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FROM ANTIQUITY TO THE MIDDLE AGES.
A SHORT ESSAY DEDICATED TO JOHN WILLIAMS**

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RESUMEN

En forma de breve ensayo exponemos la ruptura que la construcción de la catedral románica de Compostela supuso en la forma de entender y realizar el culto a los restos atribuidos al Apóstol Santiago. Ruptura reflejada en las arquitecturas implicadas en ese culto, pero también en la propia concepción de la Tumba, que irá del "martiryum" tardoantiguo al "relicario" medieval.

ABSTRACT

In the form of a brief sketch, we discuss the rupture in the way of understanding and practicing the cult of the remains attributed to the Apostle James the Greater that came about as a result of the construction of the Romanesque cathedral of Compostela. This rupture was reflected in the architectures involved in this cult, but also in the very concept of the nature of the Tomb, which will shift from that of a late-antique "martiryum" to that of a medieval "reliquary."

Key words: *Saint James, Cult, Ritual, Architecture, Tomb, Preromanesque.*

After years of friendship with Professor John Williams, which grew later on into a collaboration on the project of the reconstruction of the virtual Romanesque cathedral of Santiago de Compostela -a project coordinated by John Dagenais of the University of California, Los Angeles- we wish to fulfil a long-standing debt to him: our contribution to the homage in his honor at the 37th International Congress of Medieval Studies (2002), the point of departure, too, for our mutual relationship with UCLA. Building on the recent completion of our doctoral thesis on a topic that arose in the course of that contribution ("*Locus Iacobi*, Orígenes de un santuario de peregrinación"), we take up again here a reflection that we made then on the archeological and textual expressions of the evolution of the architectures and the cult of the Apostle in the first three centuries of their existence.

I. POINT OF DEPARTURE

Two events will be seen to be determining factors over the course of our reflection. The first, as is obvious, was the aforementioned discovery of the tomb at some point during the first third of the 9th century. This event--of which our knowledge is largely thanks to a series of written documents or chronicles dating from the high-medieval period--consisted in the discovery of a tomb which was remarkable in its characteristics and which formed a part of the ruins which in earlier times had represented an expression of life in inland *Gallaecia* before being abandoned and hidden by the time of discovery by overgrown vegetation. This tomb was deemed to contain the relics of the Apostle Saint James, a view which, once it had been officially accepted, resulted in the sudden growth in the veneration of the saint known in Spain as Santiago, with an accompanying architectural expression in which the Apostle's Mausoleum would be a determining factor. This was the first period, in which Saint James' Tomb played a fundamental role in the existence of and growth in apostolic devotion, as well as a time in which the respect for the Tomb as a monument and the reuse or recycling of the aforementioned ruins served as a nexus with the preceding world.

The second key event was the second concealment of the tomb. This time, however, it would not be left to the ravages of nature, but become a genuine sanctuary in which the Apostle could be worshipped. Here we refer to the intervention of Diego Gelmírez in the early 12th century, which, within his concept of a new Romanesque sanctuary, would eliminate the first architectural structures in which the tomb still played a key role, destroying the upper part of the Mausoleum and definitively concealing the lower part containing the Saint's relics below the new chancel. Thus the new Sanctuary, as a depositary for these relics, replaced the Mausoleum as the point of reference for worship. The protests of the Cathedral Chapter at the changes that were taking place serve as a traumatic testimony to this substitution. The dimensions of the new temple also meant the elimination of a large part of the earlier medieval cathedral, and, with it, the remains which were still visible of the primitive archaeological context of the tomb.

