we try to understand the continuum of acoustic experiences discerned by the medieval sacred traveler. We focus in particular on Santiago de Compostela, a major pilgrimage center since ninth century.

Given the current span of concerns about sensory experience across the centuries, we should specify what we are not attempting to cover in this essay.

We set aside background noises routinely ignored as clatter. These are the sounds of shuffling through the tasks of everyday life. The grunts, sighs, stomping of feet, the slap of leather at work or wear, the crackling of a fire and creaking of wood in weather may be reassuring, but they are forms of sonic muttering not coded for meaning<sup>16</sup>. Most of these noises gave comfort because they were familiar. In village life, every dog was known by its bark, every neighbor's cart had its signature creak that announced its owner's approach. The walls of most houses were porous to sound waves and allowed good warning of anyone's drawing near, if affording scant privacy for the family within. But neither sounds coming from outside or from within had much range:

In terms of absolute levels of sound, both town and countryside were very much quieter than today: much would have been audible that is now obscured by background noise. In early modern England – much the same would have been true of medieval England – sounds above 60 decibels were rare: a handful of natural sounds, such as storms and thunder; the cries of some animals, for example the barking of dogs at close hand; and a few man-made sounds...<sup>17</sup>.

15 See John K. Moore's moving discussion of the earliest depiction of St. James as pilgrim. Moore, John Kitchen, Jr., "Santiago's Sinister Hand: Hybrid Identity in the Statue of Saint James the Greater at Santa Marta de Tera", *Peregrinations: Journal of Medieval Art and Architecture*, 4.3 (2014), pp. 31-62. <https://digital.kenyon.edu/perejournal/vol4/iss3/2>

16 "On the other side of the sonic spectrum is pure clamour, apparently meaningless sound against which the ancient listener might sometimes rebel. The philosopher Seneca, lodging over a busy bathhouse, describes a cacophony of noises he somehow manages to ignore: the grunting and clanking of men lifting weights, the pounding and cracking of the masseur, the hubbub when a petty thief is apprehended in flagrante, the splash made by oafs who leap into the pool, the screeches of sellers of depilatory services, outdone only by the screeches of those enduring the same, all permeated by the cries of the snack-vendors. But a far more serious problem, he explains to his correspondent, is the noise in his own thoughts: 'What good does silence in our entire surroundings do us, if our feelings are in an uproar?' (Seneca, *Epistles* 56). In other words, where Plato used sound to configure the divine rationality of the cosmos, Seneca instead pits thought against the noisy irrationality of human emotion. Still, the careful reader catches a discordant irony in Seneca's account. Despite his claim to be able to ignore the sounds from the baths, he clearly has been listening to them. Indeed, his careful description of them is one of the most detailed to survive of any part of a real (we assume) Roman soundscape". Butler, Shane; Nooter, Sarah (eds.), "Introduction", *op. cit.*, p. 7.

17 Woolgar, Christopher M., *The Senses in Late Medieval England*, New Haven, Yale UP, 2006, p. 66.



We also take for granted the sounds of weather, although they too could be spiritualized when recalling that the God of the Hebrews marked his passing in a “small, hushed breeze” (“sibilus aurae tenuis”, I Kings 19: 11-12), or that for Christians St. James and his brother John were nicknamed “Boanerges, the sons of thunder” (“filii tonitruī”, Mark 3:17). A curious textual witness in a touristy section of the twelfth-century *Codex Calixtinus*, discussed below, describes how the pious merriment of pilgrims might miraculously hush hail and howling wind.

We do not try to survey the field of formal musicology and its catalogue of known sacred compositions as a genre<sup>18</sup>. Much like the liturgies and sermons enacted within church walls, sacred songs were controlled by an elite, produced inside sacred spaces, and “performance driven” in that getting them right was crucial for the preservation of Holy Writ and the efficacy of accompanying rites. Sounds generated inside ecclesiastical space were something to curate and craft, especially in communities of a common life like a monastery or cathedral chapter. The first canon of the Compostelan Council of 1060 regulates sounds and silence: “and in all these things silence should be observed and let them listen to holy readings while at table”<sup>19</sup>. The sermons in the first book of the *Codex Calixtinus* are full of specific requirements for the liturgical performance of seasonal and feast day chants and hymns. They also warn pilgrims who “who sang trashy songs or listened to them”<sup>20</sup>.

Liturgical references to singing out divine praises are common in medieval hymnody. Enthusiastic noisemaking is part of the drumbeat of the psalms which urge “Cantate Domino” (95, 97, 149) and “Laudate” (112, 116, 134, 146, 148, 150) and “Omnes gentes plaudite” (46). The fifteen Gradual psalms (120-135) were intended for communal chanting while on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, destined for travelers striding toward a sacred summit. One of the goals of the *Liber Sancti Iacobi* was to position Compostela as a bookend to Jerusalem where St. James was martyred. One song starts “The Chorus of the heavens signs psalms, the people of faith rejoice,

18 Woolgar notes that “The new Gothic style of the thirteenth century changed the proportions of churches, so that the largest buildings had naves much higher than they were wide, increasing the amount of reverberation within the building. It is exactly at this moment that one finds the development of polyphony, executed by small groups of singers (rather than large choirs)” (Woolgar, Christopher M., *The Senses...., op. cit.*, p. 66); for the symbolic parallels between pilgrimage and tonal progressions, see: Medina Álvarez, Ángel, “Notas sobre la simbólica musical del Camino”, *Cuadernos del CEMYR*, 6 (1998), pp. 63-80. Representations of making music in Santiago are abundant but likewise not our concern.

19 “Et in his omnibus silentium observent, necnon et ad mensam lectiones sanctas semper audiant”. López Ferreiro, Antonio, *Historia de la Santa AM Iglesia de Santiago de Compostela*, vol. 2, Santiago de Compostela, Imp. y Enc. del Seminario Conciliar, 1900, ap. XCII.

20 “Cantilenas mendasas decantaverint vel auscultaverint”: Herbers, Klaus; Santos Noia, Manuel (eds.), *Liber Sancti Iacobi. Codex Calixtinus*, Santiago de Compostela, Xunta de Galicia, 1998, p. 18 (all translations here made by Greenia and Sánchez Sánchez). See for liturgical music: Corrigan, Vincent, “Music and the Pilgrimage”, in Maryjane Dunn and Linda Kay Davidson (eds.), *The Pilgrimage to Compostela in the Middle Ages: A Book of Essays*, New York, Garland Publishing Inc., 1996, pp. 43-68; Webb, Diana, *Medieval European Pilgrimage, c. 700-1500*, New York, Palgrave, 2002, pp. 155-58. For sometimes rowdy pilgrim songs and dance to the accompaniment of portable drums, bagpipes, flutes and light stringed instruments. Amateur musicians did, and still do, earn their way as they traveled by performing ear-pleasing pieces both sacred and secular.



now let them resound in the perpetual glory of the Apostles” while another insists “Let the throng of earth sing out joining with that of heaven, our affirmation clapping back. Moreover let their devotion be pure for the singer, the listener and anyone rejoicing”<sup>21</sup>.

For much the same reasons the sounds of war belong outside the pilgrims’ ambit of sensory experience. In advance of a battle, the roar of troops and the thunder of their drums were group noises meant to build courage among one’s own and inspire fear in the enemy. These were orchestrated forms of human thunder, the menacing rumble of the army and its growl of aggression. Drums, pipes and trumpets meant to coordinate movement in combat yielded to the chaotic crash of arms. All this storming about may get coded into courtly verse, as José Enrique Ruiz Doménec, drawing on Marius Schneider<sup>22</sup>, attempts to explain in “El sonido de la batalla en Bertran de Born”. Ruiz Doménec and Schneider presume that natural sounds are steppingstones to music and rhythm, working their way up to artisanal language (poetry), but this aestheticization of the raw material of sound creates a hierarchy of value that strips raw sonorous experiences from their roles in perception and cognition<sup>23</sup>.

We are also admittedly only concerned with land travel because pilgrimage journeys by sea are a different immersive experience, pun intended. The natural sounds on board ships are specific to that splashing environment. The noisy business of sailing was controlled by non-pilgrims whose social authority and cries of seamanship in progress were paramount for safety<sup>24</sup>.

Within the sphere of pastoral care, we make no attempt to assess the “applied spirituality of the senses” as corridors for holy inspiration or avenues for sinful indulgence. Medieval authors from Augustine to Gregory the Great, Anselm of Canterbury and Bernard of Clairvaux used the senses as a heuristic for mapping how humankind might interact with grace flooding into the world or sin beguiling the flesh<sup>25</sup>.

21 “Psallat chorus celestium, / Letetur plebs fidelium / Nunc resonent perpetuum / Apostolorum gloriam” (folio 101<sup>v</sup>); “Psallat fretus / Celi cetus. / Orbis letus, / Plaudat nostra concio. / Set cantatis, / auscultantis, / el letantis / pura devocio” (folio 105<sup>v</sup>).

22 Schneider, Marius, *El origen musical de los animales-símbolos en la mitología y la escultura antiguas*, Barcelona, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1946.

