The Cultural Heritage of Pilgrim Itineraries: The Camino de Santiago

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Abstract

The Camino de Santiago comprises a lattice of European pilgrimage itineraries which converge at Santiago de Compostela in north-west Spain. This Working Paper introduces the historical and contemporary representation of these routes as a heritage complex that is imagined and codified within varied cultural meanings of a journey undertaken. Particular attention is given to the Camino Frances and the Via de la Plata which contrast as mature and formative pilgrimage settings. Within this spatial sphere, the analysis deals with the Camino de Santiago as official heritage, as development instrument, as civil society, and as personal experience. The paper concludes by critically reviewing a previous conceptualisation of pilgrim route-based tourism, derived from fieldwork completed in 1994. Some substantive additions to that model are then advanced which arguably fit better with the many context changes that have occurred over the past two decades.

Keywords

Camino de Santiago, pilgrimage, cultural heritage, route-based tourism, Santiago de Compostela
Introduction

In 2008 the National Geographic Society published *Sacred places of a lifetime: 500 of the world's most peaceful and powerful destinations*. It is illustrative of a current genre of travel writing that assembles themed locations to interest the armchair explorer or seasoned traveller. Apart from its high quality photography and synoptic guide notes, the intrinsic merit of this book is that it defines the many ways by which the sacred can be appreciated as a melange of forces, beliefs and symbols that infuse global cultural diversity. Each chapter is a journey into the sacred and, as argued by Bowman (1991), ‘the sacred is not something which stands beyond the domain of the cultural; it is imagined, defined and articulated within cultural practice’ (p120). Place centred sacredness can be quite divorced from formal religion although it is frequently interwoven with religious observances. Accordingly, the notion of pilgrimage, as a popular activity linked to the sacred, speaks to the special significance of places, persons and events. There are strong connections to the power of agency and thus institutional context, both formal and informal, has a deep bearing on the representation and management of pilgrimage. There is also a rootedness in the past that connects to the present as experienced or interpreted by individual pilgrims. The paper seeks to relate these sentiments to the case of the *Camino de Santiago* that comprises a lattice of European pilgrimage itineraries and which converge at Santiago de Compostela in north west Spain.

The paper is structured as follows: firstly, I locate the case study within the wider academic literature dealing with pilgrimage and highlight the relevance of religious, spiritual and secular motivations for pilgrim behaviour; secondly, I introduce the historical and contemporary context of the pilgrim routes to Santiago de Compostela and I follow, thirdly, with a short account of the research approach; fourthly, I explore the geographical settings for two contrasting pilgrim itineraries that traverse Spain - the *Camino Frances* and the *Vía de la Plata*, before going on, fifthly, to examine a series of cross-cutting representations of the *Camino de Santiago* drawn especially from these two particular routes: the *Camino* as official heritage, as development instrument, as civil society and as personal experience; finally, I critique an earlier conceptualisation of the evolving *Camino de Santiago* cultural heritage complex and suggest some potential directions for future planning practice and research.
The pilgrimage phenomenon

Pilgrimage has been defined as a journey undertaken by a person in quest of a place or a state that he or she believes to embody a valued ideal (Morinis, 1992, p.4). Both the journey and the destination are important to the pilgrim and are denoted by being different from whence people have come. Religious sites fulfil that criterion where devotion at a shrine constitutes a significant moment of arrival and personal engagement with the ideal of sacredness. But wider cultural ideals related for example to liberty, sacrifice and atonement, can also sponsor journeys that may be either secular or spiritual depending on how each individual perceives the quest activity.

Within the academic literature the book by Victor and Edith Turner (1978) *Image and pilgrimage in Christian culture*, is regarded as having seminal influence in this research arena. Their argument is that pilgrimage involves travel to a sacred site located at some distance from the pilgrim’s place of residence, requires giving-up temporarily the routines of ordinary life, and places emphasis on salvation and release from the evils and afflictions of the world which enrich the pilgrim on returning home ‘to a warm and admiring welcome’. They state that:

> One motive for going on pilgrimage is the feeling that a saint’s shrine has a sort of ‘hot line’ to the Almighty. One purifies oneself by penance and travel, then has one’s prayer amplified by asking a saint at his own chief shrine to forward it directly to God. (p.16)

These dimensions to the Turnerian notion of pilgrimage have endured well albeit that there is now an established critique which suggests (i) an over-emphasis bestowed on the place-centredness of sacred travel rather than deeper appreciation of movement to, at and from the destination sites (Coleman and Eade, 2004) and (ii) a determinism that prejudges the complex character of the pilgrimage experience (Eade and Sallnow, 1991) which the Turners allege changes pilgrims into ‘a throng of similars’ or ‘a likeness of lot and intention’ that is ‘converted into commonness of feeling, into *communitas*’ (p.13). Eade and Sallnow argue that a recurrent theme in pilgrimage is the reinforcement of social boundaries and distinctions, rather than their attenuation or dissolution. In advocating the ‘essential heterogeneity of the process’, they recognise specifically that pilgrimage is characterised by contested meanings and motivations. I will return to this observation at subsequent stages in the paper.