II. PRE-ROMANESQUE TIMES AND THE TRADITIONS OF ANTIQUITY

The first period of the cult of St. James the Apostle may be defined by the discovery of the building which houses his tomb and the construction of the first sanctuary for the custody and the cult of the relics. This early stage bears witness to the materialisation of the cult which involved not only the tomb as the container of the relics in terms of the architecture linked to the "translatio"—the translation and depositing of the body of the Apostle by his disciples--and therefore, as the bearer of the presence of the Apostle through those who had shared the last episodes of his life with him and who brought his body to the site. The tomb, then, is the direct intermediary in the relationship between the faithful follower and the holy body, as well as the main channel for Jacobean worship. The clearest example of this situation is found in one of the Apostle's miracles – specifically the one that appears in Chapter XVIII of the Second Book of the Codex:

"Not long ago, a count of San Gil, Poncio by name, made the pilgrimage to Santiago with his brother. And having entered the church and finding the oratory, where the body of the Apostle lay, closed, they begged the sacristan to open the chapel so that they might say their evening prayers before the tomb. Seeing that their requests were in vain, as it was the custom for the doors of the oratory to be closed from sunset to sunrise, they returned, dejected, to the inn. On their arrival, they called together all the pilgrims who had accompanied them on their journey, and once they had gathered them together, the count addressed them and told them that he wanted to enter the tomb of St. James. He asked them if they would accompany him to the tomb with the same purpose if the apostle himself, would, perchance open the doors to them."

This episode is attributed to Count Poncio de Tolosa (1037-1060 or 1061), which dates it to the pre-Romanesque period, highlighting the structural and functional autonomy of the tomb, as well as the active role played by St. James the Apostle, who opens the doors of his tomb to those who come to worship. Another episode that has been mentioned as an expression of these characteristics is the well-known resolution of the dispute between San Rosendo and the Bishop of Santiago, Sisnando II, in 961 over the ownership of certain fishing channels in the river. After an unsuccessful attempt at an agreement, the resolution stated that four good men be chosen on behalf of each party to declare in the dispute. The declaration of each man had to be confirmed by his swearing on the tomb of the Apostle. According to the document, which has come down to us thanks to Father Flórez, this oath taking was only fulfilled by those who represented the Bishop, who *“in tumuli Beati Iacobi Apostoli, sicuti et intraverunt et dederunt sacrum juramentun per ipsius Corpus Apostoli et per omnes Sanctorum virtutes, quae ibi sunt reconditae...”*. It is not the incident in itself that concerns us here, despite its interesting implications, but rather it is the fact that mention is again made, as in the above case, which takes place later in time, of the need to enter into the Mausoleum and the recondite nature of its interior.

It is not only the documentary sources that allow the Mausoleum of the Apostle to be understood as an architectural structure that played an essential role in the cult of the body of St. James. Archaeology also offers us clear evidence of this role. We are referring to the collection of medieval coins discovered by López Ferreiro. Their presence in the shrine had long been interpreted as spanning a broad historical period: from the 9th to the 16th centuries. In reality, today we know that, except for a Philip II coin –attributable to work done on the high altar in the late 16th and 17th centuries--, this is a much more homogenous collection, pertaining to a specific and well-defined historical period, ranging from the late 10th century to an undetermined time around the beginning of the 12th century. The composition of this collection, however, is not without diversity, as it includes a broad repertoire of French feudal coins, “andalusíes” coins and six coins attributed to Alphonso VI of Castile and León.

In the first group there is an abundance of “pougeoises” coins, which may be explained by the importance of this coinage in southern France, two coins from Poitiers, which being of the Charles “the bald one” immobilised type, were mistaken for Carolingian coins and, lastly, a diverse sampling of mints from SE France: Toulouse, Narbonne, Albi and, perhaps, Arles. The chronology of these coins is not always easily determined given the nature of the immobilised types affecting most of the pieces, to which we must add the possibility that they were

used for long periods of time. Nevertheless, a good number of them may be dated to the second half of the 11th century and the early years of the following century. The Spanish-Moslem coins are two dirhems dating from the end of the Caliphate period, which would mean that the date is “post quem” as it was still used during the times immediately afterwards, i.e., the 11th century. Lastly the Castilian currency, including coins of Alphonso VI, which were minted subsequent to the conquest of Toledo (1085), are considered to be from the start of the minting of coins in Castile-León. They are thought to have been in circulation until around the time of the death of this monarch in 1109. In short, they are a sample of the coins in circulation in the domain of the “Way of St. James” and the areas influenced by it at a time including the entire 11th century, although they had already started to be used in the late 10th century. Their projection in the transition between the 11th and 12th centuries would make the ideal cutoff date revolve around the years 1105-1110, the time at which the Mausoleum undergoes its final transformation to adapt to the new Romanesque cathedral.