23 In words of Schneider: “El plano acústico es el plano más adecuado al ser humano. Por eso la reacción natural del hombre a todo cuanto observa o le conmueve se traduce por una manifestación acústica”. (p. 29, cited by Ruiz Doménec, José Enrique, “El sonido de la batalla en Bertran de Born”, *Medievalia. Revista de Estudios Medievales*, 2 (1981), p. 97). According to the hypothetical schemes of Ruiz Doménec and Schneider, courtly poets like Bertran de Born developed systems of equivalencies or at least evocations of the noises of combat, heraldic colors schemes, and tonal pitches. The emergence of gunpowder for warcraft after the fourteenth century produced terrifying noise at levels never achieved before by humans, dethroning God as the loudest agent in the world.

24 Sailors have their own complex linguistic codes which choreograph their labor: see Hutchins, Edwin, “Learning to Navigate”, in Seth Chaiklin and Jean Lave (eds.), *Understanding Practice: Perspectives on Activity and Context*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp. 35-63.

25 Richard Newhauser discusses Augustine of Hippo (354-430) and Gregory the Great (d. 604) as major influences in developing a Christian stance on policing the body and soul through the sense. Their concerns were echoed

Finally, medieval understanding of the physiology of hearing is not examined here either, nor are medieval theories of synesthesia, the interlocking nature of sensory experiences that fuse into a “common sense” that coordinates them all<sup>26</sup>.

### *Pilgrims and the sounds they carried with them*

We can probably presume that the central experience of medieval pilgrims was silence, or at least the absence of the usual domestic sounds that formed the soundtrack of their lives. Gone were the familiar coughs, groans, calls and cries of the household and its livestock. Silenced too were the agricultural sounds of seasonal labor as practiced in their home communities. Silent effort was the default of medieval life. The village or courtly social interaction that medieval travelers were used to was muzzled. Pilgrims left behind their accustomed backdrop of town criers, neighborhood blacksmiths, bells, intergenerational lullabies, small town gossip at the communal well, and the backdrop of bickering neighbors.

Countryside trails were submerged in the quiet of field and forest, stream and wind. Our modern need for background noise and acoustic clutter to fill the void just wasn't there. Nor was there anxiousness about intrusive noises accosting the hush of mostly crowdless environments. In the medieval village or city, noises in the night were mistrusted for good reason, immediately suspect as threatening. They whispered of clandestine misdeeds. Nightfall while camping on pilgrimage was noiseless, quieted not from courtesy but by nature's own blackout.

Medieval pilgrims almost always traveled in packs for safety and probably spoke softly out of habit. In addition to their signature attire, a certain quiet decorum helped separate them from the drovers, merchants and messengers who shared their trails. Those whose devotion carried them to loud extremes, like the demonstrative sobbing of the inveterate pilgrim Margery Kempe, were barely tolerated by their more circumspect companions. During one sea voyage, Kempe's exasperated fellow passengers seriously considered throwing her overboard.

When appropriate, deliberately communal (rather than self-obsessed) noise-making affirmed pilgrims' camaraderie, sustained their spiritual focus, and warned off threatening animals and highwaymen. Woolgar reports that “A Wycliffite

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through subsequent writers like Haymo of Auxerre (d. 855), Ælfric abbot of Eynsham (d. c. 1012), and Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153). Butler and Nooter observe that “...the ephemeral nature of sound was, for Augustine, paradigmatic of the impermanence of human existence”. (Butler, Shane; Nooter, Sarah (eds.), “Introduction”, *op. cit.*, p. 2).

26 Rasmussen reports on recent work on “the ‘synaesthetic moment in modernist literature’, particularly the relationship between smell and sound”. Rasmussen, Sasha, “Conference Report. Common Scents: Smells and Social Life in European Literature (1880–1939), IMLR, 22–23 November 2018”, *Journal of Romance Studies*, 19.2 (2019), p. 306.

sermon-writer of the late fourteenth century ... held that the glad songs and whistling of pilgrims indicated their fear of spiritual enemies". There could have been practical reasons for making noise too. A penniless pilgrim could trumpet his poverty with a fearless ruckus, "singing sure before the thief" while monied travelers kept a lower profile<sup>27</sup>.

The habitual silence of the road was punctuated by (mostly secular) walking songs, "resting" or entertainment songs that included epics, ballads and nonsense ditties. They drew on a stock of memorized hymns that sacred travelers could intone during moments of relaxation or on their approach to shrine sites. Not a few of those overlapped with tunes familiar from popular roots recast *a lo divino* and recycled in multiple languages. Little of this remains except perhaps in more crafted art forms, such as the songs included in the anonymous, late medieval or early modern "Auto de la huida a Egipto" which serves up a number charming *villancicos* to be sung by the Peregrino figure who helps knit the action together<sup>28</sup>. Peregrino has the most speaking and singing lines of the entire cast of characters, 138 of the 384, more than a third of the total<sup>29</sup>.

Pilgrims did bring portable musical instruments with them. The catalog of instruments they used during their night vigils in the cathedral is impressive, and they surely did not wait until their arrival to enjoy them while staying overnight at a tavern or inn. The *Codex Calixtinus* names citharas, lyres, *timpanis*, pipes, trumpets, harps, viols, Breton or Gallican *rotas* and psalteries (see below). Depending on the mood and talents of the travelers, song can be a comforting companion in any age<sup>30</sup>.

These communal sounds generated by the companions of the road functioned as familiar "social managers" among pilgrims. They stand in contrast to the unfamiliar "social markers" confronted by travelers as they encountered strangers who often made strange sounds while they worked or chatted.

27 Woolgar, Christopher M., *The Senses...*, *op. cit.*, p. 80. When at rest, modern pilgrims prefer quieter spaces, acoustic shelters from their harassed modern environment, although the more popular their gathering places become, the noisier they get. When their noise overpowers the reverent hush, or refuses to cede to it at least in discrete intervals, the sacred character degrades.

28 "The action is punctuated with five *villancicos* [rustic songs], which mark points of transition between scenes, four of them being sung by characters on the move from one place to another". (Whetnall, Jane, "Auto de la huida a Egipto", in T.F. Earle and Catarina Fouto (eds.), *The Reinvention of Theatre in Sixteenth-Century Europe. Traditions, Texts and Performance*, London: Routledge, 2015, pp. 41-71, esp. 42).

29 Ron Surtz feels that the role of the Peregrino is the dramatic key to the play's dynamic (Surtz, Ronald E., "El Auto de la huida a Egipto como peregrinación virtual", *Boletín de la Real Academia Española*, 30 [2010], pp. 121-30).

30 Starting in 1974, Prof. David Gitlitz led the first American university groups on the then unmarked trails from St. Jean in France to Santiago de Compostela. "All five groups I led sang on the road, but the first, in '74, was really into it. Good voices and they knew lots of songs. For presentations we worked up a packet of about a dozen, including some rounds (Hinei Ma-tov; By the Waters of Babylon, and One Bottle of Pop); lots of ballads, in both English and Spanish; pop songs; Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Tuna songs, you name it. When I rerun bits of that first pilgrimage in my mind, it almost always has a soundtrack". (Private communication, June 13, 2019).

*Sacred chambers*

One soundscape that medieval pilgrims did seek out was one unavailable anywhere else in their world: the echoey hollows within stone chapels and churches<sup>31</sup>. The literally otherworldly sonic effects of a smooth-walled granite enclosure induced a feeling of being in the presence of the divine, the laws of nature and physics suspended by these unaccustomed sensory effects. Sacred rites in all traditions are by design ones that alter bodily perception. In the medieval Christian chapel, normal touch, smell and sight were frustrated or suspended, taste manipulated by reserved substances whose savor was enhanced by hunger from fasting. Sound was suddenly both weird and amplified<sup>32</sup>. The auditory experience of songs and speech generated within medieval chapels was completely unknown anywhere else in medieval living spaces. (Fig. 1)

For the first time in their everyday lived environments, both outdoors and indoors, the normal ambient sounds of wind, physical movement and domestic chores were effaced. Suddenly, within a dizzyingly vast and empty enclosure, the air was still, and life was louder. Voices could be clearly heard, and overheard, at a distance. Singing, chanting, preaching and other forms of liturgical performance became grander, more emphatic. The unique qualities of reverberation, clarity, and sonic decay in each holy building that sacred travelers entered impressed itself on their memories as much as the food served or weather endured. Not since the ruin of Greek and Roman theaters could audiences in their thousands be simultaneously moved by solo performers and choral production of sacred chant. Enhanced by lavish costuming and processional choreography, medieval liturgy was operatic and booming. Pilgrims could sense their voices reaching heaven<sup>33</sup>.

To examine a much earlier example, the Galician pilgrim Egeria toured the Holy Land in the 380s and documented for her sisters back home the enthusiastic

31 Secular buildings of this sort were supremely rare, the twelfth-century stone city council chambers, or *Domus Municipalis* of Bragança in Portugal being one of the few surviving exceptions.

32 Some European churches from the tenth to the sixteenth centuries were equipped with bronze or ceramic pots built into their ceilings to enhance the sound qualities of the interior spaces: see Valière, Jean-Christophe; Palazzo-Bertholon, Bénédicte; Polack, Jean-Dominique; Carvalho, Pauline, "Acoustic Pots in Ancient and Medieval Buildings: Literary Analysis of Ancient Texts and Comparison with Recent Observations in French Churches", *Acta Acustica united with Acustica*, 99.1, January 2013, pp. 70-81, and Woolgar who documents "acoustic pots introduced into choir stalls at Fountains Abbey resonance chambers, at Coventry Whitefriars at St. Gregory's Priory, Canterbury; or 'whispering galleries,' as at St. Peters Abbey, Gloucester (now Gloucester Cathedral)" (67-68 with illustration).