Key attributes of pilgrimage comprise the journey, the destination, the pilgrims and the gatekeepers. As noted by Morinis (1992) the essence of the journey is movement, which encompasses important dimensions of meaning and experience that are central to sacred itineraries (p.15). In taking the pilgrim from home to a shrine and then home
again, a religious journey is of a circular type, but may vary by mode of travel and number of companions, degree of personal interaction, duration and frequency, and time of year. Pilgrimage is not, however, embedded in all religious journeys and in his research Ron (2009) differentiates, for example, between pilgrimage and other forms of Christian travel which may, on occasion, overlap. Pilgrimage destinations comprise New Testament sites (for example, in the Holy Land), sites associated with other sacred scriptures (for example, Book of Mormon sites), and non scriptural holy sites (for example, Marian shrines, religious headquarters or church history sites related to the early saints such as Saint Patrick (in Ireland) and in the context of this paper – Saint James (in Spain). In contrast, other forms of Christian travel unrelated to pilgrimage embrace appreciation of art and architecture and attendance at conferences, plays and pageants. What makes the pilgrimage centre significant, therefore, is its capacity to develop and project ‘an image that is the magnification of some accepted ideals of the culture’ (Morinis, 1992, p.18) and which some pilgrims may describe as the imagined ‘power’ of the special place.

Other faith traditions, of course, demonstrate a comparable symbiosis between pilgrims and place meaning. The annual Haj rituals which bring some 3 million pilgrims to Makkah is one of the five pillars of Islam and should be performed at least once by all Muslims in their lifetime. For Hindu pilgrims bathing on the banks of the River Ganges at Varanasi is deeply meaningful. And in Japan the general pattern of circuit pilgrimages, common in Buddhism, extend spiritual quests over more extensive territories; among the most frequented is the Pilgrimage to the 88 Holy Places on Shikoku Island popular since the 17th century (Reader, 2005; Rodriguez de Alisal et al, 2007). In that case the pilgrim, with white tunic, wide hat and staff, carries a scroll or book in which stamps are entered for each temple visited on the way-marked trail (Fig. 1). Pilgrims may walk the entire 1,200 kilometres route in a single clockwise excursion or during multiple visits. Alternatively when the time available is brief they may travel by bus between sites, frequently in small groups. For many of these travellers in an increasingly secular society research indicates the importance of personal insights that are gained along the Way rather than it being solely a Buddhist journey (Lloyd, 2012). As will be discussed below these attributes of Japanese pilgrimage chime well with the Camino de Santiago and with which, in the particular case of the Pilgrimage Route of Kumano, there was an official twinning involving the Galician Autonomous Community in 1999 (Rodriguez del Alisal, 2007, p.81).
Figure 1: Pilgrimage iconography at Matsuyama on the *Pilgrimage to the 88 Holy Places*, Shikoku Island, Japan

All this, of course, spills over into more secular or spiritual interactions between the journey, the destination and pilgrims and where personal experiences constitute the glue that can connect individuals with profound cultural meanings. Visits to
commemorative landscapes and linked commemorative activities are evidence of a pilgrimage that is complementary to religious shrines, for example, the visitation of Ground Zero in New York, the war memorials in France or Belgium, the death camps of the Holocaust, sites of memory and memorialisation in Berlin (Fig. 2) and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park (Fig. 3). In writing about the significance of memory and memorialisation as cultural signifiers, Linenthal (2001) draws attention in this vein to the innate sanctity of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on the Washington Mall (Fig.4) which he states:

...is proclaimed to be a place for healing and reconciliation, and it became a people’s memorial as it was unexpectedly transformed by thousands of offerings of diverse devotional materials. (p.xi)

The much vaunted shallow travelling of the tourist who may gaze with ‘respectful admiration’ (after Cohen, 1992, p.49), contrasts with the deep engagement by and transformation of these ‘civic pilgrims’. For the latter, the narratives of memorialisation go beyond ‘consuming them as cultural commodities’ (p.xiii). In the following section of this paper I explore further these dimensions of pilgrimage by having regard to the *Camino de Santiago* case.

**Figure 2: Mahnmal Gleis 17, Berlin**

Source: photograph by author, 2012
Figure 3: Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park

