# A Provençal Holy Land. Re-reading the Legend and the Sites of Mary Magdalene in Southern France

Romy Wyche

This paper examines the pilgrimage experience of pilgrims to Mary Magdalene's and her companions' sites in Provence during the Middle Ages. The author analyses the creation of the cult and the elaboration of a 'holy geography' in Provence based on medieval vitae about the legend of the saints. Sites associated with the saints became part of a wider narrative in which the topography was constructed to 'ventriloque' Palestine. This development led to similarities in the pilgrimage experience in both regions. Through an analysis of pilgrimage accounts, the author argues that pilgrims in both Provence and the Holy Land interpreted the topography through the prism of the texts that they were reading, the vitae for the former and the Bible for the latter. This shared scriptural basis established certain parallels in the pilgrimage experience at each destination and, as will be examined, contributed to constructing Provence as a post-biblical holy land where the life of Mary Magdalene and her companions could be tangibly experienced.

But while nature and history have done much for Provence, perhaps religion has done even more. There are places blessed from the beginning of time which are lost in the mists of time. Egypt saw the birth of Moses; Arabia still burns with lightning from Sinai, and the sand of its deserts has retained the footprints of the people of God, the Jordan divided before this same people and, from the cedars of Lebanon to the palm trees of Jericho, Palestine would hear and see things that would be the eternal preoccupation of humanity. The Son of God was born on these sea shores; there his Word instructed the entire world, and his blood flowed so as to save it. Rome, in its turn, Rome, the heir of everything, received into its walls the legacy of Christ, and its amazed Capitol lent itself to the chaste ceremonies of victorious love, after having for a long period served the bloody triumph of war. There, above all, are the places religion has consecrated, the holy places, those one could believe belonged to heaven rather than

> to earth. And yet a part was reserved to Provence in this distribution of divine graces attached to the earth, a unique part, and one like the last imprint of the life of Jesus Christ among us.[58]

This description of Provence as a post-biblical land, written in the nineteenth century by a French Dominican ecclesiastic, stems from a belief that had already started to flourish in the eleventh century. It was thought that Mary Magdalene,[59] along with her sister Martha and brother Lazarus, were expelled from the Holy Land and drifted to the coast of Provence where they became early Christian missionaries and lived there for the rest of their lives. From the twelfth century onwards, various sites in Provence became associated with these specific saints, creating a pilgrimage "land" for those who wanted to see and experience their post-biblical lives. In this respect, this was not a direct reconstruction of the Holy Land, as was that of Gerusalemme di Valdelsa in Tuscany (1500–1515) for example, which was a topographical copy of Jerusalem, with *loca sancta* commemorating New and Old Testament events,[60] or even 'copies' of specific monuments like the fifth century tomb of Christ in Narbonne. Instead, Provence was conceived of as a continuation of the Holy Land, where new sites became associated with biblical characters. Mary Magdalene's tomb, for instance, was not mentioned in the Bible nor was it known to be in Jerusalem,[61] but in the Middle Ages it was thought to have been in Provence. By the thirteenth century, this "invented" tomb had become one of the most popular pilgrimage destinations in Medieval France, and in time, these sites and the legend of Mary Magdalene became a fundamental part of the topography and identity of the region.

[58] Translation into English from French offered by Peter T. Hancock from Lacordaire 1880: 3. However, it should be noted that the first edition of this book was published in 1860.

[59] Mary Magdalene here is actually a composite figure between the anonymous sinner of St. Luke's Gospel, the Magdalene present at Jesus's crucifixion, and the sister of Lazarus and Martha. This composite identity of Mary Magdalene appeared in Latin theological writings from as early as the late sixth century and became more commonly accepted in the West in the twelfth century, see Foskolou 2011–2012, especially pp. 271–272. Texts influencing Mary Magdalene's medieval identity include the 25th and 33rd homilies of Gregory the Great and the late ninth to early tenth century *Sermo in veneratione sanctae Mariae Magdalenae*, traditionally attributed to Odo of Cluny but now thought to be the work of an anonymous Cluniac monk, see Iogna-Prat 1992.

[60] Sergio Gensini, *La 'Gerusalemme' di S. Vivaldo e i Sacri Monti in Europa* (Pisa: Pacini, 1989), 133-143.

[61] While she had no official tomb associated with her, it was believed that her body was in Ephesus and by the end of the ninth century had been translated to Constantinople by Pope Leo VI, see Haskins 1993: 108.

Many miracles were recorded at her sarcophagus, which King Louis IX went to see in 1254 on the way back to Paris from his Crusade, at the same time as he visited her grotto where she was thought to have retreated for thirty years. René of Anjou (Faillon 1865: 996), François I (Faillon 1865: 1033; Boche 1664: 53), Louis XIII (Faillon 1865: 1068), and in 1660 Louis XIV with his mother Anne of Austria (Faillon 1865: 1100; Boche 1664: 531), also paid homage to the saint. Most of these visits are well documented, while others might like Louis XIII, have taken place only in the particularly imaginative mind of Etienne Faillon, a staunch defender of the legend in the seventeenth century (Faillon 1865). That said, we have many historical records from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries written by literate friars, but starting from the fifteenth century pilgrims begin to write detailed accounts of their own pilgrimages.[62] In 1472, one such pilgrim, Hans von Waltheym, planned his journey so as to see all sites related to the saint in the region, ignoring every other aspect of Provence. He concentrated on more than just her tomb, and was attracted by all sites associated with her legend in what is now Southern France. Like many other pilgrims, he wanted to see and experience the sites where Mary Magdalene and her companions had preached, lived, and died. Through his experiences, he came to see Provence as a new Holy Land.

In this article, I analyse how these sites were part of a wider narrative set in Provence in which the topography was constructed to 'ventriloque' Palestine through the creation of holy sites.[63] I am not concerned with the specific, local conditions under which the various cults related to the saint were created but rather with the pilgrimage experience itself. First, I will briefly examine the historical, textual and, archaeological evidence that became the basis for these legends. Second, I will look at the nature of this pilgrimage through pilgrims' accounts to see how they described the sites that they were seeing. I suggest that this pilgrimage was based on texts, and thus by essence was of a scriptural nature, much like pilgrimages to the Holy Land. Hence, it was not only the saints who were transposed into Provence from the Holy Land, but the pilgrimage experience itself.