33 A team of researchers working in Greece on a project entitled "Bodies and Spirits: Soundscapes of Byzantium" has been analyzing the acoustic qualities of specific churches to test their responsiveness to medieval chant. Some key findings include evidence suggesting that important monumental artwork was placed in locations within buildings that had special acoustical significance, that some buildings have undergone changes that have drastically changed their acoustical signatures, and that certain types of chant are best suited to specific spaces (Antonopoulos, Spyridon, "Researchers recreate ancient sounds with acoustic maps of Greek churches", may 16, 2016 [accessed May 4, 2021. <https://www.city.ac.uk/news/2016/may/music-researchers-recreate-ancient-sounds-with-acoustic-maps-of-medieval-churches>]).





Fig. 1. Templar Church of Santo Sepulcro whose otherworldly acoustics still enchant modern visitors on the Camino de Santiago. (Torres del Río, Navarra).

liturgies of Jerusalem. She paid special attention to their “sensory surround”: churches smoky with incense, bejeweled vessels, banks of lamps and candles, voices raised in full-throated worship that could be heard “as far away as the city”.

Both the decorum of the liturgy as designed, and its resounding performance were important to these early worshipping communities of the Holy Land. Egeria reports on these liturgies like this:

And when they have finished them [the hymns and antiphons] according to the custom, the bishop rises and stands in front of the enclosure, that is, the cave, and one of the deacons makes the commemoration of individuals, as is the custom, and when the deacon says the names of the individuals, very many children always stand, constantly responding *Kyrie eleison*, as we say, “Lord have mercy”. Their voices are immense<sup>34</sup>.

On another occasion Egeria notes that “When he [the bishop] has begun to read it [the account of the Lord’s resurrection], there is such a groaning and moaning from everyone and such tears that the hardest person could be moved to tears that the Lord had undergone such things for us”<sup>35</sup>. When the bishop explains the Passion of the Lord “those praising are such that their voices are heard far outside the church”<sup>36</sup>.

### *Church bells*

Christianization, and for Westerners civilization itself, was announced with bells. Johan Huizinga evokes the power of bells in a celebrated passage from his *The Waning of the Middle Ages*:

One sound rose ceaselessly above the noisy clamor of busy life and lifted all things unto the sphere of order and serenity: the sound of bells. The bells were in daily life like good spirits, which by their familiar voices, now called upon citizens to mourn, now to rejoice, now warned them of danger, now exhorted them to piety. They were known by their names: big Jacqueline, or the bell Roland. Everyone knew the difference in meaning of the various ways of ringing. However continuous the ringing of the bells, people would seem not to have become blunted to the effect of their sound<sup>37</sup>.

Bells are the only Christian liturgical object not only blessed and consecrated for sacred use, but also baptized with given names usually cast on their visible

34 McGowan, Anne; Bradshaw, Paul F., *The Pilgrimage of Egeria. A New Translation of the “Itinerarium Egeriae”*, Collegeville, Minnesota, Liturgical Press, 2018, §24, p. 151

35 *Ibidem*, §24, p. 154.

36 *Ibidem*, §47, p. 192.

37 Huizinga, Johan, *The Waning of the Middle.... op. cit.*, See also in Iris Shagrir (Shagrir, Iris, “Vox Civitatis: el paisaje sonoro en la Jerusalén del siglo XII”, *Ad Limina, revista de investigación del Camino de Santiago y las peregrinaciones*, 8 (2017), pp. 63-84, esp. 63 [accessed November 15, 2020 [https://www.caminodesantiago.gal/documents/17639/362257/Ad\\_Limina\\_VIII.%2004\\_Iris%20Shagrir.pdf](https://www.caminodesantiago.gal/documents/17639/362257/Ad_Limina_VIII.%2004_Iris%20Shagrir.pdf)]) with perhaps more clarity: “Había un sonido que dominaba una y otra vez el rumor de la vida cotidiana y que, por múltiple que fuese, no era nunca confuso y lo elevaba todo pasajeramente a una esfera de orden y armonía: las campanas. Las campanas eran en la vida diaria como unos buenos espíritus monitorios, que anunciaban con su voz familiar, ya el duelo, ya la alegría, ya el reposo, ya la agitación; que ya convocaban, ya exhortaban... Se sabía lo que significaba el tocarlas y el repicarlas. Y, a pesar de los excesivos repiques, nadie era nunca sordo a su voz” (Huizinga, Johan, *El otoño de la Edad Media: Estudios sobre la forma de la vida y del espíritu durante los siglos XIV y XV en Francia y en los Países Bajos*, ed. José Gaos (transl.), Madrid, Alianza Ensayo, 1994, p. 14).

surface<sup>38</sup>. They are endowed with a voice that calls to prayer, signals events both sacred or secular, marks times of commerce and sounds alarms of attack. Their clappers were tongues, and their confession of faith was molded onto their exterior:

I praise the true God. I call the people. I gather the clergy. I cry for the dead. I drive away plagues. I honour feasts. My voice is the terror of all demons<sup>39</sup>.

Bells helped regulate the pace of secular life and summoned town councils<sup>40</sup>. They marked the passage of time for a whole community at once and for the surrounding countryside within earshot.

This function was not the exclusive property of the bells that marked ecclesiastical hours<sup>41</sup>. Clocks were another tool for marking time, routinely located where a community felt its own heartbeat, its church<sup>42</sup>. In Santiago the chapter of canons issued a contract for Juan Abarqua, citizen of Compostela, as clock master for the cathedral and specified his assignments:

He should take charge of, install and calibrate, and maintain and keep accurate the clock located in the church of said city, so that it measures the twenty-four continuous hours of night and day as the clock keeps time<sup>43</sup>.

In medieval Compostela the clock was installed<sup>44</sup> in the cathedral. In 1418 Juan de Boado received the salary that “the City Council gave him on a yearly basis for his labor in installing and maintaining the clock of the church of Santiago”<sup>45</sup>. He was

38 Blick notes that “Bells were named after saints that were believed to be efficacious against bad weather, but the name could be changed to that of a demon if they proved unworthy [ineffectual]” (Blick, Sarah, “Bringing Pilgrimage Home: The Production, Iconography, and Domestic Use of Late-Medieval Devotional Objects by Ordinary People”, *Religions*, 10 (2019), pp. 1-26, esp. 20 [accessed September 26, 2019 <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel10060392>, [www.mdpi.com/journal/religions](http://www.mdpi.com/journal/religions)]).

39 “Propietates campanae / Laudo Deum verum. Plebem voco. Congrego clericos. / Defunctos ploro. Pestes fugo. Festa decoro. / Vox mea cun[c]torum fit terror demoniorum”. Barcelona, Arxiu de la Biblioteca de la Universitat de Barcelona. Cited and translated by Garceau, Michelle E., “«I call the people» Church bells in fourteenth-century Catalunya”, *Journal of Medieval History*, 37 (2011), pp. 197-214, esp. 198; a similar inscription may be found on a bell in Valencia.

40 At Worcester, Katherine Lack notes that the church “tower housed a set of bells, the largest of which was used to summon the city council to the nearby Guildhall” (Lack, Katherine, *The Cockleshell Pilgrim. A Medieval Journey to Compostela*, London, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2003, p. 7. For English monastic setting and the various sizes of bells and clappers they used to regular their lives, see Woolgar, Christopher M., *The Senses...*, *op. cit.*, p. 69-74.

41 There were plenty of studious time pieces commissioned by Alfonso X el Sabio who, in the middle of the thirteenth century, had a whole treatise composed about their design, they were dedicated to casting every more precise horoscopes and were silent affairs.

42 Víctor Pérez Álvarez observes that chiming mechanical clocks for indoor and private use were not available in Spain until the sixteenth century (Pérez Álvarez, Víctor, “Mechanical Clocks in the medieval Castilian Court”, *Antiquarian Horology and the Proceedings of the Antiquarian Horology Society*, 34.4 [dec. 2013], pp. 489-502).

43 “Rega et arme et conçerte et traga regido et conçertado o relogeo que esta na dita iglesia, em maneyra que el faça viinte et quatro oras continuadas ontre noyte et dia segundo curso de tal relogeo”. (January 23, 1406). (López Ferreiro, *Historia de la Santa AM Iglesia...* *op. cit.*, 1904, pp. 104-105).

44 The sources use the verb *armar* which includes ‘assemble’ or ‘repair’, as for April 24, 1417.

45 “O Conçello lle dava en cada huun anno por seu traballo de armar e procurar o relojo da iglesia de Santiago” (Rodríguez González, Ángel (ed.), *Libro do Concello de Santiago (1416-1422)*, Santiago de Compostela, Consello da Cultura Galega, 1992, p. 171).



a 'public' or civil employee rather than a religious functionary of any sort and was known in the account books as the "mestre do relógio", master of the clock. Again in 1421 he earned his wages "for maintaining the clock and its chimes"<sup>46</sup>. The bells that still marked the schedule of religious rites came to overlap with intervals of purely civil time under the auspices of the Church which owned the tower. The first mechanical clock documented in the Iberian Peninsula dated from 1332, in the kingdom of Aragón under Alfonso VI during whose reign they multiplied. Another is documented in Castile in Salamanca in 1378 or perhaps earlier, another in the cathedral of Toledo in 1366 and yet another in the cathedral of Burgos in 1386<sup>47</sup>. The woodblock illustration that opens the *Despertador de peccadores* (Burgos, 1541) suggests that alarm clocks were already becoming metaphors for rousing the spiritual life. (Fig. 2)

There were other noise makers in civil life, like trumpets and drums, town criers and paid mourners (*plañideras*). None had the commanding reach of bells for alerting an entire settlement at once. In Girona, Vic and Barcelona, the bells warned of dangers from the sea like storms and enemies. They might issue a call for militias to assemble<sup>48</sup>.

