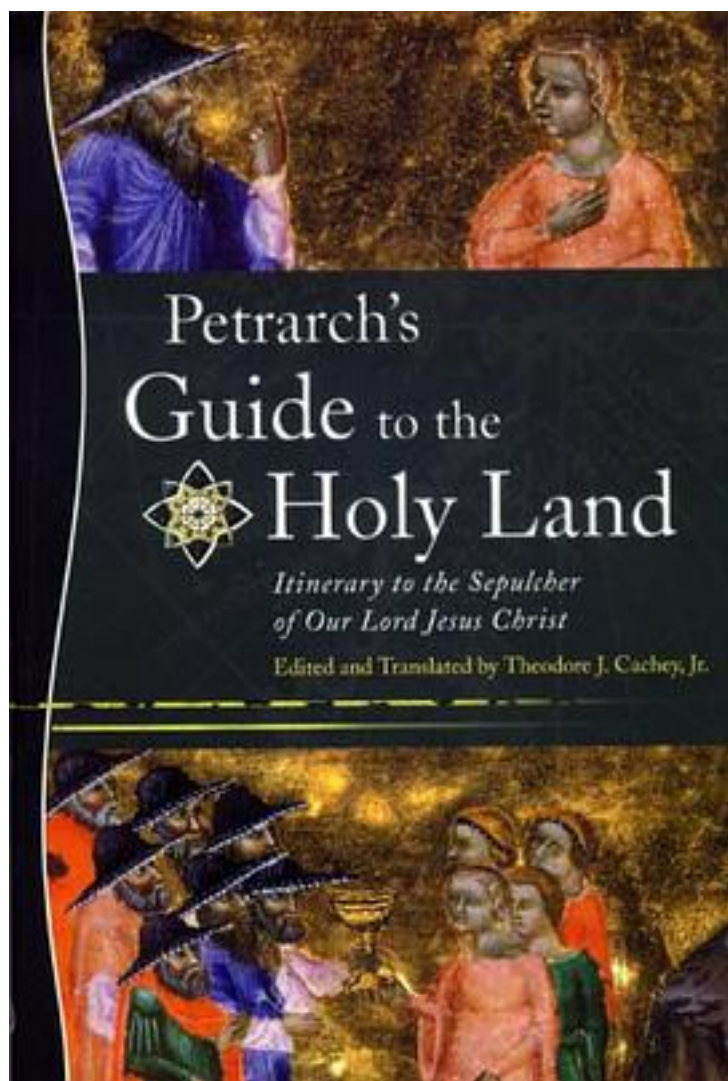


Petrarch's Guide to the Holy Land



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出版者:University of Notre Dame Press

出版时间:2002-12

装帧:Hardcover

isbn:9780268038731

In the early spring of 1358 Francis Petrarch was invited by his friend Giovanni Mandelli, a leading military and political figure of Visconti Milan, to go on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Pleased at the invitation, Petrarch nevertheless declined to undertake the journey. Fear of the sea, of shipwreck, and of "slow death and nausea worse than death" held him back. While Petrarch would not make the literal journey he offered Mandelli a pilgrimage guide instead of his companionship: "nevertheless, I shall be with you in spirit, and since you have requested it, I will accompany you with this writing, which will be for you like a brief itinerary". Composed over three days between March and April of 1358, the "Itinerarium ad sepulchrum domini nostri Yesu" takes the characteristic Petrarchan form of an epistle to a friend. Delivered to his correspondent in the form of an elegant booklet, the work presents a literary self-portrait that was meant to stand as "the more stable effigy of my soul and intellect" as well as "a description of places". Although the Holy Land is the ostensible destination of the pilgrimage, more half than of the guidebook is devoted to Petrarch's leisurely and loving descriptions of Italy's physical and cultural landscape. Upon reaching the Holy Land, Petrarch covers ten cities in four days, explores sacred landmarks and sites and ends up at the tomb of Alexander. This translation of the "Itinerarium" is based on an authoritative 14th-century manuscript in the Biblioteca Statale of Cremona, which is, according to the explicit declaration of the scribe, a copy of Petrarch's 1358 autograph, the translation is accompanied by the manuscript reproduced in facsimile and by a transcription of the Latin text. Cachey's introduction and notes discuss Petrarch's text within the multiple contexts of travel in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and contemporary political and cultural issues, including Petrarch's relation to emergent forms of "cartographic writing" and Renaissance "self-fashioning".

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