The archaeological records of the Mausoleum of the Apostle indicate that the accumulation of coins was a gradual process, as a result of the donations made prior to the construction of the Romanesque cathedral. During this period it was possible to place the coins directly in the Mausoleum. They were later buried in the rubble when this Mausoleum was torn down, after which no contributions could be made. This would imply that the destruction of the Mausoleum severed the possibility of there being a direct relationship with the Tomb of St. James. Moreover these records chronicle the beginning of the large-scale pilgrimages and their consolidation, which had their start in SW France and extended all over the south and west of the country. Also included are some of the episodes that have been documented, such as the early visit of Godescalc, the Bishop of Le Puy, and the presence of the coins from Toulouse, which would appear to be related to the miracle of the entry into the tomb, among others.

Undoubtedly, the clearest evidence of the interpretation of the mausoleum as a *memorial* lies in its very conservation—it was a funeral monument in the context of a small enclave during the times of the early Roman Empire—, and even more so, as it relates to other places of worship associated with it such as the church of Santiago, the baptistery and church and monastery of San Pedro de Antealtares. This is a more complex issue, owing to the lack of available archaeological data, particularly in terms of monastic buildings. However, all the evidence seems to indicate that these four entities, the church, the martyr’s church, the baptistery, mausoleum and monastery were part of a whole, not only as far as the cult is concerned, as chronicled in written sources, but also, perhaps, architecturally. It

is a monastic-martyr's group of buildings, revolving around an ancient funeral shrine, which would play a critical role in shaping the group as a whole, as well as the establishment of the cult. We must bear in mind that in charge of this cult was a group of monks belonging to what was then known as the monastery of San Pedro de Antealtares, although the participation of the Bishop of Iria was very important from the very beginning. In fact, the discovery of the tomb is attributed to Bishop Teodomiro himself, and the significance of this took on greater dimensions over time

The characteristics outlined above would not appear to identify the *Locus Sancti Iacobi* with urban enclaves of the time – Oviedo has been mentioned, as have the French episcopal cities--, or with the monastic centres in the surrounding areas. A parallelism that is more functional, conceptual, and to a some extent, formal is found in the late ancient sanctuaries, well known in the Orient, with examples of a double church arranged longitudinally around a “martiria” (cf. Gerasa): a memorial, a martyr's shrine, a monastery with its own church, a baptistery, a meeting place for pilgrims, all of which were heavily fortified. Examples of these are *Qalat Siman*, in Syria, Saint Catherine's of Mount Sinai in Egypt, and Tebessa in North Africa. All of these sanctuaries present an architecture and dimensions, which, like their chronology and cultural attributes, are a long way from the limited possibilities of the 9th century in the North of the Iberian Peninsula. This obstacle may be overcome by the existence of links, such as, for instance similar centres, although on a smaller scale, in Hispania of the late Roman or Visigoth period, of which there are some indications. This tradition was also reflected in enclaves that were contemporary with the Locus, for example, the monastic sanctuaries of Carolingian France and the Anglo-Saxon world. Within the Anglo-Saxon framework, some of the most striking are the worship centres of Wells and Jarrow, because of their layout which is similar to religious buildings and the memorial, and because they are at the root of future cathedrals.

All of the above cases, whether we are dealing with the behaviour of the believers as regards the Tomb, or with the position of the Tomb in the definition of the sanctuary itself, demonstrate that the Mausoleum was a crucial part of the veneration of the body of St. James from early times. This cult did not entail just the worship of relics, even though they were of great importance, or of the tomb of the apostle, in the strict sense of the word—body and sarcophagus. Rather, this is the cult of the presence of the Apostle, as reflected in the original construction, which sheltered his body after it had been brought from Palestine, a structure which was built by those who had been in contact with him in life and who had enjoyed a special relationship with him. Thus, it is not just a question of going to

visit his remains, but of introducing oneself into a space that is, to some extent, related to the life of the Apostle, meaning that his presence goes beyond what was left of his inert body. This idea was already expressed by López Ferreiro, although it was more an expression of his own religious sentiment than an element for a historical or anthropological analysis: *“That altar, then, evoked the sweetest and most pleasant memories, not only did it remind us of the marvellous event –the discovery of the Body of the Apostle, but it also transported the soul to those early times when preachers of the gospel implanted there, that shining symbol to serve as a testimony to and an everlasting reminder of his preachings”*.