[62] For accounts of pilgrimages to the sites, see Montagnes 2001; 2002.

[63] The recent works by Bianca Kühnel have concentrated on the reconstruction of the Holy Land in Europe (as opposed to its 'replication' as in Provence), see Kühnel 2012, especially p. 243. There have been many such studies in the last few years, for instance de Klerck 2014 and Terry-Fritsch 2015.

## Creation of the Legend

The legend of Mary Magdalene in Provence originated from Vézelay Abbey in Burgundy in the eleventh century following its monks' claim to possess her relics. The monks needed to explain how the relics came to be translated to Burgundy, so it was decided that a hagiographer would write a vita explaining how the relics arrived there (Pinto-Mathieu 1997: 74). In the mid-eleventh century, a monk at the abbey invented a legend in which Mary Magdalene, along with her brother Lazarus and sister Martha, were expelled from the Holy Land and set out in a boat with no sails that drifted towards the coast of Provence.[64] Many years after their deaths, a knight named Adelelmus went to retrieve them to save them from the Saracens who were ravaging Provence, and subsequently brought them to Vézelay. Different versions of this legend were written that vary the companions of the saints,[65] the precise geographic locations of events, and even the name of the individual who retrieved the relics from Provence.[66] Vézelay Abbey became one of the major pilgrimage sites in Western Europe during the thirteenth century largely because of the cult of Mary Magdalene (Saxer 1975: 22), which was one of the reasons why the Third Crusade was preached there.[67]

The vitae also inspired the creation of cults in Southern France, and the first to have allegedly surfaced in response to the legends was that of Martha in Tarascon in 1187, just a few years before the Second Crusade.[68] At about the same time, two rival cults appeared in Provence claiming to have the tomb of Mary Magdalene and

[64] This version is known as the *Sermo de Sancta Maria Magdalena* and can be found under BHL 5488. A translation of this sermon is available in Clemens 2001.

[65] In later versions such as the *Vita Apostolica* or the *Translatio Posterior* both dating from the late eleventh century, Mary Magdalene travelled with Maximinus, known as Maximin in France. For extracts of these vitae, see Saxer 1955.

[66] In both the *Vita Apostolica* and the *Translatio Posterior,* Adelelmus is replaced by a monk named Badilo who came to Provence to retrieve the relics in 745 (749 according to some accounts).

[67] For the reasons why the abbey was chosen as the launching point for the crusades, see Phillips 2007: 67.

[68] In her late twelfth century vita written in Provence, it was said that she had delivered the city of Tarascon by slaying the dragon - locally known as the Tarasque - that had been terrorising the city for centuries - and that she converted the city to Christianity. For an analysis of this vita see Peters 1997, especially p. 442. As a result of all these achievements in Provence, scholars have argued that her medieval popularity stemmed more from her Gallic accomplishments than from her life as recorded in the New Testament. For more on the life of the saint in Tarascon, see Daas 2008, especially p. 3.

thereby contesting Vézelay's claims to her relics.[69] But it was only in 1279 that the cult started to receive widespread recognition, when the Dominican friars in Saint-Maximin alleged that Charles II of Salerno (1254–1309) had discovered the sarcophagus of the saint in Saint-Maximin (Saxer 1955: 197). In 1295, Charles II built a large basilica for Mary Magdalene in Saint-Maximin above the hypogeum in which Mary Magdalene's sarcophagus had been found, thus changing what had once been a private late antique funerary chapel into a crypt below the church.[70] In 1283, the saint's skull was removed and placed in a golden reliquary, crowned with an Angevin diadem sent by the Prince's father Charles I, King of Naples (1227–1285). The cult got a major boost when Pope Boniface VIII (1294–1303) explicitly acknowledged the authenticity of the relics in 1295 and founded a Dominican order in Saint Maximin.[71]

Furthermore, Mary Magdalene was said to have lived in a grotto in the Sainte-Baume hills near Saint-Maximin for thirty years. In point of fact, the hills were even named after the grotto, Sainte-Baume being Provençal for 'Holy Grotto'. According to his early thirteenth century vita written by Rufino, the Italian pilgrim Raimondo Palmario had already visited the harsh place of her penitence not far from Marseille, no doubt the Baume in 1170.[72] The grotto attracted many different types of pilgrims, including some notable figures such as Petrarch who made frequent visits to the shrine starting in 1338, and who was inspired to write poems about the saint (Gilbadi 1975). The site was renowned for the miracles that had happened there, as is testified by Jean Gobi Senior, who after having left his monastery in Montpellier came to St. Maximin to record these revelations in his books of Miracles written in the sixteenth century (Gobi l'Ancien 2009). At about that time, pilgrimage accounts inform us that the Monastery of St. Victor in Marseille claimed to possess the rock at which Mary

[69] For more on this cult, see Saxer 1959: 105.

[70] For more information on the late antique hypogeum, see Fixot 2001.

[71] In addition, Katherine Jansen thinks that the emergence of a mendicant preaching earlier in the thirteenth century and the 4th Lateran Council's reformulation of the sacrament of penance at the same time contributed to a renewed enthusiasm for the saint, see Jansen 1995.

[72] Although Canetti believes that it might be Lérins, the island near Cannes on which there is a monastery, but there is no evidence to support this claim (Canetti 1993: 195). Faillon uncovered an even earlier account in a brief notice located in the archives of the Grande Chartreuse that attributed the foundation of the grotto to the year 1117 by a nobleman from Italy who was ill and taken to the grotto and who promised to establish a Carthusian monastery if he recovered. After his health improved, he founded Montrieux and became a monk. Mary Magdalene is not mentioned, so it is possible that the grotto had miracle associations before being linked to the saint, or that it was already associated with her. Furthermore, in 1248 the site is mentioned by the Franciscan Salimbene of Parma who visited the cave, see Faillon 1865: 806 and Saxer 1959: II, 240–241.