Source: photograph by author, 2013

Figure 4: Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington DC

Source: photograph by author, 2011
The *Camino de Santiago*

The pilgrimage routes to Santiago de Compostela are linked to the cult of the shrine of Saint James the Great and date back to at least the 10th Century. Traditionally, James, one of the Twelve Apostles, was the first Christian missionary to Iberia; having returned to Jerusalem, he was martyred in AD44 (Fig.6). His body was supposedly taken back to Spain for burial where it lay undiscovered until the end of the eighth century. Thereafter, the promotion of Santiago de Compostela as a cult centre led to it emerging alongside Rome and Jerusalem as one of the great pilgrimage destinations of medieval Europe. By the 13th Century perhaps as many as 500,000 pilgrims each year travelled to Galicia (Murray and Graham, 1997).
The genesis of the cult of Saint James, as suggested by Webb (2002), coincided chronologically with the Islamic occupation of much of the Iberian Peninsula, and while the pilgrimage ‘stirred into life as Christian resurgence gained strength’, it is argued that caution is required in attributing causal connections between these phenomena (p.13). Nonetheless, it was in Asturias that opposition to Islam first began and it is unlikely that rediscovery of the tomb of Sant'Iago was disconnected from these events (Graham and Murray, 1997). The enduring and multiple representations of Saint James as, either the venerable pilgrim (Fig.7), or more particularly as a soldier on horseback within the Reconquista narrative - Santiago Matamores (Fig.8), link into that debate.

**Figure 6: The historical narrative of Saint James**

Source: photograph by author at Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, 2010

**Figure 7: Pilgrim bas-relief, Church of Santiago, Caceres**

Source: photograph by author, 2012

**Figure 8: Santiago Matamores bas-relief, Zafra**

Source: photograph by author, 2012
The subsequent development of the medieval pilgrimage routes to Santiago de Compostela formed an intricate web of land-based and maritime connections which linked all of Europe, including Ireland, to north west Spain and while there were many subsidiary routes, the principal focus was on four traditional gathering points at Paris, Vezelay, Le Puy and Arles (Fig.9) to which pilgrims came from within France and other countries. From these places the pilgrimage routes crossed the Pyrenees and converged at the Navarrese town of Puente le Reine to form what was coined as the *Camino Frances* (The French Way). Over time a complex infrastructure of market towns, churches, hospitals, bridges and marked trails was created to serve the medieval pilgrim trade. These elements form the heritage complex associated with the contemporary *Camino de Santiago*, whose most prominent itinerary (ie the *Camino Frances*) is an 800 kilometre route between Saint Jean Pied de Port (denoted as (4) in Figure 9 below) in south west France and Santiago de Compostela that passes through the tourist-historic cities of Pamplona, Burgos and Leon. Today, the consumers (Fig.10 and Fig.11) of this extensive heritage complex with multiple routes comprise an admixture of niches with different demands and motivations – coach and car based travellers, cyclists, those on horseback (few), and walkers (many). Pilgrims are most commonly identified as walkers, though that that title is not exclusive to those travelling on foot and certainly does not apply to all within that sub-market and for some of whom the experience may be reduced to a long stroll in the countryside. There is consequently a duality of participation between those with a spiritual motivation following either religious rituals or seeking a fresh inner awareness and those pursuing more secular aspects of route based travel. The multiplicity of personal accounts of the Camino over the past 25 years is evidence of that dualism (see for example, Bentley, 1992; Boers, 2007; Egan, 2004; Kevin, 2008; Hitt; 1994, Luard, 1999; MacLaine, 2000; Murtagh and Murtagh, 2011; Slader, 1989).
Figure 9: The *Camino de Santiago* itineraries

![Map of the Camino de Santiago](http://www.google.co.uk/search?q=map+of+camino+de+santiago&hl=en&tbo=u&tbm=isch&source=univ&sa=X&ei=kjnXUKHRNcrD0AXOtlFg&sqi=2&ved=0CDsQsAQ&biw=1920&bih=979, accessed 23 December 2012)

Source:
http://www.google.co.uk/search?q=map+of+camino+de+santiago&hl=en&tbo=u&tbm=isch&source=univ&sa=X&ei=kjnXUKHRNcrD0AXOtlFg&sqi=2&ved=0CDsQsAQ&biw=1920&bih=979, accessed 23 December 2012
This motivational differentiation is thrown into sharp relief by ‘official’ scrutiny of and rewards to those claiming pilgrim status. Travellers walking or cycling to Santiago de Compostela are invited to use a special passport (credencial) to collect dated stamps (Fig. 12), obtainable from churches, inns and cafes, which act as a personal record of the journey. Provided a traveller can demonstrate evidence of having completed at least 100 kilometres by foot, or 200 kilometres by bicycle, the cathedral authorities in Santiago issue a document known as a Compostela which constitutes the papal pardon granted to pilgrims (Fig. 13). In recent years these requirements have been revised by the cathedral authorities. They now denote a comparable and mandatory walk-in or cycling distance within Galicia to the tomb of the apostle in Santiago de Compostela, even though individual starting locations may be many hundreds of kilometres distant. Pilgrim passports must now be issued by the church or by approved agents and too many stamps from bars and cafes along the way are frowned upon! Additionally, those seeking a Compostela are asked to specify their primary reason for undertaking the pilgrimage, defined as religious, religious / cultural, or cultural. In previous years the answers given had no bearing on the outcome, but in seeking to separate out more secular motivations, the cathedral authorities will now refuse a Compostela to those deemed unworthy of that pilgrimage accreditation. Instead a Certificado will be offered to those completing the journey and whose motivations do not meet the cathedral’s Compostela criteria. This reclaiming of the religious and spiritual meaning of pilgrimage by Galician church authorities can be viewed as a response to the emergent global awareness and celebrity status of the Camino de Santiago as a cultural phenomenon and which has seen ‘official’ pilgrims increasing from some 2,500 in 1985 (when it was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site) to
over 192,400 in 2012 with intervening Holy Years, when the feast day of Saint James (25 July) falls on a Sunday, recording much higher figures. During the most recent Holy Year in 2010, for example, a Compostela was awarded to some 272,000 pilgrims (http://www.csj.org.uk/present.htm#Some statistics, accessed 11 January 2013). Total visitor numbers to Santiago de Compostela are of course much greater.