III. THE ROMANESQUE CATHEDRAL AND THE GREAT TRANSFORMATION

These circumstances, which hindered the continuity in the accumulation of coins at the Shrine, highlight the radical transformation that took place in the nature and function of this old building. The *ante quem* date of around 1105 attributes this change to the construction of the Romanesque cathedral, whose building is taken up again at this time by Diego Gelmírez, who was still the Bishop of Iria.

It is, in reality, the consummation of a process begun at the end of the 11th century, when the construction of the new basilica was decided, while at the same time the role of the monks of Antealtares in the cult of the apostle was being questioned. The original funeral structure had to be adapted to a new type of architecture, which entailed changing the size of the structure and the role of the apostolic church to better fit its new condition as a cathedral church. If the cathedral, as the Bishop’s church, absorbed the attention of the cult of the Apostle, both in terms of space and concept, doubts were raised as to the role of the monks whose very *raison d’être* had been precisely that. Moreover, the new building separated these monks physically from the tomb, severing the spatial and cultural ties of the pre-Romanesque stage. This clash between the bishop and the monastery, in essence between two stages of the Jacobean cult, is clearly reflected in the document known as the “Concordia de Antealtares”.

We do not know what solution was proposed by the initial project of the cathedral with regard to the tomb. However, when it was redefined by Gelmírez at the beginning of the 12th century, emphasising its condition as a great cathedral-sanctuary, the shrine would appear to have been doomed, as it was a difficult task to integrate it into the presbytery of the new building, with which it clashed both structurally and functionally. There were considerable differences as compared to the former situation. The overall concept of the sanctuary had been changed:

it went from being a group of buildings around the tomb, to the tomb being included in a single building. Changes were also made in the building to be used for the worship of the Apostle with the martyr's church being converted into a cathedral church, and the liturgy being changed from the old Mozarabic ritual to the official Roman Catholic rite. Playing a crucial role in all of this was Gelmírez, a key figure in the evolution of the mitre of Compostela, as it was he who succeeded in converting the old bishops into archbishops of Compostela, consolidating, as well, their role in the economic and political scene of Spain.

However, this change, as far as the tomb of the Apostle is concerned, was no easy matter, as corroborated by the commentaries included in the *Historia Compostelana*. After a substantial part of the head of the new cathedral had been built, Gelmírez had to reorganise the presbytery to adapt it to the new circumstances, where the new artistic standards, as well as the image of St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome, would play an important part. This step involved the elimination of the upper part of the old mausoleum with the original altar and replacing it with a new altar below a baldachin. This work entailed a substantial transformation of the shrine and came up against opposition from at least some of the cathedral clergy, who saw it as the profanation of the tomb of the Apostle, which was, at the time, considered to be the original structure erected by the disciples of the apostle, as recounted in the *Historia Compostelana*: "*Many were of the opinion that under no circumstances should the structure be destroyed; this structure, however rudimentary and misshapen, built with the hands of such men, unless they themselves or their master should have to bear, by being struck by lightning from the Heavens, the punishment brought on by such an audacious act...*". Gelmírez needs to justify such a delicate step and again the *Historia Compostelana* tells us exactly how he does this: "*...Moreover, said bishop, with fervent interest in enhancing the honour of his church, given that the altar, having been enlarged a second time, did not measure up to such a great apostle, considered after pious reflection, that the altar of the Apostle should be expanded*"; and later in the text: "*...since he carefully observed with his eyes that they paid more attention to the outer trappings than to the interior elements, trampling on their fear with his well-intentioned foot, completely destroyed said room...*". But he also needs to cover up or at least temper the radical nature of the change with the construction of the *confessio*: "*And after building the altar..., since it was open to the human eye from every angle, there was no secluded place left for the faithful to be able to pray in privacy... Therefore, the bishop began to insist on this idea ... and was zealous in his desire ...to build a confessio at the altar. And, surely, it can be seen what a magnificent confessional he built beneath the two columns of the altar*

supporting the baldachin, as it welcomes all who enter". It is a space whose characteristics are reminiscent of the original tomb which was also a secluded place for the faithful to commune with the apostle.