Magdalene prayed when she landed.[73] Other pilgrims also note that they saw a little alabaster box in the monastery containing precious ointment (Platter 1892: 309–310).

The abbey became more closely associated with the tomb of Lazarus[74] in the twelfth century, when the monks of St. Victor claimed to possess his relics.[75] Mary Jacobi and Mary Salome, the supposed half-sisters of the Virgin Mary,[76] and Anne, Mary's mother, eventually also became part of the legend.[77] We know that Hans von Waltheym saw the tomb of Saint Maximin in his 1474 pilgrimage, among the sar-

[73] Audisio 2009, especially p. 339. The rock was mentioned in De Beatis 1913: 239; Platter 1892: 308. Müntzer describes the rock as "the place where she recovered", see Amargier & Charlet 1991, especially p. 593.

[74] According to a thirteenth century liturgical manuscript from Autun, the saint died in the Holy Land at the time of Domitian, and his bones were then transferred to Marseille during the reign of Titus and Vespasian. An additional note on the manuscript written a century later tells us that Girard, Bishop of Autun (968–976), asked for the relics to be moved to his city. A discussion on this manuscript can be found in Seidel 1999: 67.

[75] For a list of the relics and 'spaces' in Saint-Victor associated with the cult of Mary-Magdalene, see Audisio 2009: 339–340. It should be noted however that a Lazarus is mentioned in a charter relating to the consecration of St. Victor in Marseille dated 1040. That said, Saxer redated the document to 1120 (1959: 208). However, the origin of this Lazarus is unclear: a large number of burials were found in excavations of subterranean chambers. We know that many of these tombs belonged to important saints and members of the clergy in the region. It is not impossible that one of these sarcophagi might have belonged to a fifth-century bishop of Aix named Lazarus. The identity of the sarcophagus's owner may have been confused as a result of this mistaken belief, or wishful thinking. See Demians d'Archimbaud 1971 and De Beatis 1913: 309.

[76] In 1212, Gervase of Tilbury in his *Otia Imperalia* mentioned that their bodies were among the holy bodies to be found in a church west of Marseille, probably in the town now called Saintes-Maries. See Gervase of Tilbury 1707: I, 914. Extracts from the relevant passages can be found in *Acta Sanctorum*, Octobris IX, 453. Gervase furthermore noted that the Church was founded by disciples of Jesus who had fled from persecution in Palestine. That said, their relics were only discovered when King René of Anjou (1409–1480) directed an excavation in 1448, and by coincidence found three bodies that were attributed to Mary Jacobi, Mary Salome and their servant, see Pinto-Mathieu 1997: xiii. For more information on their cult, see Chocheyras 1998.

[77] She is not included in the medieval vitae but authors from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries recall an ancient legend by which they were found by a deaf boy during the reign of Charlemagne who indicated the location of her relics that had been hidden from Saracen attacks during an Office, see Boze 1813: 107. That said, her cult was already celebrated in Apt Cathedral in the twelfth century, though it was probably unrelated to the legend. By the fourteenth century it was believed that the relics in the cathedral were the result of Anne's trip across the Mediterranean with the other saints. For more on the saint in Apt, see Barruol 1964: 3.

cophagi of other "dear saints who were buried there".[78] One of these sarcophagi is now attributed to Sidonius, a man who was cured of blindness by Jesus.[79]

To sum up this rather complex story, the cult was created in Burgundy where the body was first produced, and then, much later, a series of texts were written to substantiate that claim.[80] It was believed that during the reign of Louis the Pious, the Count of Burgundy and Abbot Heudo of Vezelay sent the monk Badilo to Aix-en-Provence to rescue the remains of the saint who had come to Provence with Lazarus and Martha from the Holy Land, from the wasteland that Provence had become after the destruction of Provence by the Saracens, as was recorded in the *Gesta episcoporum Cameracensium* written in 1024–1025.[81] In the words of Webb, at first the "Provençals had to content themselves with the secondary characters and the leftovers of the party" (Webb 2000: 15). There was the cult of Martha in Tarascon, while Marseille claimed to have Lazarus' tomb. If we believe Raimondo's pilgrimage account the Sainte Baume was already visited by pilgrims who wanted to see where Mary Magdalene had lived as a hermit,and the shrine of Saintes-Maries was already a centre of worship.[82] His testimony is the first proper pilgrimage record in Provence, and dates to around 1170. He makes no mention of the tomb of Mary Magdalene in Saint Maximin, which is logical since it had not yet been found:

> (then) having venerated the relics of the most holy Apostle, and returning to Italy, he visited the relics of the most holy Magdalene and the harsh place of her

[78] We know for instance that Marcella, one of Martha's servants, was thought to have written the saint's late twelfth century Provençal vita, suggesting that she herself was also in the region; she is also mentioned in the *Golden Legend* (ca. 1260), see Peters 1997. One of the sarcophagi in St. Maximin has been associated with her, but no mention of it had been made in the Middle Ages, see Fixot 2001: 24–25.

[79] Sidonius is present in some vitae as one of Mary Magdalene's companions, including the influential *Golden Legend*.

[80] By 1024–1025, the *Gesta episcoporum Cameracensium* explicitly mentioned that the monk Badilo had bought the body with him from a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, see Geary 1990: 75.

[81] The *Vitae apostolica beatae Mariae Magdalenae* (BHL 5433–5449) in the twelfth century recounts for the first time in vivid terms how the saint arrived in Provence. For good overviews of the elaboration of the legend in Burgundy see Saxer 1975 and more recently, a PhD thesis on the topic: Taconne 2012.

[82] If Raimondo Palmario's story is true, and if there was already a connection with Mary Magdalene at that point, it could well be the first site that was already associated with her in 1117, see Webb 2007: 65–92.