This cultural allure of the Camino de Santiago as certified experience has been widened somewhat over the period since October 2003 by the initiation of a Pilgrim University Record issued by the Universidad de Navarra in Pamplona to allow for the collection of stamps from universities along the route travelled. It seeks to specifically engage with university students, alumni and staff from across the world. On submission of their record to the Office of Alumni at Universidad de Navarra, endorsed by a stamp from their affiliated university, they will be awarded La Compostela Universitaria (Jacobean University Certificate). This certificate has no religious meaning per se and might easily be interpreted as institutional positioning in a global market where visibility and ranking dominate the contemporary university administration discourse. From its inception to October 2012 almost 32,000 records have been issued to university pilgrims from 47 countries and for the 45% who represent themselves as students, the certification may represent for some nothing more than formalising the award of course credits (www.campus-stellae.org/ accessed 19 June 2013).
In short, this case study of the pilgrim routes to Santiago de Compostela demonstrates considerable heterogeneity among travellers, along with contested interpretations of what pilgrimage is and who participants are. The narrative is in line with the observations over 20 years ago of Eade and Sallnow (1991) that a pilgrimage itinerary and venue provide a ritual space for the expression of a multiplicity of perceptions and meanings, which the pilgrims themselves bring and impose on these cultural complexes.

The research approach

The author has made two expeditions along the Camino Frances that involved an admixture of walking and driving in April 1994 (9 days), and in April / May 2003 (10 days). More recently this entire 800km pilgrimage trail was walked during three periods comprising August 2008 (300km from Saint Jean Pied de Port to Burgos over 13 days), October 2008 (200 km from Burgos to Leon over 8 days) and October 2009 (300 km from Leon to Santiago de Compostela over 14 days). In October 2012 the initial 300 km of the Via de la Plata from Seville to Caceres was walked over 13 days. A final combined walking and driving expedition along the Via de la Plata between Caceres and Santiago de Compostela via Ourense and then westwards to Finisterre and Muxia was completed over 7 days in October 2013. Additionally, the walking section from Rabanal to Fonsebadon on the Camino Frances was revisited in October 2013. A photograph archive of each transect has been recorded (shifting over time from 35mm film, to camera disk and memory card formats), promotional material relating to the Camino de Santiago has been collected en-route, and informal conversations with walkers and cyclists have taken place regarding their itinerary experiences. Pilgrim diaries posted on the Internet have also been examined. Over the period from 1994 a substantial inventory of books, monographs and articles relating to the Camino de Santiago has been accumulated and which continues to be updated. Finally, secondary analysis of longitudinal statistical data has been made possible as a result of material published annually by the cathedral authorities in Santiago de Compostela and by the Confraternity of Saint James in London, much of which is now available on-line. A paper drawing on the totality this work was presented most recently at the World Meeting of the Confraternities and Societies of St James and the VIth International Scientific Conference entitled "1200 years of pilgrimage to the grave of St James in Santiago de Compostela" in Krakow, Poland in September 2013.
The *Camino Frances*

As noted above the *Camino Frances* has long been the principal pilgrimage itinerary to Santiago de Compostela and owes much to its codification in Book V of the *Codex Calixtinus*, a twelfth century collection of books dealing with the life and legacy of Saint James. At that time the pilgrimage was embedded into the wider power politics of the medieval Roman Church, centred on the great Burgundian abbey of Cluny and thus it underscored a strong geographical alliance between France and the northern Spanish Kingdoms. The fifth book in this compilation, reportedly written by a French cleric, Aimery Picaud, is a guide for pilgrims and was designed to ensure they were channelled at that time through the major Cluniac shrines along the Way. As noted by Graham and Murray (1997) this Cluniac sponsorship of the cult of Saint James and the accompanying infrastructure along the *Camino Frances* influenced expressions of architecture and art that were much more in line with medieval French forms and tastes; Romanesque styles predominated.