In Compostela the cathedral chapter regulated the use of bells for calling its own meetings and heralding announcements: "On which occasions the bell should be rung":

Likewise on special occasions which all the brothers follow in named order according to who are present as they are fitting to be called on those occasions, that is two strikes of the bell for the solemn election of the archbishop and dean, and for senior canons, and at greater canonical events, for other stipendiaries and at the granting of lodgings or conferral of canonical orders, and for the reception of canons and brothers by apostolic letters or legates of the Apostolic See<sup>49</sup>.

The sound of bells marked meetings in ecclesiastical buildings, and it did not matter if the event were called by religious or civil authorities, even for assemblies of craftsmen's guilds. On August 5, 1421 representatives "were called together in assembly in the chapel of San Fiz [de Solovio, near the eastern walls] of the city of Santiago by pealing of the second bell according to long use and custom"<sup>50</sup>.

46 "Seu selario de armar o relógio e son". Rodríguez González, Ángel (ed.), *Libro do Concello...*, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

47 Noise-making mechanical clocks had been thought to enter Spain only in the sixteenth century.

48 Garceau, Michelle E., "I call the people...", *op. cit.*, p. 201. Peter the Ceremonious executed the leaders of an Aragonese rebellion by having them drink the molten metal of the bells they had employed to call rebels to arms.

49 July 19, 1255: "Super quibus pulsari debet campana. [...] Ad hec atque specialia negocia que secuntur omnes fratres ex nomine quilibet presentialiter sunt uocandi licet ad eadem bis pulset canopana videlicet ad electionem archiepiscopi solemniter et decani, et ad canonicam maiorem, porcionem et maniapaniam et ad mansionariam concedendas uel conferendas et [...]m de recipi in canonicum et in fratrem per litteras apostolicas uel legati sedis apostolice". ACS, CF24, ff. 120v-121r.

50 "Juntados en cabidoo enno adro da capela de San Fiinz da cidade de Santiago por tanjemento de canpana segundo que han de usso e de custume" Rodríguez González, Ángel (ed.), *Libro do Concello...*, *op. cit.*, p. 267).



Fig. 2. Despertador de peccadores: Inuentado por vno dellos. Burgos 1541. Source: <https://webs.ucm.es/BUCM/blogs/Foliocomplutense/5155.php>. No changes made.

By the fifteenth century the sounding of bells, traditionally associated with ecclesial functions, was used to mark the prosecution of crimes, followed by crying out the name of the offender. The *Regulation of the Hermandade* or brotherhood, passed on July 6, 1418, is very clear: "Anyone against whom a claim of offense is made let them ring the bell and raise a hue and cry naming the offender and pursuing the wrongdoers wherever they may go"<sup>51</sup>. This was to apply not only in one city in Galicia but in surrounding towns as well: "And just as they have the bells rung in one place they should send to have them rung in others throughout the region and the cry be raised in those towns"<sup>52</sup>.

In the early fifteenth century the Galician noblewoman Inés Fernández de Moscoso had clung to property in the Bierzo valley that her late husband had intended as a pious donation. When the concerned monasteries mounted legal action against her, she ceded the lands and dependencies. The triumphant abbot signaled his ownership by taking a meal in his new estates and pulling the bell rope in sign of right of tenancy:

In 1412 the surrender [of the property] was effected, Doña Inés admitting that out of the sin of greed she had not fulfilled the desires of her husband ... releasing and disencumbering for the monastery the said property at Freyreira and the structures at Lagumanes and at Éntona, with all the entitlements, rights, succession, determination, lordship, tolls, meadows, pastures, water sources, all of which the abbot hastened to take possession of. That same day he entered the church of the said property at Frieria, and sat down to dine and rang the bell with his own hand in affirmation of his lordship and possession<sup>53</sup>.

Few listened for pealing bells more attentively, perhaps anxiously, than pilgrims. They felt themselves strangers because these new bells spoke with the voices of strangers. Still they yearned for their ringing and to be incorporated into a community united by its carillons.

51 "Qualesquier a quien fuere dada la querella que fagan repicar la canpana e que salgan luego a vos de apelido e que vayan en pos de los malfechores por doquier que fueren" (Rodríguez González, Ángel (ed.), *Libro do Concello...*, op. cit., 267).

52 "E como repicaron en el tal lugar que lo enbien faser saber a los otros lugares enderredor para que fagan repicar e salgan a aquel apelido todos los de aquellos lugares" (Rodríguez González, Ángel (ed.), *Libro do Concello...*, op. cit., p. 137).

53 "En 1412, hizo efectiva la entrega, reconociendo doña Inés que *con peccado de codicia* no había cumplido los deseos de su marido [...] dejaba y desembargaba al monasterio *el dicho lugar de Fryeira e el dicho casar de Lagumanes e de Éntona, con todos los foros, derechos, herdades, pesqueras, sennorío, portages, prados, pastos, fontes...* de todo lo cual el abad se apresuró a tomar posesión y aquel mismo día *entró luego en la iglesia del dicho lugar de Frieria, e sentóse a comer e tannó la campana con su mano, en lugar de sennorío e posesión*" (Pardo de Guevara y Valdés, Eduardo (ed.), *Mujeres con poder en la Galicia medieval (siglos XIII–XV) - Estudios, biografías y documentos*, Santiago de Compostela, Instituto de Estudios Galegos Padre Sarmiento, 2017, p. 437).





Fig. 3. *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, Códice Rico, Cantiga 83. Source: Facsimilar edition.



Fig. 4. *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, Códice Rico, Cantiga 83, detail. Source: Facsimilar edition. Image altered to highlight bells.

Besides their utilitarian function in regulating liturgical life, communal labor and civic duties, bells sounded warning and converted private moments into public ones. Funerals merited the tolling of bells, and so did unexpected miracles when all were summoned away from their normal affairs to bear witness to an eruption of the divine into a micro-society, as often depicted in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*<sup>54</sup>. “Bells echoed the *vox Domini* ... and reflected the omnipresence of God in the medieval world”<sup>55</sup>. They stood in for angels and ventriloquized for God. When called upon, they also spoke to heaven on behalf of a community. (Figs. 3, 4, 5)

54 In many of the illustrations in the Códice Rico of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* bells peal in public confirmation of the miracle. Bells are a high frequency marker of the urban landscape and monastic enclosures painted into no less than 75 of the first 200 Cantigas: 11, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 31, 32, 35, 37, 38, 39, 41, 43, 45, 48, 52, 53, 55, 56, 58, 59, 62, 63, 64, 66, 68, 69, 70, 73, 74, 78, 79, 83, 84, 85, 86, 89, 91, 94, 97, 98, 102, 103, 109, 111, 114, 117, 118, 121, 123, 125, 127, 129, 136, 137, 139, 151, 154, 157, 161, 164, 168, 173, 174, 178, 184, 187, 188, 189, 192.

55 Garceau, Michelle E., “I call the people...”, *op. cit.*, p. 197.





Fig. 5. *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, Códice Rico, Cantiga 83, panel. Source: Facsimilar edition.

Bells were the triumphant cry of victory over pagan frontiers and forever retained something of their militant tone. Honorius de Autun wrote that “When bells are rung, they are like the trumpets that urge soldiers into battle”<sup>56</sup>. William Durandus wrote in his *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum* (1286) that the vibrations of bells could fend off whirlwinds, hail, thunder and lightning, not to mention unseen malicious spirits<sup>57</sup>.

56 Cited in Iris Shagrir: “*Honorii Augustudonensis Operum Pars tertia Liturgica*, Migne PL vol. 172, col. 567” (Shagrir, Iris, “*Vox Civitatis...*”, *op. cit.*, p. 64).

57 Durandus, William, *The Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments: A Translation of the First Book of the ‘Rationale Divinorum Officiorum*, in John Mason Neal and Benjamin Webb (eds.), 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, London, Gibbons, 1906, p. 67.

Full sized bells fit for administering a city required as much craft in their fabrication as any gold vessel for the altar and were at least as expensive to manufacture. They even influenced medieval architecture in the central Middle Ages as bell towers became a dominant and exceedingly visible investment and symbol of secular power.

In Santiago de Compostela, the north tower of the west façade used to be lower and rather than bells boasted a flat-topped platform for a potent catapult. It could bombard besieging forces whose own catapults could not be brought within range or superior height to threaten it. The cathedral once bristled with military watch towers and buttressed its walls with castle-like ramparts. When Galician churches were forcibly demilitarized in the late fifteenth century, Pope Sixtus IV in 1485 threatened Archbishop Alonso de Fonseca II with fines and even excommunication if he did not pull down his battlements. The reconciled bishop replaced his round guard turrets with campaniles. The display of authority that towers announced so visibly was not completely lost, simply transposed into a more resonant voice. Archbishop Alonso understood the wisdom of the popular saying that “In the absence of towers, campaniles would do”<sup>58</sup>.