> penitence, not far from Marseille. Then, he travelled around Provence, and visited the relics of the three Maries and saints Martha and Lazarus.[83]

But by the thirteenth century, and especially during the fourteenth century, the pilgrimage route to Provence was in full swing, and pilgrims would travel from site to site to see the places where Mary Magdalene and saints associated with her had lived, and to view and touch their relics.[84] Provence eclipsed Vézelay as the site to be visited to see the Magdalene (Saxer 1975: 122), and as the cult grew, pilgrimage accounts became more elaborate, detailing specific elements and adding further credence to the legend as a whole. The geography became reinterpreted to fit this new narrative, as pilgrims created a sacred topography during their travels to the shrines of the saint.

## Re-thinking Western landscape

This mimetic pilgrimage, a phenomenon by which a hill-top chapel becomes reinterpreted as a "substitute Mount Sinai" (Lewis 1999: 159), is part of what Victor and Edith Turner describe as the "post-Islamic trend" of creating a sacred landscape in Europe through implantation of the cult of saints from Palestine and the Near East (Turner & Turner 1978: 175). As Simon Coleman and Jas Elsner have pointed out, "sanctified sites could indeed duplicate the shrines of the Holy Land, either through imitation, the appropriation of relics from Palestine itself, or the generation of indigenous local relics." (Coleman & Elsner 1995: 104) Although the cult of saints in the West started in Late Antiquity (Brown 1981: 1–2) when both local and non-local saints were collected, the form of these cults changed during the Middle Ages. In the eleventh century, there was a significant decrease in the importance of local saints and an increase in the importance of the cult of universal saints and, more importantly, cults related to Christ (Geary 1990: 25).

More broadly speaking, this phenomenon promoted an interest in relics from the Holy Land. One of the more interesting examples is the "symbolic translation" in 1061 of the Holy House that emerged as a shrine in Walsingham, also called "England's Nazareth" (Singer 2010: 27). By the mid-twelfth century, an Augustinian priory had been established there and by the thirteenth century a significant stream of pilgrims were arriving, including several English kings. Visitors to the site were called Palmers, a name usually reserved for those who had been to the Holy Land. The shrine grew, slowly at first, to become one of the most important national shrines in

[83] Rufino, "*Vita S. Raymundi Palmarii Confessoris*", *Acta Sanctorum* (Julii VI): 650.

[84] For information about the pilgrims to these sites in Provence, see Montagnes 2001.

England after or alongside Canterbury. Another competing cult was created in Loreto, where according to tradition, angels had translated the Holy House in the thirteenth century (Sox 1985: 147–154). Other examples include Glastonbury in England, where it was thought that Joseph established a monastery and where he was thought to have been buried (Lyons 2014). But perhaps the closest parallel to the phenomena in Provence is that of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, Spain where Theodemir, bishop of Iria Flavia was guided by a star to find the remains of St. James in a marble sarcophagus thought to have been found during the reign of the Asturian king Alfonso II "the Chaste" (791–842). In fact, the cult of St James became connected to that of Mary Magdalene in Vézelay in France through the Via Lemovicensis route that started in Burgundy to finish in Santiago de Compostela. Hence, Mary Magdalene's cult was already part of a wider transposition of Holy Land cults in Europe, but the legends of St James in Galicia and of Mary Magdalene in Vézelay were not connected through a specific narrative. Unlike the cults in Burgundy, Santiago de Compostela, and Walsingham, the cult of Mary Magdalene in Provence was a transposition of a Holy Land pilgrimage experience rather than just an import of a single site from Palestine.

Many reasons have been suggested for these imports and 'mimetic pilgrimages' that began in the eleventh century. One of the prevailing arguments is that it became increasingly difficult to access the Near East after the fall of Acre to Muslim powers in 1291, that imposed further restrictions on the already laborious pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Furthermore, relics were considered to be under threat in the Holy Land during the period, and scholars consider the creation of these cults in Europe to have been a way of preserving the relics and also bringing them closer to the West.

## Describing the Topography

Pilgrims who went to the Holy Land believed that the sites they saw were authentic. Indeed, they embarked on the pilgrimage to glimpse the life of Christ and the Gospels. The contemporary realities of Palestine were of little interest. In his essay "The Sacred Topography of the Gospels" published in 1941, the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs looked at ways in which observers from Late Antiquity and later crusaders described the Holy Land through their knowledge and understanding of it.[85] Pilgrims went there to see parts of the Gospels and patterns of the life of Jesus related to different sites. As a result, as Louis Corer put it, "they imposed what was in their own eyes on the land that they were only describing" (Corer 1980: 5). A pilgrim to

[85] Halbwachs 1941. See also his major study on memory, Halbwachs 1980.

Provence shared common characteristics with the crusaders described by Halbwachs, they too knew the stories they were going to see through the books they had read. In this respect, it was what Jas Elsner and Joan-Paul Rubiés have termed a 'scriptural' model of pilgrimage (Elsner & Rubiés 1999: 16).

A "scriptural" pilgrimage is one whereby pilgrims would see the topography of the land through text. There are two examples in this category for Christians, the most important being the pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and the other the cult of Peter and Paul in Rome. In this context, the text of the Bible justified the interpretation of the sites it mentioned as being worth visiting and "the site provided material proof of the actual setting and context of any scriptural event" (Elsner & Rubiés 1999: 17). A second model Elsner and Rubies discuss is that of "charismatic" pilgrimage, meaning that bones of saints were venerated at the site of their "invention" (i.e. discovery) or translation, sanctifying these sites. Most cults in the Medieval West were built around this model, in which relics were found and translated to specific sites which then created a cult around them.

Pilgrimage in Provence is unique in Western Europe as it can be seen as a scriptural pilgrimage with unusual charismatic elements. It is scriptural because the scriptures became the vitae in which stories of the saints were set in the specific topography of Provence, therefore pilgrims came to see and experience the sites at which the saints had lived and died. But it is also charismatic because the saints were imported to the West from the Holy Land, and the specific places to which their bodies were transposed in Saint-Maximin, Tarascon, Apt, etc., became the focus of their cults in the West.