This complex episode has its place in works on the construction of the Romanesque cathedral, but always focussing on the reconstruction, and, to a lesser extent, on the interpretation of the resulting situation: the altar and baldachin of Gelmírez. There has also been some awareness as to the significance of the destruction of the upper part of the tomb, in terms of the difficulty, or rather obstacle to having access to the body of the apostle. However, there has not been an assessment of the important change in the relationship between the believer --pilgrim-- and the tomb of the Apostle, or, in other words, the transformation of the cult of St. James. Perhaps this is because research papers have never been fully aware that after the intervention of Gelmírez, the mausoleum no longer exists as the hallmark and holder of the cult of St. James, which from that time on would depend only on the body of the Apostle, but that it now exists not as a holy body in its original burial grounds, but as the remains of an apostle, that is, his "relics". Proof of the new situation is the fact that these remains, which are now relics, start to be distributed, in the form of gifts. This practice appears to have begun in the mid-11th century with the episode of St. James of Liege, intensifying at the beginning of the 12th century, also in Liege (Belgium). Also of note is the donation made by Gelmírez himself to Pistoia (Italy).

These relics, which at one time were accessible or even tangible, now invoke a hidden presence, something that is there, but can neither be seen nor touched. The work of Gelmírez carried out in the presbytery is in fact that of a true reliquary, containing the remains of St. James the Apostle --an official place of worship for the bishop as well as the popular veneration of the pilgrims, where the episcopal cathedra and the tomb of the apostle fuse together into a single world. This is the most important reliquary of a cathedral which Gelmírez has taken upon himself to enhance with the possession of a commodity which, at that time, gave prestige and power to those who held it. This was even greater if the relics pertained to important figures in the history of the church, as would be the case of the relics of the Spanish martyrs taken from Braga or the head of the other apostle, St. James the Less, brought from the Holy Land.

These two episodes demonstrate the interest of the first archbishop of Compostela in increasing the importance of his see, as well as in undermining the importance of his competitors; or the necessity to hold preeminence in the cult of the Apostle James in the face of doubts over the contents of the Tomb or the confusion between two apostles with this same name.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

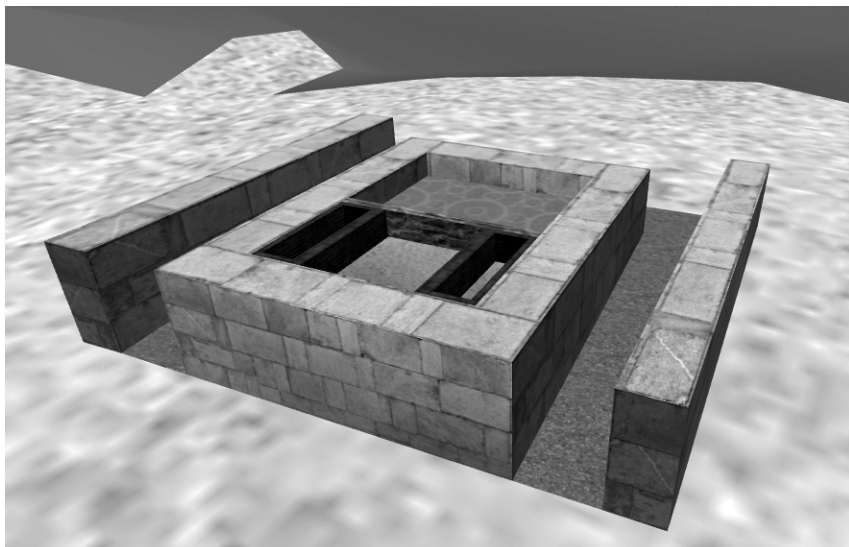
In these brief pages we have tried to reflect on the changes in the cult of the Tomb attributed to the Apostle James and their relation to the conceptual and architectural evolution of the Sanctuary: from an original burial, understood and reinterpreted as a mausoleum, accessible to the faithful and around which are arranged buildings to attend to the cult to the remains that it contains, using a liturgy that is still Hispanic, to a Tomb under ground upon which the presbytery of a cathedral church of the Roman rite will be placed. From an architecture in the form of a small building, a simple reminder of the apostolic presence and open to a direct relation with the remains, to which cult will be rendered, to a container of relics, sealed and enclosed in a new architecture created and controlled by the power, which is now archiepiscopal. Thus, the first representations of the apostolic Tomb will reflect the fusion of both elements: the mausoleum as a frame, but with stand-alone sarcophagi as the containers of relics, an image that expresses the interpretation at the beginning of the twelfth century of a process that, from the archeological point of view, we have just defined, but emphasizing the element that, from this moment forward, takes on more importance: the individual tomb as reliquary.