Among competing religions, the call to prayer became the symbolic target of efforts to silence the infidel or pagan outsider<sup>59</sup>. Al-Mansour raided Santiago in 997 and forced enslaved Christians to transport its bells to Córdoba as war trophies. The pre-Romanesque church erected by Alfonso III (848-910) probably boasted only eleven modest bells, but their loss became the stuff of the legends and chronicles which influenced the eventual Christian military expansion southward. On arrival in Córdoba the captive bells were flipped over, mounted on tripods, filled with oil, and used to illumine the Great Mosque. All the other bells Al-Mansour took in raids through the Christian north were reputedly melted down to cast new bronze doors for the same Muslim house of worship. The incident was reported ruefully in multiple early histories and incentivized the symbolism of retaking Córdoba<sup>60</sup>.

58 In Vázquez Castro, Julio, “«A falta de torres, buenos son los campanarios» Las desaparecidas torres del Ángel y del Gallo en la catedral de Santiago de Compostela”, *Quintana*, 6, (2007), pp. 245-266. The papal command was issued at the insistence of the Catholic Monarchs Ferdinand and Isabel who struggled to disarm an independent and well-fortified Galician nobility which had reinforced key churches like those Ourense, Portomarín and Tui. “Castillos en el aire. El inicio del cimborrio gótico de la catedral compostelana”, *Quintana*, 8 (2009), pp. 245-269 [accessed November 01, 2020 [https://www.academia.edu/9716648/2009\\_-\\_Castillos\\_en\\_el\\_aire.\\_El\\_inicio\\_del\\_cimborrio\\_g%C3%B3tico\\_de\\_la\\_catedral\\_compostelana](https://www.academia.edu/9716648/2009_-_Castillos_en_el_aire._El_inicio_del_cimborrio_g%C3%B3tico_de_la_catedral_compostelana)]

59 Constable notes that “in some places, the mosque call was replaced by the sounding of a trumpet or other instrument, a substitution that eliminated the problem of [offensive, potentially proselytizing] language but not the issue of noise” (Constable, Olivia Remie. “Regulating religious noise: The Council of Vienne, the mosque call and Muslim pilgrimage in the late medieval Mediterranean world”, *Medieval Encounters*, 16 (2010), pp. 64–95, esp. 69).

60 The story of the bells was recounted in *Chronicon Mundi* (ca. 1236) of Lucas of Túy – a royal commission to celebrate the taking of Córdoba in that year – and its later Spanish translation (ca. 1300). It also appears in the Latin *Historia de rebus Hispaniae* (ca. 1243) of Rodrigo Jiménez de Rada, reworked into the *Primera Crónica General* (1270-1274) of Alonso X, and its eventual translation into Galician (ca. 1312). See Lorenzo, Ramón, “A visión de Santiago nalgúnhas crónicas medievais”, in Santiago López Martínez-Morás, Marina Meléndez Cabo, Gerardo Pérez Barcala, *Identidad europea e intercambios culturales en el Camino de Santiago (Siglos XI-XV)*, Santiago de Compostela, Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, 2013, pp. 247-62, esp. 253.

When Fernando III (1217-1252) reincorporated Córdoba in the course of his successful countercampaigns, he had those bells and the mosque doors melted down and recast for new bells which he bestowed on the sanctuary of St. James<sup>61</sup>.

The tensions among neighboring religious groups persisted for centuries, including within shared soundscapes. Olivia Remie Constable notes that “the twelfth-century *hisba* text by Ibn ‘Abdūn of Seville had ruled that ‘the ringing of bells should be suppressed in all Muslim territories and the sound should only be heard in the lands of the Christians’”. Elsewhere she observes how Christians bowed to their overlords’ demands: “In a twelfth-century version of the *Pact of ‘Umar*, transmitted by the Andalusī Muslim scholar al-Turtūshī (d. 1126), Christians living under Muslim rule promised that ‘we shall only ring bells (*nāqūs*) in our churches very gently. We shall not use voices in our church or in the presence of Muslims, nor shall we raise our voices when following the dead’” (91, 66-67).

For their part, the tradition of silencing the Christian call to prayer lasted through the Muslim residence in Iberia. Medieval *hadiths* among Islamic jurists declared that “Angels do not accompany the travelers who have with them a dog and a bell” and that “The bell is a musical instrument from the instruments of Satan”<sup>62</sup>. Mosques in Morocco still house Iberian church bells carried off as war trophies in times past. They are displayed in their normal hanging position but with their “tongues” (clappers) removed. In a modern touch, they are strung with electric light bulbs and used as chandeliers, illuminating the prayer space according to the new lights of Islam<sup>63</sup>.

Christians routinely employed a parallel practice when they had the military advantage and conquered a Muslim town. When they ruled over urban Muslim populations, they imposed strictures like those that Constable reports: “In 1303, mudejars in Valencia were prohibited from ‘sounding a horn (*nafill*), other instrument, or trumpet in order to signal the prayer or other public announcement from towers, mosques, or other places in the manner of the damnable Muhammadan sect”<sup>64</sup>. Christian masters took possession of mosques, converted some to churches and not infrequently converted minarets to bell towers. Constable says pointedly that, “Religious noise was a powerful signal of territorial control. Bells, especially, were often seen as auditory symbols of conquest, and in thirteenth-century Spain, it was common for them to be immediately installed in the church towers (often former

61 They lasted until the sixteenth century when they were melted again to cast one huge bell, the Berenguela. This bell cracked and now rests in the open-air cloister of the cathedral. A Dutch-manufactured replacement eventually took over its duties.

62 Alibhai, Ali Asgar, “The Reverberations of Santiago’s Bells in Reconquest Spain”, *La corónica* 36.2, Spring (2008), pp. 144-164, esp. 152.

63 Alibhai provides color plates of bells taken from Spanish churches from the twelfth through the fourteenth centuries and repurposed as lamps in the Qarwiyyin Congregational Mosque in Morocco.

64 “References to the use of the *nafill* and other instruments in place of a muezzin would become more common in Aragonese sources from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries” (Constable, Olivia Remie, “Regulating religious noise...”, *op. cit.*, p. 73, n. 32).





minarets) of recently conquered towns”<sup>65</sup>. The most famous case is, of course, the iconic Giralda Tower in Seville which retains its original ramps rather than steps. The assigned muezzins rode a donkey to the top to issue their call to prayer from the upper platform, later capped with housing and mounts for Christian carillons. The Muslim poet Abu al-Baqa’ al-Rundi grieved for fallen Seville and Córdoba: “Those mosques have now been changed into churches, / Where the bells are ringing and crosses are standing. / Even the *mibrabs* weep, though made of cold stone, / Even the *minbars* sing dirges, though made of wood!”<sup>66</sup>.

Muslims who were resident in Christian lands long enough to establish cemeteries to their holy leaders made their own pilgrimages to those sites despite Islamic scholars’ condemnation of the practice as a despised imitation of infidel practices. Gatherings at tomb sites sometimes spawned clamorous processions and other spontaneous rites.

65 Constable, Olivia Remie, “Regulating religious noise...”, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

66 Monroe, James T., Ed. and Trans. *Hispano-Arabic Poetry: A Student Anthology*, Berkeley, 1974, p. 39.



Figs. 6, 7, 8. Spanish Christian bells as war trophies transformed into chandeliers in the Qarwiyyin Congregational Mosque, Fez, Morocco. Twelfth to fourteenth centuries. From Ali Asgar Alibhai, "The Reverberations of Santiago's Bells in Reconquista Spain". Photo: Juan Fernández-Oronoz Nieto.

Evidence provided by both Muslim and Christian sources suggests the noisy and disruptive nature of *ziyāra* [pilgrimage]. Arabic authors described people gathering at certain holy sites (often at night and sometimes in large numbers) to pray, preach, chant, talk, tell stories, and read aloud from the Qur'an. These were all activities that would have disturbed the surrounding acoustic environment and interrupted the daily life of people in the vicinity<sup>67</sup>.

(Figs. 6, 7, 8).

In either case, Christian and Muslim travelers entered cityscapes ruled from above by imperious tolling<sup>68</sup>. Along Christian pathways, medieval pilgrims anxiously

67 She also notes that "... the twelfth-century Sevillian *muhtasib*, Ibn 'Abdūn, had *ziyāra* in mind when he prohibited the practice of gathering, drinking and carousing in cemeteries..." (Constable, Olivia Remie, "Regulating religious noise...", *op. cit.*, pp. 82-83).

68 Constable explores "the issue of religious noise in the later middle ages ... [when] Muslims and Christians lived in close proximity" at the time of the Council of Vienne (1311). The Muslim call to prayer (*adhān*) by the assigned crier or muezzin and their local pilgrimages (*ziyāra*) implicated the regulation of religious noise into the fifteenth

listened for the sound of bells to guide them to their next refuge with its assurance of safety and order. The acoustic blanket that stretched out from strategic sonic heights promised sanctuary, safety, and even salvation. (Fig. 9)

### *Acoustic Islands*

When medieval pilgrims approached a city or fortified settlement, they experienced it as an acoustic island that announced itself through the racket of its distinctive local labor, the entertainment of its taverns and noble courts, the sacred sounds of its religious communities, the criers of the marketplace, and the “legal sounds” that required civil obedience. Competition for the exercise of acoustic authority, with church, government, businesses and individuals alternating in successively weaker ways. But even secluded shrines could accrete dependent populations, and in the Middle Ages popular targets of devotion routinely did. The patron saint of a settlement inhabits the city and the city belongs to the saint: the spirit protects and therefore “owns” the site.