This scriptural characteristic shared between Provence and the Holy Land established certain parallels in the pilgrimage experience at each destination. Indeed, pilgrims in both lands were seeing the landscape and the monuments through the texts they were reading; it was thus the texts that shaped the landscape, and the landscape was composed of realms of memory that became the material proof of the text. Pilgrims would not restrict their visit to a single site, but would see several sites through which they could experience the lives of the saints they longed to see.

This similarity can be noted in the ways in which pilgrims themselves came to experience the sites in Provence. For instance, interesting analogies can be drawn between the Bordeaux Pilgrim's accounts of his pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 333 during Late Antiquity, Bertandron de la Brocquière's much later perspective in 1455, Hans von Waltheym's about his Mary Magdalene pilgrimage to Provence in 1474,[86]

[86] See Faugère 1991 for his full pilgrimage account. For information about the pilgrim see Stouff 1991.

Canon Johannes Versaren's in 1469,[87] the Nuremberg doctor Jerome Müntzer's in 1495 (Amargier & Jean-Louis Charlet 1991; Coulet 1991), the Dominican Silvestro Mazzolini da Prierio's in 1497 (Mazzolini da Prierio 1510), and the monk Honoré Jérôme de Duranti's in 1586.[88]

As early as the fourth century, when the Bordeaux pilgrim embarked for his pilgrimage to the Holy Land, he was not expecting to discover new things or learn about an unknown distant place, he went there with the precise idea of finding elements of a history that he already knew.[89] During his travel to various sites, he emphasised a number of details such as natural wonders and diverse episodes experienced by biblical figures of the past. Therefore, it is through his eyes and through the recounting of these stories that this land became holy. He viewed Jerusalem not through its contemporary characteristics, but focused on the way it was described in the Bible, thereby ignoring many aspects of the city. In other words, he viewed his own physical version of the past through a collective memory described in the Bible. The pilgrim's biblical knowledge of the objects and sites he planned to see, prevented him from perceiving them in any way other than through a religious interpretation.[90]

This process remained remarkably similar for centuries, for instance Bertrandon de la Broquière, advisor and first esquire to the Duke of Burgundy, compiled his pilgrimage experience in his *Voyage d'OutreMer* in 1455:

> After making all the pilgrimages normally made by pilgrims, we made those to the mountain on which Jesus had fasted for forty days, to the Jordan where he was baptised and St. John's church close to the river; to Saint Mary Magdalene's and Saint Martha's church where our Lord resuscitated Lazarus, to Bethlehem where he was born, to the birthplace of Saint John the Baptist, to the house of Zachary, and finally to Holy Cross, where the tree of the true cross grew; and then we returned to Jerusalem.[91]

[87] His account can be found in Anecdota 1895, II, 440–445.

[88] His account is translated in Montagnes 2002: 99–116.

[89] For an account of his travels see Elsner 2000, especially pp. 191–195.

[90] Pilgrims also had specific routes that they followed as described in 'guidebooks', see for instance the *Onomasticon* compiled by Eusebius of Caesarea and translated into Latin by St Jerome that became the first guide for pilgrims visiting the Holy Land and thereafter the basis for the Holy Geography. Eusebius sought to list every place mentioned in the Bible and locate them while describing their biblical history.

[91] My own translation from Bertrandon de la Broquière, *Voyage d'OutreMer,* 1457, ms. 5639, BnF, Paris. Bertrandon undertook his pilgrimage in 1432–1433.

Pilgrims travelling to the Holy Land tended to focus on monuments with a direct relation to the Bible so as to relive biblical stories. This sought-after experience created an institutionalised sort of routine pilgrimage in which specific sights were highlighted as "must sees" (Coleman & Elsner 1995: 83). As Coleman and Elsner pointed out, with this process the biblical story could be told through topography in utterly tangible and experiential terms, by taking a walking tour through the Holy Land (Coleman & Elsner 1995: 84).

Pilgrimage in Provence was experienced in a similar manner. However, unlike the Holy Land itself, its sources were not found in the Bible, the Bible being replaced by the vitae that were widespread during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and particularly the version of the *Golden Legend* written by Jacobus de Voragine in 1260 that was a medieval "bestseller" and one of the most influential books of the later Middle Ages.[92] It described the story of Mary Magdalene in Provence, her tomb in St. Maximin, Martha's tomb in Tarascon, and the names of their companions, Marcella, Sidonius, Lazarus, and others. The author's sources included many stories of miracles and various vitae[93] that were used to construct his own vita of Mary Magdalene.

In addition to having read the same sources, many pilgrims would have heard the story recounted many times during their journey. For instance, Hans von Waltheym described an episode in which a canon escorted him on his visits to the crypts in Apt, showed him the relics of St Anne along with other sacred objects, and answered his questions relating to the legend.

> He immediately sent to the town for four local canons and four magistrates who had keys and led us into a large crypt. They unlocked all the locks and showed us St Anne's head and her holy remains and many other sacred objects. That was on Saturday, Jacobi Philippi night. After seeing all the sacred objects, I said to the Dean in Latin "But Sir, my problem is that it is clearly written that Saint Anne is buried in the Holy Land. How did her holy remains arrive here?[94]

[92] For its dissemination see Fleith 1990. Furthermore, it should be noted that the Dominican friar Bernard Gui included the story of Mary Magdalene in Provence in his *Speculum Sanctorale* that he wrote around 1329.

[93] For an overview of these vitae, see Saxer 1955.

[94] My translation from the original German in Welti 1925: 35.

In 1494, Jérôme Müntzer often mentioned that when he stayed in abbeys, local monks would welcome him and escort him to sites, again narrating the legend while he was visiting the region (Stouff 1991).