**Figure 14: San Pedro de la Rua church in Estella on the *Camino Frances***

Source: photograph by author, 2008
The contemporary cultural landscape has, accordingly, to be read through that historical lens with villages, towns and cities, strung like well placed beads on a necklace, where intervening distances are often relatively short, and travellers can combine a tourist gaze with religious devotion within the many churches and abbeys that command visual interest (Figs. 14 and 15). For many of those who travel between Saint Jean Pied de Port and Santiago de Compostela, this route is perceived as the 'true', 'must-do' and 'authentic' pilgrimage itinerary and its reinvented popularity is evidenced by the proliferation of tour operator packages for sale (including university sponsored study visits), multi-language guide books, and a publishing industry (increasingly using electronic formats) based on personal experiences. The 2010 Emilio Estevez movie The Way starring Martin Sheen, described as “a soulful and cinematic journey”, has fuelled awareness and interest. Meeting the demands of travellers, in turn, has spawned a diverse and enterprising local hospitality sector, supported in different degrees by government agencies and public funds. Later sections of this paper will develop this analysis, but in demonstrating the market hegemony of the Camino Frances useful reference can be made to pilgrim data collected by the Cathedral authorities in Santiago de Compostela. In 2012, of the 192,488 officially recorded pilgrims who presented their credencial in the Cathedral
office, some 70.1% had travelled part or all of the Camino Frances; the corresponding figure for the Via de la Plata was only 4.2% with the balance made up by the Camino Portugues (13.3%), Camino del Norte (6.7%), Camino Primitivo (3.3%) and Camino Ingles (1.9%) and others (0.5%). In short, the Camino Frances can be regarded as being very much a mature pilgrimage itinerary; in the language of business it has strong domestic and international brand appreciation.

**The Via de la Plata**

The Via de la Plata (the Silver Route) as a contemporary pilgrimage itinerary is, in contrast, a more recent construction albeit its origins reach back to Roman times as a road that initially linked Gijon to Merida and which was subsequently extended south to Seville. Indeed Merida was very much 'the city of Rome' equivalent in Iberia with its ensemble of bridges, aqueduct and reservoir, amphitheatre, theatre and arch still standing today and forming core elements of a World Heritage Site complex designated in 1993 by UNESCO (Figs. 16 and 17).

**Figure 16: El Acueducto de los Milagros, Merida**

Source: photograph by author, 2012
As recorded by Raju (2005) the *Via de la Plata* commenced as a pilgrim artery to Santiago de Compostela in the twelfth century and was a journey taken by Christian pilgrims living under the tolerance of Muslim rule. As with the *Camino Frances* there developed over time an infrastructure of pilgrim hospitals and churches, with pilgrims being given protection by the Order of the Knights of Santiago founded in Caceres. The settlement pattern, however, across much of the *Via de la Plata* outwith Galicia is less dense than the *Camino Frances* with villages and towns separated by lengthy tracts of largely empty countryside and which, for example, in Andalucia comprises large estates (*cortijos*) given over to cattle ranching (Fig. 18). The result is that walking the pathways of the *Via de la Plata* can be a demanding experience with much fewer pilgrims adding to a sense of personal isolation and the Roman road alignment frequently giving un-interupted views to distant horizons (Fig. 19). This is the longest of the many routes through Spain and Portugal to Santiago de Compostela at some 1,000 km from Seville and in its current format owes much to the work of Jose Luis Salvador Salvador (1942-1995) who way-marked and revived the pilgrimage route in the late twentieth century and whose ashes in part are buried at a wayside memorial just beyond El Real de la Jara. Indeed the latter day reinvention of the *Via de la Plata* is
underlined by the publication in 1995 of a multi agency sponsored book of photographs of the Roman road between Seville and Gijon that omits any detailed reference to Santiago de Compostela (Roldan et al, 1995). Accordingly and notwithstanding its antiquity, the *Via de la Plata* is situated today at a more formative stage of pilgrim itinerary development attracting not so much first time travellers but those who, perhaps, have previously completed the *Camino Frances* and are searching for a different experience.

**Figure 18: Estate entrance gate beyond Castilblanco de los Arroyos**

![Estate entrance gate beyond Castilblanco de los Arroyos](image1)

Source: photograph by author, 2012

**Figure 19: Roman road north of Seville**

![Roman road north of Seville](image2)

Source: photograph by author, 2012
It is against this introductory commentary that the Working Paper now moves on to consider a series of cross-cutting representations of the Camino de Santiago as a cultural heritage complex: as official heritage, as development instrument, as civil society and as personal experience.