Courtly entertainment was not necessarily at odds with pilgrimage<sup>69</sup>. The masterpiece which merges the two realms of acoustic experience, reticent pilgrim strangers and confident noisy residents, is the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* of Alfonso X, el Sabio. This vast anthology grew to over 420 compositions during the 1250s to 1270s and was ostensibly served up as court entertainment for the Alfonsine retinue. Among their many goals, these narrative and lyrical songs in praise of the Virgin Mary were meant to inspire travel to her shrine sites, established stops along well-known pilgrimage routes such as the churches at Rocadamour and Villalcázar de Sirga. Alfonso became increasingly eager to inspire travel, and perhaps settlement, in his freshly reincorporated territories in the south, like Santa María del Puerto near Cádiz. The *cantigas* promise healing and dramatic intercession. Many have strong “walking” rhythms rather than lilting tempos or wandering lyrical melodies. The famous illuminations in two of the royal manuscripts, the Códice Rico and the Códice de Florencia, illustrate something of the acoustic milieu of that medieval world.

The opening panel of Cantiga 30 shows two figures. To the left is a pious layman, the protagonist of this story shown in the act of pulling coins from his purse

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century. While control of the religious acoustic environment was spotty, the Council of Vienne marked a shift in thinking about religious among both Muslims and Christians. Constable rightly notes that, “Whether in the medieval Mediterranean world or in modern Europe and America, the religious acoustic environment has often been shared, contentious, and subject to both secular and religious legislation” (Constable, Olivia Remie, “Regulating religious noise...”, *op. cit.*, p., 65).

69 Many medieval compositions were meant to inspire pilgrimage. Most examples of hagiography, and even miracle stories detached from full life of saint suggest the value of drawing close to the that holy person by visiting their tomb, monastery or a church dedicated to them.





Fig. 9. Minaret converted into a Christian bell tower at the Ermita de Cuatrovitas (Sevilla). © Ryan Goodman.

Fig. 10. *Cantigas de Santa Maria*,  
Códice Rico, Cantiga 144,  
panel b. Source:  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cantigas\\_de\\_Santa\\_Maria\\_CXLIV\\_-\\_Milagro\\_del\\_toro\\_de\\_Plasencia.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cantigas_de_Santa_Maria_CXLIV_-_Milagro_del_toro_de_Plasencia.jpg).  
No changes made.



and dropping them in the hand of a pilgrim begging alms. They inhabit different worlds. The burgher dwells in a packed urban setting, while the pilgrim moves in the airy background of spiritual concerns<sup>70</sup>. The illustration suggests differing acoustic domains as well. In the *Cantigas* the traveler's world shows none of the usual busyness of city life, none of its noisy crafts and labor so common in other *Cantigas*. (Fig. 10)

Pilgrims arriving at last at cities like Santiago did however make their own joyful noises which added to the euphoria of the city and even provided a moral force for good. Diana Webb notes some of the many cases where pilgrim ruckus and frivolity constituted a distasteful, even dissolute hubbub decried by later moralists and social commentators. Lollard critics decried “the noise of the singing, bagpipes and jingling of their Canterbury bells, not to mention dogs barking after them”<sup>71</sup>. At the shrine of Montserrat in Cataluña,

Pilgrims often wanted to sing and dance, not only while keeping vigil but in the square outside the church; songs appropriate to the setting had therefore been composed, but pilgrims were exhorted not to disturb other worshippers who wished to pray and meditate. The author of the preface [to the *Libre Vermell*, compiled ca. 1399] also optimistically urged pilgrims not to indulge in frivolous and improper song and dance, even when they had departed from the shrine<sup>72</sup>.

70 Alfonso X portrayed himself as a royal intermediary who could travel in secular, spiritual and even divine spaces. He is the dramatic presence supposedly voicing all these first-person lyrics. The king practices a sort of “liturgical ventriloquism” with his intercessory role supplanting the one traditionally reserved for the clergy in Christian worship (Greenia, George, “The Politics of Piety: Manuscript Illumination and Narration in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*”, *Hispanic Review*, 61 Summer (1993), pp. 325-44).

71 Woolgar, Christopher M., *The Senses...*, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

72 Webb, Diana, *Medieval European...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 155-158, esp. 157.

Hospitality for pilgrims at the Virgin's Shrine at Montserrat included providing them with appropriately pious songs they could even dance to. The same *Llibre Vermell* documents the monks' guidance, and apparently their dismay over pilgrim misbehavior:

Because sometimes pilgrims keeping vigil in the church of the Blessed Virgin of Montserrat want to sing and dance – and likewise on the square during daytime – and since it is not appropriate to sing there anything else than honorable and pious songs, some have been set down above and below. They should be used decorously and sparingly in order not to disturb those who are still at prayer and in pious reflection, things all people keeping vigil should concentrate on and piously apply themselves to<sup>73</sup>.

The “Stella splendens” of the *Llibre Vermell* bears a header that proclaims, “Sequitur alia cantilena ad trepidum rotundum” (Here follows another little song for a dance in the round)<sup>74</sup>.

The final acoustic island the pilgrim landed on had to be the most distinctive. Tongues of many nations cried out on its shores with fervent insistence. The chants of the universal Church were complemented by proprietary compositions only performed by church functionaries at a given location. Other songs were entirely in the purview of the laity, like sung prayers performed on commission by blind soloists, or entertainment by bands of children as William Wey notes, even transcribing their lyrics<sup>75</sup>.

### *Legal soundings*

Pilgrims were not citizens of the communities they visited. They counted as a protected class of aliens with limited legal rights. These semi-sacred guests enjoyed certain exemptions from duties and taxes, and were granted unique measures of

73 “Quia interdum peregrini quando vigilant in ecclesia Beate Marie de Monte Serrato volunt cantare et trepidare, et etiam in platea de die, et ibi non debeant nisi honestas ac devotas cantilenas cantare, idcirco superius et inferius aliquae sunt scriptae. Et de hoc uti debent honeste et parce, ne perturbent perseverantes in orationibus et devotis contemplationibus, in quibus omnes vigilantes insistere debent pariter et devote vaccare” (Wursten, Dick, *The music from the Llibre Vermell of Montserrat. Revised text edition, based on the original manuscript*. Last updated December, 2018. [https://dick.wursten.be/Vermell\\_originaltexts\\_translations.htm](https://dick.wursten.be/Vermell_originaltexts_translations.htm)). The Latin transcription by Dick Wursten, the English translations are our own. Concerning the undignified behavior of women and even Franciscan friars who danced in the streets to celebrate religious feasts see also: Gómez Muntané, Maricarmen, *El ‘Llibre Vermell’. Cantos y danzas de fines del Medioevo*, México, Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2017, pp. 40-44.

74 See: Massip, Francesc, “Danza y espectáculo en los caminos de peregrinación (ss. XII-XV)”, in Santiago López Martínez-Morás, Marina Meléndez Cabo, Gerardo Pérez Barcala (eds.), *Identidad europea e intercambios culturales en el Camino de Santiago (Siglos XI-XV)*, Santiago de Compostela, Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, 2013, pp. 263-300.

75 Wey, William, *The Itineraries of William Wey*, in Francis Davey (ed. and trans.), Oxford, Bodleian Library, 2010, p. 213.

charity, care and protection in times of armed conflict. They were expected, however, to obey the laws and customs of the city like curfews, not compete with local merchants, and keep the peace including noise ordinances.

Hawkers calling out to shoppers meant a strenuous welcome for pilgrim newcomers to the city. Ian Wood points out how “temple economies” were operative in the medieval West as well as the ancient Middle East, shrine sites being important geographic junctions of commerce and social development<sup>76</sup>.

In Jan. 9, 1271, the cathedral Chapter issued a “Directive on How Those Found Who Go About With Light After Curfew Has Been Sounded Are to Be Punished”<sup>77</sup>. Members of the Chapter are forbidden to move about armed and in the dark: “Any cleric found out and about armed and not carrying a light [candle or torch] should be apprehended by the bailiff”.

Churches in Middle Ages not only staged religious services but served as the fulcrum of social life. They provided space for striking deals, taking appointments and offhand conversation. All this hubbub during worship prompted the Fortieth Compostelan Council in June 22, 1436 to declare that:

Inasmuch as was declared to said lord that some of the faithful on Sunday and other solemn feast days during the celebration of High Mass are in the cemeteries outside the doors of the churches chatting and doing other things that should be suspended at such times, therefore he orders the faithful under pain of excommunication that they go to their church and attend said Masses by every parishioner according to rules I have imposed on the Sunday and feast days to attentively hear the Mass as said by their chaplain or pastor<sup>78</sup>.