There is also evidence of visual narration. Honoré Jérôme de Duranti in his testimony writes that there were many oratories that pilgrims passed as they made their way up the hill of the Sainte Baume towards the grotto. Each oratory contained depictions of a different stage in the life of the saint, thereby encouraging pilgrims to recount her story during their climb to the grotto:

> The route of pilgrims is very pleasantly punctuated by several beautiful stone oratories all along these mountains, including some fine representations of the penitent hermit saint. [...] You will also see her dishevelled, on the ground, embracing, washing and wiping her saviour's feet. A little higher, you will see her again, no longer prostrated but seated at his feet listening in silence to the Word of the Father, whose soft talk nourished and quieted her, putting her to sleep. And then in another oratory, you will see her no longer seated, but standing, coming in front of her husband to meet him, when he came to resuscitate Lazarus. [...] The statues continue until you reach the last oratory inside the holy grotto, in which she is lying down full length; it was all very well organised by the ancients.[95]

In turn, this inspired pilgrims to add their own version to the legend. The Italian Dominican Silvestro Mazzolini da Prierio undertook a Provençal pilgrimage to see Mary Magdalene's resting place in 1497, to fulfil a vow that he had made to the saint (Jansen 1999: 44; Montagnes 1985). Influenced by the Golden Legend, among other texts (Tavuzzi 1997: 32–34), he composed his own vita after seeing the sites, supplementing it with elements that he saw while visiting the region. He thus added his own version to the ever-growing Provençal Magdalene narrative.

## Provençal Pilgrimage Itineraries

This reliance upon the vitae made pilgrims' itineraries remarkably similar. They all visited the same sites, and described and interpreted them through the legend. Hans von Waltheym's account is one of the best illustrations of this scriptural type of pilgrimage. His narrative makes it clear that his ultimate goal was to visit places associated with saints. His first stop was in Marseille to see a small grotto that offered shelter to Mary Magdalene in her early days in Provence, thought to be in the crypts

[95] Translated by myself from Montagnes 2002: 72.

in the monastery of St. Victor. He does not mention any of the other artefacts found in the crypts: for instance, he says nothing about the remains of Cassian, a renowned fifth-century monk who brought Eastern monasticism to the West. Instead, he focused on an alabaster vase that was thought to have contained Mary Magdalene's perfume that she used to wash Jesus's feet. His next objective was to climb the hill leading to the Sainte-Baume where it was believed that the saint had retreated for thirty years; one sixth of his volume is dedicated to the description of the grotto and its surroundings illustrating its predominance over the other destinations he had visited.

He gives detailed topographical descriptions, and often adds mythological details to his account, for instance he writes "the cave is so well concealed, so wild and adventurous that I believed that God All-Powerful's holy angels had led her there from Marseille because otherwise no-one would ever have found it." (Faugère 1991: 525) He finally ended his tour by going to the basilica of Saint-Maximin to see the relics of the saint and the place where she was buried.

Doctor Müntzer's account constitutes a good example of how the landscape and regional history became reinterpreted to fit Mary Magdalene's narrative. He visited the town of St. Maximin to see the tombs of Mary Magdalene and St Maximin, and the Sainte Baume grotto. He then proceeded to Marseille to see an alabaster box containing the ointment of Mary Magdalene and the body of Lazarus; he also mentions the Saintes Maries and the body of Martha in Tarascon, though it remains unclear whether or not he saw them (Amargier & Charlet 1991). He did not dwell much on any other aspects of the region. For instance, he did not mention the many saints that were thought to have been resting in Arles, and in Marseille he writes that the late antique monk Cassian went to Saint-Maximin to receive the Sacrament, as he was advised to do by Mary Magdalene herself,[96] hence reinterpreting other Provençal historical figures and their relics through the prism of the legend. Similarly, Johannes Versaren went to Marseille, the Sainte Baume and finally Saint Maximin in 1469 (Anecdota 1895: II, 440–445). In fact, the pilgrim claimed to have seen the saint at the Sainte Baume: "Magdalene, it seemed to me, rose out of the rock on which she was lying and took me by the hand and led me to drink from her fountain, which is close and is as clear as crystal." (Montagnes 2002: 77) In his eyes she was still very much present within the landscape.

Like the Bordeaux pilgrim whose knowledge of the Bible prevented him from seeing Jerusalem in any context other than as the Holy City in the Holy Land, in

[96] Müntzer does not specify how he learnt about this story, Amargier & Charlet 1991: 593–595.

Provence knowledge of the legend conditioned pilgrims to see sites through their relation to the legend of Mary Magdalene.

## A Land Beyond the Bible

Obviously, the sources for the two pilgrimage destinations were fundamentally different. Pilgrims to the Holy Land based their experience on the Bible, which is inherently unchanging. While they also had other sources such as pilgrim books, their quest was to find sites described in the Holy text. On the other hand, Provençal vitae were much more fickle sources, as many different versions of the same legend existed and the story was always updated.[97] There was no single accepted book, and as a result pilgrim accounts varied over time. Arguably though, this did not change pilgrims' experience as a whole: the pilgrim Raimondo Palmario who saw the tomb of Mary Magdalene probably in Aix, and Müntzer who saw an alternate tomb of the saint in Saint Maximin, both believed that what they were seeing was authentic.

As Donald Howard has pointed out, "The Jerusalem pilgrimage was the pilgrimage of pilgrimages; others were types and shadows of it, for Jerusalem was at the centre of the World, it was the ground the Lord had walked upon, and it was a symbol of the Heavenly City." (Howard 1980: 12) Provence could never fully replicate Palestine, but it could imitate elements of it and it did so by being the land where Mary Magdalene, one of Jesus's companions lived, preached and died, and where pilgrims could relive elements of her life by walking through the rugged landscape. The similarity between the two pilgrimage experiences is perhaps best exemplified in Raimond's pilgrimage accounts. He went to the Holy Land years before he pursued his pilgrimage in Provence. The pilgrim's recollections of Bethany focused entirely on Mary Magdalene's rapt contemplation at the feet of Christ. For most pilgrims, Bethany was above all the place where Lazarus was resurrected, however, the Italian pilgrim focused on the life of Mary Magdalene (Webb 2000: 18). During his journey in what is now southern France, he visited the shrines of Lazarus, Martha, the Maries, and the grotto where Mary Magdalene was thought to have lived as a hermit. Clearly, he visited Provence because of his devotion to the Magdalene, and to him the region was nothing more than the post-biblical land of the saint where he could tangibly experience her life through Provence's topography, almost as an epilogue to the pilgrimage he had previously made to the Holy Land.