This is an image that, through the contemporary written documentation, projects itself into the past, reinterpreting in function of a perspective that began to fragment across the eleventh century, reminding us of Patrick Geary's assertion: "What we think we know about the early Middle Ages is largely determined by what people of the early eleventh century wished themselves and their contemporary to know about the past". But it also projects itself toward the present, so that it influenced decisively all the reconstructions that have been created down to today of the supposed "tomb" discovered at the beginning of the ninth century. This last circumstance is the one that makes it especially necessary for us to reflect critically on the data, archeological as well as written, on which John Williams himself has been working, and for whom these pages aspire to be not so much the solution as a call for attention that I, as an archeologist, feel myself obliged to make in the face of some doubts left behind in some of the previous analyses of the preserved remains of the so-called "Tomb of Santiago."

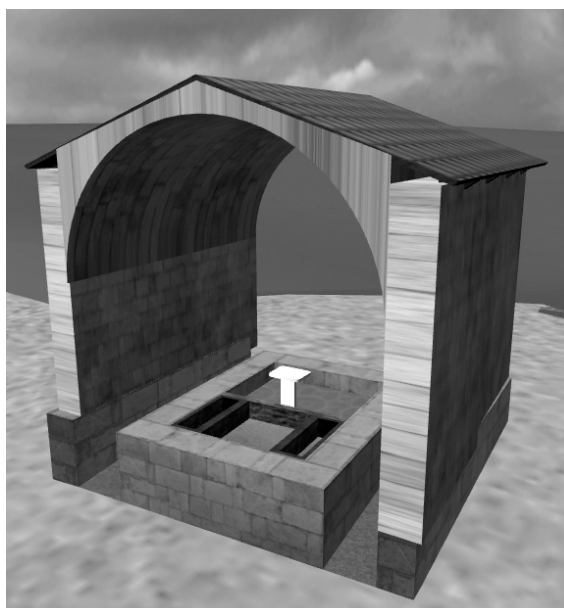
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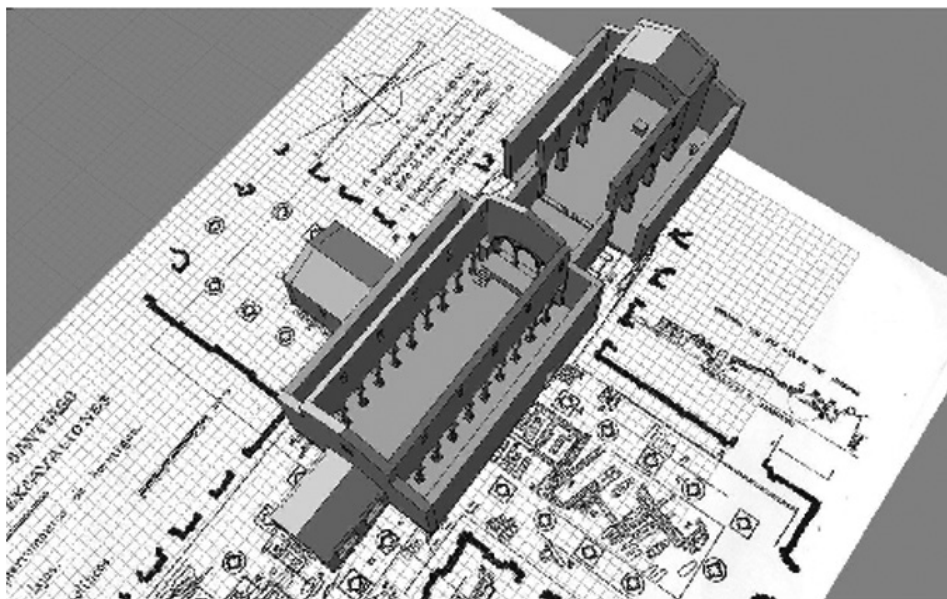