Hieronymus Münzer, co-author of the Nuremberg Chronicle, affirms in his Santiago travel narrative of 1494 that the continuous bustle produced by the babble of church-going crowds was irreverent and disruptive: “The incessant ruckus produced by the chatting of the people within that church is astonishing, and shows scant devotion to the holy Apostle who is indeed worthy of far greater reverence”<sup>79</sup>.

76 Wood, Ian, *The Transformation of the Roman West*, Leeds, ARC Humanities Press, 2018

77 *Constitutio qualiter puniantur illis qui sine lumine de nocte post pulsacionem minicionis inueniantur*. Archivo de la Cathedral de Santiago, CF24, fol. 74v. There is a translation into Spanish in López Ferreiro, *Historia de la Santa AM Iglesia ...*, *op. cit.*, 1895, pp. 187-188.

78 “Item por quanto he dicto a o dicto sennor que alguus frigieses enos domingos festas solemnes en quanto se celebra a misa mayor están en os cemiterios ante as portas das eglesias parlando et facendo outras cousas que en tal tempo deuen cesar, por ende manda a os frigreses so pena descomoion que uaan á sua Iglesia et esten a as dictas misas por quanto todo frigres segun direito he obrigado enos domingos et festas de oir comridamente toda a dicta misa de seu capelán et rector”. López Ferreiro, *Historia de la Santa AM Iglesia ...*, *op. cit.*, 1895, ap. XVIII, p. 67.

79 “Increíble es el bullicio que hay de continuo en aquella iglesia, producido por la charla de las gentes, que muestran de este modo muy poca devoción al bendito Apóstol, digno, en verdad, de que se le guardase mucha más reverencia” (García Mercadal, J., *Viajes de extranjeros por España y Portugal: desde los tiempos más remotos hasta comienzos del siglo XX*, Valladolid, Junta de Castilla y León, Consejería de Educación y Cultura, 1999, p. 388).





Fig. 11. *Breviario de Miranda*, fifteenth century, ACS, CF28, f. 404v. Source: ©Archivo-Biblioteca de la Catedral de Santiago.

This *din* represented a thriving life of a city of pilgrimage, of merchants, and of an aggressive oligarchy whose silence could not be counted on<sup>80</sup>. (Fig. 11)

The sound of the *añafil* or clarion (straight) trumpet is associated also with the announcements of the town crier whose proclamations served to enact civic decisions or, in later Middle Ages, with administrative and criminal procedures. The mandate of March 11, 1419 by the city council is very clear:

<sup>80</sup> Erasmus levels a similar complaint about riotous behavior that drowns out worship: "But that you may not wonder so much at that, in the Midst of the Cities, and in Alehouses next to the Churches, upon the most solemn Holidays, there was drinking, singing, dancing, fighting, with such a Noise and Tumult, that divine Service could not be perform'd, nor one Word heard that the Parson said" (Erasmus, Desiderius, "A Butcher and a Salt-Fishmonger", in E. Johnson (ed.) and N. Bailey (transl.), *The Colloquies vol. 2* [1518], Online Library of Liberty [accessed October 5, 2019 <https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/erasmus-the-colloquies-vol-2>]).

They were asked and entreated that they should give license to Domingo Longo, officer of the town Council of said city, who was present, to go through the town squares of said city to make proclamation such as was customary in cases of judgment ... and they routinely ordered said Domingo Longo to go through the town squares of said city accompanied by a clarion trumpet to make the proclamation<sup>81</sup>.

The figure of the crier is a boisterous feature among the tools of political power. He serves as mediator between two culturally distinct spaces, local authority and absent lords, straddling the edges of both. He extends his sway through the realms of Castile during the Trastámaran dynasty in the second half of the fourteenth century as a tool for the transmission of news, both for royal politics and local policy, decisions and regulations<sup>82</sup>. In the judicial use, as we read in the case of 1419, is not only the communication of a judgment but an exercise of pedagogy, showing the whole community the consequences of breaking the law and the rigor of its compliance<sup>83</sup>.

A pair of trumpeters marks the opening of Cantiga 320 in one of the illuminated Escorial manuscripts (Fig. 12). Pendant banners identify these musicians as employees of the sovereign of Castilla and León, Alfonso X. The Arabic script traced on the flared mouths of these heralds' *buisines* spells out the traditional *bismillah*, "in the name of God", the phrase which opens the Qur'an<sup>84</sup>. Its appearance on these clarions could allude to them being war trophies taken in battle against Muslim forces, or a gift of tribute from a vassal Muslim kingdom within Alfonso's expanding realm. By extension the inscription may be a gesture that Alfonso's authority extended over his Muslim subjects who should harken to the decrees promulgated at the sound of his clarions.

Through trumpet calls and vocal proclamations civil authorities exercised authority over common folk including visiting pilgrims. Vibrant announcements blared their solemnity relying on recognizable formulas and phrases with few cultural particularities required. Gisela Coronado refers to two groups: enunciative cries for municipal decrees and exhortative cries communicating a prohibition or new rule. She offers examples from the fifteenth century of royal efforts to regulate news of pronouncements of city councils to extend municipal and royal power<sup>85</sup>.

81 "Lles rogava e pedia de graça que mandasen e desen liçençia a Domingo Longo, servento do conçello da dita çidade, que presente era, que fose con el por las praças desta dita çidade a faser pregon, segundo era costume de fazer aos que eran julgados en caso semellante [...]. Mandavan e mandaron e deran liçençia ao dito Domingo Longo que fose por las plaças da dita çidade con anafil ao fazer os apregoos". Rodríguez, ed., *Libro do Concello*, 163.

82 Nieto Soria, J., "El pregón real en la vida política de la Castilla Trastámara", *Edad Media. Revista Histórica*, 13 (2012), pp. 77-102, esp. 78.

83 *Ibidem*, p. 93.

84 The instrument reputedly entered Europe when it was brought back by crusader forces returning from Palestine. There is ample evidence that it was already known in ancient Rome (the *tubae* on Trajan's Column, CE 113), and Richard I of England was greeted outside Acre with tuba and horns. They are well attested in Islamic manuscripts which show the trumpeting angel Israfil, a counterpart to Raphael in Hebrew and Christian traditions.

85 Coronado Schwindt, Gisela, "Las ciudades castellanas bajomedievales a través de sus paisajes sonoros", *Estudios de Historia de España*, 15 (2013), pp. 131-151.

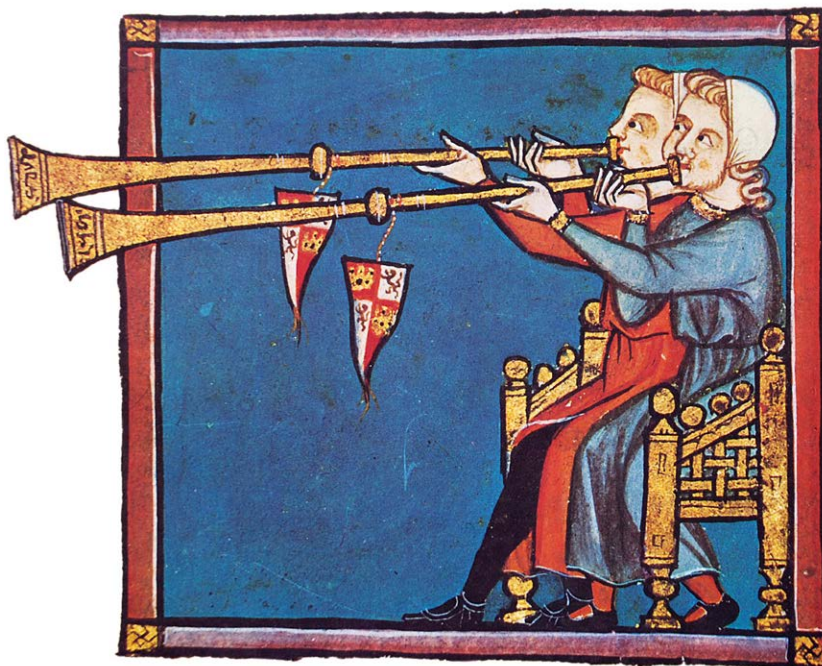


Fig. 12. *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, Códice de los músicos, Ms. J.b.2, Cantiga 320.

Source: <https://h5p.org/sites/default/files/h5p/content/879732/images/image-5ec62632e1131.jpg>. No changes made.