[97] There are fundamental differences between the *Vita Eremetica*, the life of Martha written by Pseudo Marcillia, the vita of Mary Magdalene in the *Golden Legend*, the *Dominican Legend* and the life of Mary Magdalene written by Silvestro Mazzolini da Prierio. Elements were added with each new version of the story.

The land itself came to be sacred and the sites became realms of memory for the legend. When Waltheym visited the town of Saintes Marie de la Mer where Mary Magdalene's's boat had supposedly landed, he took back with him some of the earth from the ground in which he tells us Mary Jacobi and Mary Salome had been buried, and that had been made sacred by their contact with the saints (Faugère 1991: 537). Hence, everything from the earth, historical figures of the region, and the Provençal landscape as a whole became part the legend of Mary Magdalene and her companions. It remained so for centuries, starting in the Middle Ages, continuing well into the nineteenth century as exemplified by Larcodaire and still today as hundreds of pilgrims still gather every year to climb to the Saint Baume in the hope of seeing where Mary Magdalene lived her final years.

## Bibliography

AMARGIER, Paul & Jean-Louis CHARLET. 1991. "L'itinéraire de Jérôme Münzer en l'an 1495". *Provence Historique* 166: 586–599.

ANECDOTA = *Anecdota ex codicibus hagiographicis Johannis Gielemans, canonici regularis in Rubeavalle prope Bruxelles*. Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1895.

AUDISIO, Gabriel. 2009. "Les reliques de Saint-Victor au XVème Siècle: Identité et curiosité". In *Saint Victor de Marseille: Etudes archéologiques et historiques*, 337–344. Turnhout: Brepols.

BARRUOL, Jean. 1964. *Sainte Anne d'Apt, d'après une documentation nouvelle*. Apt: Imprimerie F. et M. Reboulin.

BOUCHE, Honoré. 1664. *La chorographie ou description de Provence et l'histoire chronologique du meme pays*. Aix: C. Davis.

BOZE, Elzear. 1813. *Histoire d'Apt*. Trémolière.

BROWN, Peter. 1981. *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

CANETTI, Luigi. 1993. *'Gloriosa civitas': Culto dei santi e società cittadina a Piacenza nel medievo*. Bologna.

CHOCHEYRAS, Jacques. 1998. *Les saintes de la mer. Madeleine, Marthe, les saintes Maries de la Provence à la Bourgogne*. Orléans: Paradigme.

CLEMENS, Raymond. 2001. "The cult of Mary Magdalene in late medieval France". In *Medieval hagiography: an anthology*, edited by Thomas Head, 661–663. London: Routledge.

COLEMAN, Simon & Jas ELSNER. 1995. *Pilgrimage Past and Present in the World Religions*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Corer, Louis. 1980. "Introduction". In Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, 1–38. New York: Harper & Row.
Coulet, Noël. 1991. "L'itinéraire de Jérôme Müntzer, voyageur et pèlerin". *Provence Historique* 166: 581–595.
Daas, Martha. 2008. "From Holy Hostess to Dragon Tamer: The Anomaly of Saint Martha". *Literature and Theology* 22 (2008): 1–15.
De Beatis. 1913. *Voyage du cardinal d'Aragon (1517–1518)*. Paris.
Demians d'Archimbaud, Gabrielle. 1971. "Les fouilles de Saint-Victor de Marseille". *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres*, 115: 87–117.
Elsner, Jas. 2000. "The Itinerarium Burdigalense: Politics and Salvation in the Geography of Constantine's Empire". *Journal of Roman Studies* 90: 181–195.
Elsner, Jas & Joan-Paul Rubiés. 1999. *Voyages and Visions: Towards a Cultural History of Travel*. London: Reaktion.
Faillon, Etienne. 1865. *Monuments inédits sur l'apostolat de Sainte Marie-Madeleine en Provence: et sur les autres apôtres de cette contrée, Saint Lazare, Saint Maximin, Sainte Marthe, les saintes Maries Jacobe et Salomé...* Paris: J.P. Migne.
Faugère, Annie. 1991. "Le Pèlerinage de Hans von Waltheym en l'an 1474". *Provence Historique* 166: 465–541.
Fixot, Michel. 2001. *La Crypte de Saint-Maximin la-Sainte-Baume*. Aix-en-Provence: Edisud.
Fleith, Barbara. 1990. "Legenda aurea: destination, utilisateurs, propagation. L'histoire de la diffusion du légendier au XIIIe siècle". In *Raccolte di vite di sante dal XIII al XVIII secolo*, 41–48. Fasano di Brinsiki: Shena.
Foskolou, Vassiliki. 2011–2012. "Mary Magdalene between East and West: Cult and Image, Relics and Politics in the Late Thirteenth-Century Eastern Mediterranean". *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 65/66: 271–296.
Geary, Patrick. 1990. *Furta Sacra: The Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Gensini, Sergio. 1989. *La 'Gerusalemme' di S. Vivaldo e i Sacri Monti in Europa*. Pisa.
Gervase of Tilbury. 1707. *Otia Imperialia ad Ottonem IV Imperatorem*, II, edited by G. W. Leibnitz, 3 vols. Scriptores Rerum Brunsvicensium. Hanover.
Gilbadi, Joseph. 1975. "Petrarch and the Baroque Magdalene Tradition". *The Hebrew University Studies in Literature* 10.3: 1–19.
Gobi l'Ancien, Jean. 2009. *Miracles de sainte Marie-Madeleine*, introduction and translation by Jacqueline Sclafer. Paris: CNRS éditions.