The Camino de Santiago as official heritage

The modern revival of pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela can be traced back to 1879 when church authorities announced that the bones of Saint James had been discovered beneath the cathedral thus setting in motion fresh interest in the Jacobean cult following a sustained decline from the sixteenth century. The combined effects of the final victory over Islam in 1492, the Reformation, and later dismissal of the cult as superstition were relevant factors. Pack (2010) observes further that liberal governments of the nineteenth century suspended the royal offering to Saint James thus weakening church wealth that supported pilgrim hospitality. While the cult did not disappear completely, its power as both a national and universal symbol did recede (p.336), only to be re-invigorated by the rise of National Catholicism and its embeddedness within the Spanish Civil War between 1936 and 1939. As described above there is a dualistic identity to Saint James - venerable pilgrim and champion of the Reconquista, and both elements visibly resurfaced within the political context of Falangist nationalism. The Falange, for example, organised pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela and, as noted by Dunn and Davidson (1996), Franco took the opportunity to stand with church officials as Head of State in front of the Cathedral doors (Fig. 20) and to participate in the national offering to the patron saint on 25th July (ofrenda nacional). Pack (2010) reports that Franco had used the 1937 Holy Year to re-establish the offering to Saint James which resulted in an exceptional Holy Year being declared by papal decree in 1938 “to cement the bond between Saint James and the Francoist cause” (p.352). This annual tradition involving church and state, albeit under markedly different circumstances, still continues (see, for example, the television broadcast for 2012 at, http://www.crtvg.es/tvg/programas/ofrenda-nacional-ao-apostolo-santiago) and is illustrative of how the saint and his shrine as heritage have been re-invented through time in response to changing religious and secular demands. Thus Santiago Matamores, a central ingredient of the iconography of the Reconquista and appropriated into the Falange cause as a symbol against a fledgling Republic, has been consigned to an unsavoury past, notwithstanding the commonplace and enduring artistic representation of this violent imagery in churches along the Camino de Santiago (Fig.21) including the cathedral in Santiago de Compostela where a less than subtle
attempt has been made to soften its visual impact against calls for its complete removal (Fig 22). In contrast and to fit better with the pluralism of modern times, the Compostela certificate has been quietly redesigned over the past decade by replacing the official seal of a sword wielding Saint James on horseback with the more peaceful motif of the apostle’s tomb (Fig. 13 above).

**Figure 20: Francisco Franco at the Pórtico de la Gloria,**
*Santiago de Compostela Cathedral, 1938.*

Source: http://cultura.elpais.com/cultura/2012/03/02/actualidad/1330720212_359535.html, accessed 9 January 2013
Figure 21: *Santiago Matamores* within Burgos Cathedral

Source: photograph by author, 2008

Figure 22: *Santiago Matamores* within Santiago de Compostela Cathedral

Source: photograph by author, 2013
The apogee of the *Camino de Santiago* as official heritage rests today with its international acclaim bestowed initially by the Council of Europe in 1987 when the *Camino Frances* was designated the continent's first cultural itinerary. UNESCO followed in 1993 by including the *Camino Frances* in its World Heritage Site listing, with parts of the routes in France added in 1999. Each designation has a different emphasis as argued by Schrire (2006), with the Council of Europe placing weight on intangible heritage. Coming on the back of Spain's accession to the European Union in 1986, the *Camino* is symbolically held to point towards the ideal of European integration, signifying an attitude of mind that encompasses an attentiveness towards others and a deeply felt commitment to the European project (Graham and Murray, 1997). Accordingly, it takes Spain out of its self-imposed historic isolation during much of the Franco era towards what Schrire cites is “a multi-cultural form of Europeanness” (p.72). In contrast, the UNESCO designation places more weight on the tangible heritage of material related to places, structures and art along the *Camino Frances*, and which at the time received domestic representation in a special stamp issued by the Spanish Post Office (*Correos*) in 1995 (Fig. 23).

**Figure 23: Camino Frances commemorative stamp, 1995**

![Camino Frances commemorative stamp, 1995](http://www.google.co.uk/search?q=route+of+santiago+de+compostela&hl=en&tbo=u&tbn=isch&source=univ&sa=X&ei=_0bwUPXbFYXV0QWkypoHYAg&sqi=2&ved=0CFoQsAQ&biw=1920&bih=979, accessed 11 January 2013)

Thus far the many alternative routes that comprise the *Camino de Santiago* network in Spain have not been accorded comparable international esteem even though World Heritage Site status has also been awarded to places situated along these trails. In that
regard the *Via de la Plata*, for example, can point to Seville, Caceres and Salamanca as containing significant World Heritage Site elements. However, expressed more prosaically the 'dots have not been joined up' and the *Via de la Plata* has been resting on the UNESCO 'tentative' list since 1997. The *Northern or Primitive Route* has been listed in a similar fashion since 2007. Clearly, more secular considerations around merit are being played out against a route based equality of religious or spiritual significance, although even on that matter there is also a grading of recognition by the Santiago de Compostela cathedral authorities which, as noted above, have proclaimed the *Camino* pilgrimage as an essentially Galician experience for purposes of the *Compostela*. All this has resonance with the views of Eade and Sallnow (1991) and cited by Roseman (2004) that 'the characteristics, personal meanings, and ideological significance of pilgrimage journeys and destinations are continuously constructed often in competing ways' (p.69).