A



B

Fig. 1. A. Virtual image of the remains attributed to the sepulchral edifice. **B.** Virtual reconstruction of the relationship between the remains of the “edículo” and the apse of the high medieval church. (Image © 2012, by permission of The Regents of the University of California).



A

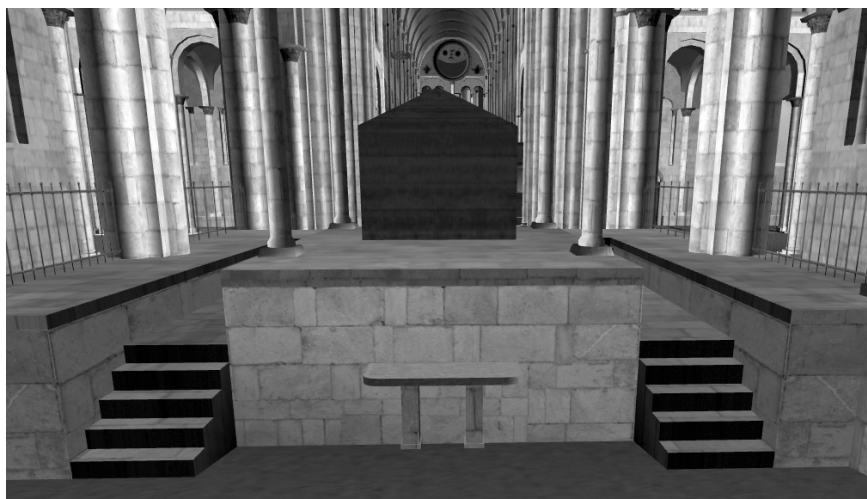


B

Fig. 2. Virtual reconstruction of the church of Alfonso III, the Tomb and the Church of Antea-tares: **A.** Interpretation of the archeological planimetry. **B.** General view from the north (Images © 2012, by permission of The Regents of the University of California).



A

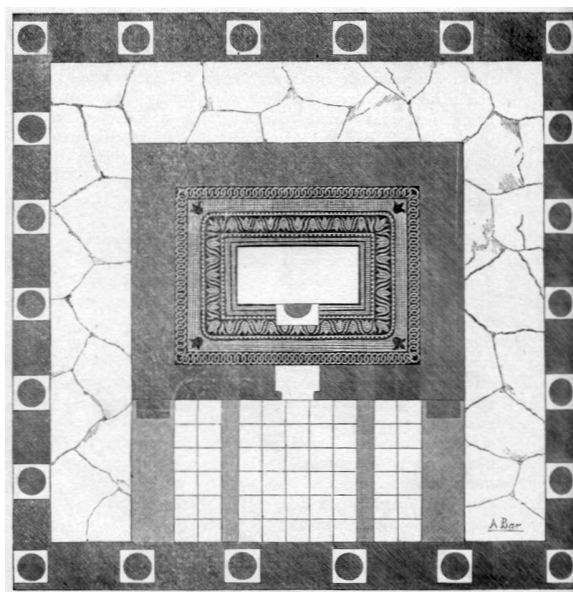


B

Fig.3. A. Virtual reconstruction of the presbytery and main altar of the Romanesque cathedral.
B. The “ediculo” in the context of the Romanesque apse (Images © 2012, by permission of The Regents of the University of California).



A



B

Fig.4. A. Image of the discovery of the apostolic tomb (*Tumbo A*, Archivo de la Catedral de Santiago). B. Hypothetical reconstruction of the floorplan of the original “ediculo” according to López Ferreiro (1898).