HALBWACHS, Maurice. 1941. *La topographie légendaire des Évangiles en Terre Sainte: étude de mémoire collective*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France.
——. 1980. *The collective memory*. New York: Harper & Row.
HASKINS, Susan. 1993. *Mary Magdalene: Myth and Metaphor*. London: Harper Collins.
HOWARD, Donald. 1980. *Writers and Pilgrims: Medieval Pilgrimage Narratives and Their Posterity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
IOGNA-PRAT, Dominique. 1992. "La Madeleine du *Sermo in veneratione sanctae Mariae Magdalenae* attribué à Odon de Cluny". *Mélanges de l'Ecole française de Rome. Moyen-Age* 104: 37–70.
DE KLERCK , Bram. 2014. "Jerusalem in Renaissance Italy: The Holy Sepulchre on the Sacro Monte of Varallo". In *The Imagined and Real Jerusalem in Art and Architecture*, edited by Jeroen Goudeau, Mariette Verhoeven & Wouter Weijers, 215–236. Leiden: Brill.
KÜHNEL, Bianca. 2012. "Virtual Pilgrimage to Real Places: The Holy Landscapes". In *Imagining Jerusalem in the Medieval West*, edited by Lucy Donkin & Hanna Vorholt, 243–264. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
JANSEN, Katherine L. 1995. "Mary Magdalene and the Mendicants: The Preaching of Penance in the late Middle Ages". *Journal of Medieval History* 21: 1–25.
——. *The Making of the Magdalen: Preaching and Popular Devotion in the Later Middle Ages.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.
LACORDAIRE, Henri-Dominique. 1880. *Sainte Marie Madeleine*. Paris: Mme Ve Poussielgue-Rusand.
LEWIS, Katherine. 1999. "Pilgrimage and the Cult of St. Katherine in Late Medieval England". In *Pilgrimage Explored,* edited by J. Stopford, 145–160. Woodbridge: York Medieval Press.
LYONS, William John. 2014. *Joseph of Arimathea: A Study in Reception History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Mazzolini da Prierio, Silvestro. 1510. *Aurea rosa.* Hagenaw.
MONTAGNES, Bernard. 1985. "La Légende Dominicaine de Marie-Madeleine à Saint Maximin". *Mémoires de l'Académie de Vaucluse* 6: 73–86.
——. 2001. "Le pèlerinage provençal à Marie-Madeleine au XVe siècle". *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques* 85: 679–695.
——. 2002. "Le pèlerinage de Marie-Madeleine en Provence". *Itinéraires pèlerins de l'ancienne Provence*, 65–118. Marseille: La Thune.
PETERS, Diane. 1997. "The life of Martha of Bethany by Pseudo-Marcilia". *Theological Studies* 58: 441–460.

PHILLIPS, Jonathan. 2007. *The Second Crusade: Extending the Frontiers of Christendom*. New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press.

PINTO-MATHIEU, Elisabeth. 1997. *Marie-Madeleine dans la littérature du Moyen Âge*. Paris: Beauchesne.

PLATTER, Felix. 1892. *Félix et Thomas Platter à Montpellier*. Montpellier: C. Coulet.

SAXER, Victor. 1955. "La crypte et les sarcophages de Saint Maximin dans la littérature du moyen age". *Provence Historique* 21: 196–231.

——. 1959. *Le culte de Marie Madeleine en Occident: des origines à la fin du Moyen Age*, 2 vols. Auxerre ; Paris: Publications de la société des fouilles archéologiques et des monuments historiques de l'Yonne; Clavreuil.

——. 1975. *Le dossier vézelien de Marie Madeleine: invention et translation des reliques en 1265–1267: contribution à l'histoire du culte de la sainte à Vézelay à l'apogée du Moyen Age*. Brussels: Société des bollandistes.

SEIDEL, Linda. 1999. *Legends in Limestone: Lazarus, Gislebertus, and the Cathedral of Autun*. Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press.

SINGER, Stella. 2010. "Walsingham's Local Genius: Norfolk's 'Newe Nazareth'". In *Walsingham in literature and culture from the Middle Ages to modernity*, edited by Dominic James and Gary Waller, 23–35. Farnham: Ashgate.

SOX, David. 1985. *Relics and Shrines*. London: Allen & Unwin.

STOUFF, Louis. 1991. "Deux voyageurs allemands en Provence au XVe siècle (Hans von Waltheym en l'an 1474, Jérôme Müntzer en l'an 1495)". *Provence Historique* 166: 567–573.

TACONNE, Raphaelle. 2012. *Marie Madeleine en Occident: les dynamiques de la sainteté dans la Bourgogne des ix^e^–xv^e^ siècles*. Dissertation. Avignon: Université d'Avignon et des Pays du Vaucluse.

TAVUZZI, Michael. 1997. *Prierias: The Life and Works of Silvestro Mazzolini Da Prierio, 1456–1527.* Durham, N.C.; London: Duke University Press.

TERRY-FRITSCH, Allie. 2015. "Performing the Renaissance Body and Mind: Somaesthetic Style and Devotional Practice at the Sacro Monte di Varallo". *Open Arts Journal* 4: 111–132.

TURNER, Victor & Edith TURNER. 1978. *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

WEBB, Diane. 2000. "Raimondo and the Magdalen: A Twelfth-century Italian Pilgrim in Provence". *Journal of Medieval History* 26: 1–18.

——. 2007. *Saints and Cities in Medieval Italy*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

WELTI, Friedrich Emil. 1925. *Die Pilgerfahrt des Hans von Waltheym im Jahre 1474*. Bern: Stämpfli.

**Romy Wyche**, BA in Art History at McGill University, M.St in Classical Archaeology at the University of Oxford (on Byzantine Art and Archaeology), D.Phil (PhD) in Archaeology at the University of Oxford on the reception of Roman sarcophagi in the Middle Ages entitled "An Archaeology of Memory: The 'Reinvention' of Roman sarcophagi during the Middle Ages". She is currently a researcher on the project "Graphicacy and Authority in Early Europe: Graphic Signs of Power and Faith in the Early Middle Ages (c. 300-1000)" at the University of Oslo.