One significant consequence of this broader official recognition of *Camino* heritage is illustrated by the attention given to signage and way-marking. Apart from the ubiquitous and informal daubing of walls, boulders, poles (and even railway lines!) with yellow arrows, the most common logo is the deployment of a stylised scallop-shell, the symbol of Saint James, turned on its side and streamlined into a fan of lines meeting to the left. This represents the many routes of the *Camino de Santiago* in common purpose and leading westward to the shrine of the apostle. The blue and yellow colours and, on occasion, specific mention that the signage relates to *Itinerario Cultural Europeo*, emphasise the European credentials of the motif, with variations on the theme being used for road and off-road travellers (Fig. 24). In so far as possible there is modal separation and while frequent use is made of agricultural lanes and edge-of-field tracks for walkers, there are additional trail sections that have been purpose constructed to provide safe passage removed from traffic, especially along the heavily used *Camino Frances*. Moreover, on *Vía de la Plata* where there is less separation, there is signage that warns those on paths of a forthcoming road junction (Fig. 25). It should not be assumed, therefore, that the way-marked off-road route in its entirety is a more authentic medieval relic. The regional government of Navarra, for example, recognising that there was "no fixed and abiding road", invented a definitive itinerary through legislation in 1988 which defines a route, 3 metres wide, that avoids "main roads, built-up areas, agricultural land and rubbish tips" (pp.5-6) and is accessible only to walkers and those on horseback (Gobierno de Navarra, undated). Implicit within this is the connection between the *Camino* and regional identity and increasingly the regional governments are investing in their own versions of way-marking that co-position the
name of the government entity with the route (Fig. 26). Efforts at municipal level since 1997 to extend the pilgrim itineraries to the western seaboard beyond Santiago de Compostela and reward travellers with Fisterrana and La Muxiana certificates of completion mirror that enterprise. In this case the municipalities of Finisterre and Muxia would seem to be competing with each other for the accolade of the ‘official’ finish of the Camino de Santiago.

Figure 24: Waymarking along the Via de la Plata

Source: photographs by author, 2012
The *Camino de Santiago* as development instrument

In a mildly sardonic paper Bell and Dale (2011) comment that academic research on medieval pilgrimage has tended to neglect its economic and financial dimension, focusing instead on religious, social and cultural attributes (p.624). Just as travellers at that time required accommodation, medical care, sustenance, and equipment so also do contemporary pilgrims. Their paper identifies the varied nature of the pilgrim market that enhanced prosperity in towns along the *Camino Frances* from the eleventh century onwards. It included, for example, ‘recalcitrant members’ of European universities who were sent on pilgrimage as a form of ‘expiation and punishment’ (p.622)!

More recently, the pilgrim market as a nascent form of mass tourism did flourish during the Franco era, as noted above, and in the 1948 Holy Year it is estimated that some 500,000 people venerated the shrine with half arriving in groups of over 100 (Pack, 2010). The marketing of the *Camino de Santiago* from that period displays varied motifs that link the apostle, the shrine and the pilgrim with more nuanced representations of simplicity, power and mobilisation (Fig. 27). Thus in 1948 the classic portrayal of the pilgrim as lone traveller complete with traditional costume of cloak, staff
and scrip, arriving through a darkened gateway into Praza do Obradoira in Santiago de Compostela and facing the west facade of the cathedral illuminated by the stars of the Milky Way (Via Lactia), speaks to metaphorical personal accomplishment at the end of a journey. Interestingly the red sword of the Order of Saint James that appears as a visual footnote in that poster can be linked more directly to a very stylised Falange iconography as evidenced in the 1959 promotional artwork. This draws from Mateo's Entrance of Glory (Portico de Gloria) in the cathedral and positions St James against the adopted black and red colours of the regime with the surrounding starbursts most suggestive of the arrows that emerge out of the yoke in its flag. An even more militaristic representation of energetic pilgrim mobilisation that marches past a backcloth of religious architecture is evident in the 1965 Holy Year poster. It contrasts sharply with the contemporary pluralism of many pilgrims shuffling into the shrine in 2010. There can be little doubt that during the Franco years the Camino de Santiago as development instrument was inextricably linked to a project of national unity. But it also fitted well with an interest by the government during the 1950s and beyond in developing a tourism product that combined "national image" with "religious devotion" (Pack, 2010, p.358), Thus, for example, the current luxury Parador in Santiago de Compostela, Hostal de los Reyes Catolicos, was opened with state investment in 1954, and in 1962 the Camino Frances was declared by the government as a National Patronate (Pack, 2010). As noted by Afinoguenova (2010) this period of development-guided (desarrollista) policy through to 1969 witnessed a state driven heritage industry to diversify Spanish tourism away from the coastal resorts with images of old and new Spain carefully crafted into a branding melange that served multiple purposes: a resource for economic development, an ideological imperative to drive territorial integration, and the need to give the Franco regime in its late stages a new set of political credentials internationally. The Camino Frances as development instrument was appropriated into that strategy.
Figure 27: Pilgrimage marketing posters, 1948 - 2010