### *Pilgrims giving voice to prayer*

One way that pilgrims *could* raise their voices was in prayer, and those prayers could become public spectacle. The best example is perhaps the idealized, almost mystic description in Book III, Sermon 17 of the *Codex Calixtinus* with its wondrous, almost cinematic description of the surging throngs of devotees inside the cathedral during their overnight vigils<sup>86</sup>. The catalogue of swirling activities and noisemaking again has something of the tourist brochure hype about it, a promotional tone that promises theatrical displays of authentic piety that could elevate viewers as well as participants. The whole scene is medieval “sound and light show” with free admission:

One marvels with exceeding joy, who sees the chorus of pilgrims keeping watch around the venerable altar of St. James; Germans on one side, French on another, Italians on another standing in groups, holding burning tapers in their hands, which illuminate the whole church as the sun or rather the brightest day. Each one with his compatriots

<sup>86</sup> Some of the activities listed would not have taken place in the dark. Vigils (Matins) rarely includes processions because of the challenges of moving groups around without daylight. Offerings alms to the blind in the dark of night may sound appealing because both donor and beneficiary are wrapped in shadows, but the blind are cautious about wandering through a city lacking the daytime auditory clues they count on to make their way. They are also more exposed to miscreants operating in the dark.

sagely performs the vigils [Matins] by themselves. They keep awake, some by playing citharas, others lyres, others timpanis, others pipes, others trumpets, others harps, others viols, others Breton or Gallican *rotas*, others psalteries, others by singing various kinds of music, some lament their sins, other recite psalms, others give alms to the blind<sup>87</sup>. There are heard diverse genera of tongues, diverse shouts of barbarous languages and the prattle of Germans, Angles, Greeks, and of all the other tribes and diverse races of all climes of the world. There are neither languages nor tongues whose voices do not resound. In this way vigils are observed there, some indeed advance and others pull back and various people offer gifts. If anyone approaches with sadness, he retires with happiness. Solemnities are continually celebrated there, feasts carefully conducted, magnificent throngs worship day and night, praise and jubilation, joy and exultation, are sung together. Splendor pervades all days and nights, as though under a continual joyful solemnity to the Lord and to the Apostle. The doors of this same cathedral are seldom closed day or night, and it is ordained that night has no place in it, because the splendid light of the candles and tapers shines like mid-day<sup>88</sup>.

(Fig. 13)

New work by Sarah Blick reveals that among the souvenirs that pilgrims brought home with them were commemorative noisemakers. Rattles, miniature bells and tin and clay whistles were sold to visitors at sanctuaries and popular markets. Like pilgrim badges they could be worn conspicuously, and they vied for display in the homes of returned pilgrims. "Sweet sounds of singing and chanting were praised and considered necessary for church services, while jangling, loud noises were prized for their ability to scare off demons and threatening weather. A rattle in the hands of a baby could scare off evil. ... Boat-shaped whistles could be purchased at shrines to the Virgin like Boulogne-sur-mer "decorated with scales and a dragon-head prow and surmounted by a tiny figure of St. Nicolas or trilobe tracery"<sup>89</sup>.

The final paragraph of Book III of the *Codex Calixtinus*, sermons for feast days, insists on the effect of natural sounding devices that could calm threatening weather:

87 Probably to launch these recipients into audible prayers or songs.

88 Herbers, Klaus; Santos Noia, Manuel (eds.), *Liber Sancti Jacobi...*, *op. cit.*, p. 89. See the Spanish translation with helpful notes on the named musical instruments in: Moralejo, A.; Torres, C.; Feo J. (eds.), *Liber Sancti Jacobi Codex Calixtinus*, Santiago de Compostela, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas Instituto Padre Sarmiento, 1951, pp. 199-201.

89 Blick, Sarah, "Bringing Pilgrimage Home...", *op. cit.*, pp. 19-21.





Fig. 13. Tribune level of the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Catedral\\_de\\_Santiago\\_de\\_Compostela\\_desde\\_a\\_Tribuna.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Catedral_de_Santiago_de_Compostela_desde_a_Tribuna.jpg). No changes made.

Concerning the sea shells of St. James<sup>90</sup>:

They say that the melody of the conch shells from the shores of St. James, the shells that pilgrims habitually take home with them, rings in the ears of the throngs spurring their devotion to faith and expelling the snares of the enemy, the rumble of hail, the distress of downpours, the onslaught of storms – all calmed by the thunder of merrymaking. The winds are made healthful and gentle, gales are tamed.<sup>91</sup>

90 "De tubis Sancti Iacobi. Traditur quod ubicumque melodia tube marium sancti Iacobi, quam peregrini secum deferre solent, auribus insonuerit populoꝝ, augmentatur in eis devocio fidei, procul pelluntur omnes insidie inimici; fragor grandinum, procella turbinum, impetus tempestatum temperantur infesta tonitrua, ventorum fragla [flagra] fiunt salubriter ac moderate suspensa, posternuntur aerie potestates" (Herbers, Klaus; Santos Noia, Manuel (eds.), *Liber Sancti Jacobi*..., *op. cit.*, p. 191). Compare with the translation and notes in Coffey, Thomas F.; Dunn, Maryjane (eds.), *The Miracles and Translatio of Saint James. Books Two and Three of the "Liber Sancti Jacobi"*, NY & Bristol, Italica Press, 2019, pp. 95-96. The Bayeux Tapestry depicts one sailor signaling with a horn and others perhaps whistling from ship to ship.

91 A footnote in the Spanish translation of Serafín Moralejo observes that, "aunque el texto latino dice *tuba* «trompeta», se trata ... de las caracolas que los peregrinos recogían en la playa de Galicia [*presumably those arriving by ship at A Coruña, Fisterra, or Corcubión on the western coasts*] para llevárselas a su tierra.

The traditional cupped scallop shells brought back as symbols of the Jacobean pilgrimage are not for blowing or trumpeting such as the conch shells used as horns in many tropical seaside communities. There is however a still popular Galician tradition of using the outer ridges of the shell as a percussion instrument. Pilgrims could use their shells as rasps to make clacking sounds to accompany any sort of song or performance, no stranger than clapping in time with a song.

### *Conclusions*

Modern pilgrims may sing heartily as they walk today's groomed trails, but their choices tend to be pop tunes or glossy hits from Disney movies. That is certainly the case for contemporary youths whose musical repertoire is scattershot, strictly generational, and often only known in forms too orchestrated to reproduce on the trail. They reach for their cellphone to make music for them. Hardly anyone carries with them a deliberate song list of sacred lyrics, at least not to use on the trail and only suitable when a specific group is isolated from its random traveling companions, even those of the same language. Shrine sites rarely offer an international playlist of hymns so that everyone may join in. Music and song are now privatized, confined to earbuds.

Medieval pilgrims, however, abandoned the soundscapes of home and experienced, even eagerly sought acoustic novelty in sacred soundings. The churches that welcomed them enveloped worshipers in stillness and song in ways that induced a sense of transcendence. One could address God and almost hear God respond from the echoey, resonant stone walls. Recovering a sense of their hushed walking, auditory bewilderment, and enthusiastic merriment helps us understand the appeal of medieval pilgrimage and the enduring memory of its sounds.

### *Afterword*

Some years ago at the National Gallery in Washington, DC a colleague from William & Mary was helping curate an exhibition of Russian icons. Technical experts had come from Russia to assist, and late one night before opening the show they were alone, making a final walk through of the emplacements. As they stopped in

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Estas caracolas se encuentran también en la actualidad y son las que los pescadores en las Rías Bajas llaman *cuernas*. De ellas se sirven a manera de pregón para anunciar a su regreso del mar la venta de la pesca". (Moralejo, A.; Torres, C.; Feo J. (eds.), *Liber Sancti Jacobi...*, op. cit., p. 402). Some art historians inaccurately use 'conch shell' interchangeably with 'scallop shell' (Wixom, William D., "Medieval Sculpture at the Cloisters", *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* [Winter 1988/89], pp. 11-65, esp. 12).

front of each icon, they reminded each other of a unique hymn associated with it and they sang it together softly. The image called forth the song, and suddenly, in an empty museum gallery, they were on pilgrimage.

The other senses within the medieval *sensorium* have been explored unevenly. Vision has been overwhelmed by studies focused on art history, aesthetic taste and iconography<sup>92</sup>. The matrix of sensory impressions into which the rare stained glass or illuminated manuscript is set waits to be reconstructed. The same is true of touch. How often could pilgrims caress a polished surface, what were the textures of their clothes, their vessels, their tools? A modern recovery of medieval smells seems downright off putting, yet the manufacture, trade and deployment of scents was no small part of life. Peter Brown writes that "... incense could mean different things to different people. Emperors burned it in huge potlatch bonfires to delight the citizens of Rome. Doctors used it in their remedies...":

But frankincense was more than that. Just as light or the glow of gold was thought of as the purest material reflection on earth of the spiritual world—so that a temple or a church filled with light contained nothing less than “frozen God”—so the smell of incense was matter at its most ethereal, closest to the sweetness of the gods. Incense formed a delicate bridge between the human and the divine. In a world crowded with hostile as well as with benign presences, incense acted as a repellent to drive off demons. No wonder that it rose in billows in the temples of the Middle East<sup>93</sup>.

Brown notes that in the temples of India and elsewhere the medieval sensorium is still accessible, still redolent with its smells, surfaces to be stroked and a thoughtfully cultivated soundscape. The West needs to listen to the East<sup>94</sup>.

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92 But see: Frank, Georgia, "The Pilgrim's gaze in the age before icons", in Robert S. Nelson and Norman Bryson (eds.), *Visuality before and beyond the Renaissance: Seeing as Others Saw*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2000, pp. 98-115; Wells, Emma J., "Making Sense...", *op. cit.*

93 Brown, Peter, "Cities That Touched Heaven", *New York Review* (June 6, 2019), pp. 28-30, esp. 29.

94 While all opinions and errors are the authors' alone, we wish to express gratitude to colleagues who offered valuable insights, specially Charles Faulhaber, Nancy Harvey Lenz, Michelle Hawkins Garceau, Sonja Musser Golladay, Rebekah Scott and Miguel Taín Guzmán. George Greenia would also like to credit Somayah Allibhai-Mawani, a student at William & Mary who convinced her observant Muslim family to allow her to join a Christian pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. A student of studio art, her personal research focused on sensory impressions within a medieval cathedral.