Sources: http://www.dpvintageposters.com/
http://fogcityposters.wordpress.com/2012/02/13/1965-santiago-de-compostela-spain-travel-
http://2011/07/la-coleccion-de-carteles-de-los-anos.html
http://peregrinossantiago.es/eng/pilgrimage/holy-years/ accessed 12 January 2013
Since then the economic commodification of the *Camino de Santiago* has intensified within a democratic Spain and while the destination remains significant as a tourist-historic city, it is enjoyment of the routes themselves as cultural itineraries, and in particular the *Camino Frances*, that defines the quintessential experience for many travellers situated conceptually on the continuum of pious pilgrim to secular tourist (Lourens, 2007; Smith, 1992). Cities and towns along that route, such as Leon, Astorga and Sarria have risen to cultural prominence (Gonzalez and Medina, 2003). In this vein Santiago de Compostela has sought to position itself more broadly as an international cultural heritage venue, although it would appear to have over-extended that ambition with its now incomplete and visibly empty €400 million City of Culture of Galicia venue which sits as a lonely edifice on a hilltop well removed from the historic pilgrimage core of the city (Fig. 28). It has been condemned as a

**Figure 28: City of Culture of Galicia, Santiago de Compostela**

Source: photograph by author, 2013
“white elephant” that was conceived in an era of Spanish excess and opened in a period of economic collapse (Wainwright, 2011).

More widely, route based tourism operates at a variety of spatial scales and in diverse cultural contexts. The essence of itineraries is that they combine cultural consumption with points of sale and are closely linked to a continuous re-imaging of place and culture that draws inspiration from nostalgia, memory and tradition (Murray and Graham, 1997). The consumers of this heritage tourism complex comprise a fusion of niches with different demands: long distance coach and car based travellers, cyclists and walkers, and on occasion those on horseback or with a donkey. Tour operators within an international market sell lift-and-drop all-inclusive packages that focus on the more scenically appealing sections of the Camino, while those with a more independent trait can rely on road and track based itineraries that are shaped by daily feasible distances set out in guidebooks and the availability of services including ‘lift and drop’ luggage collection (Fig 29).
In both instances, however, there is evidence that demonstrates the current vogue of promoting these pilgrimage trails as off-road adventure routes. With contemporary cultural tourism increasingly oriented towards sensory experiences, most typically expressed through the linkage between sport and tourism, the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage routes may be just a very long trek, or a challenging off road trail for mountain-biking. Significantly, the Camino Frances is now a designated EuroVelo route, one of a series of long distance cycling itineraries that traverse Europe.

As development instrument, the rural regeneration contribution of the Camino de Santiago has been experienced to great effect within the villages that straddle its various routes and in this regard attention can be drawn to one settlement that exemplifies these changes in fortune. Foncebadon is situated on the Camino Frances some 245 km east of Santiago de Compostela in mountain terrain that takes pilgrims to the highest elevation of the route at Puerta Irigo (1,505m). From personal experience this is a physically demanding section of the pilgrimage trail that combines use of secondary asphalt roads and steep off-road tracks, but which rewards travellers with some spectacular landscapes and an interesting vernacular architecture of random stone buildings with first floor wooden galleries. This is marginal farming territory with
an often inclement weather pattern and which by 1994 had resulted in the complete abandonment of Foncebadon as a lived-in village (Fig. 30). This functional obsolescence was evidenced by dereliction and occasional cattle grazing freely along the main street, using the former church for shelter. Foncebadon had a reputation for harbouring wild dogs - the bane of the walking pilgrim (see Slader, 1989). However, fifteen years later the village had been remarkably transformed (Fig. 31). Much of the housing stock had been renovated, possibly for second home occupation, and interpretative signage directs walkers into new facilities comprising an albergue (hostel), restaurant with accommodation, and the refurbished church which serves also as a seasonal 22 beds albergue. By 2013 a shop had opened. The contribution made by EU LEADER rural development programme funding is acknowledged on specially designed wall plaques.

This vignette around investment and local development is typical of what has been happening more widely along the Camino de Santiago and now almost every village on the Camino Frances and Via de la Plata has at least one bar or cafe (albeit with varying opening times!) and most have some basic overnight accommodation for pilgrims. Along the Camino Frances walkers can also avail of informal day-time stalls in the countryside offering snacks and drinks while, on occasion, evening meals are available in restaurants from 6pm to specifically cater for the dining habits of the large non-European market. Internet connectivity abounds and, in an increasingly commercial environment, establishments compete with each other by taking advance bookings (via mobile phone), offering en-suite facilities, washing machines and clothes dryers, and providing lift and drop backpack services. Informal advertising by bundles of leaflets on way-marking stones, fly-posting and signage are commonplace and are illustrative of a local business opportunity that is being readily grasped in hard times, with charges for the most part remaining modest (Fig. 32).

Moreover, there is some evidence that unapproved accommodation is also seeking to enter the pilgrim market on the Camino Frances, such is the pressure on bedspace availability, and in turn giving rise to vocal complaints from registered hospitality entrepreneurs. On occasion, the quality of accommodation has surfaced as an issue because of mattress flea infestation and necessitating temporary closure of premises by the regulatory authorities.
Figure 30: Foncebadon on the *Camino Frances*, 1994

Source: photograph by author, 1994

Figure 31: Foncebadon on the *Camino Frances*, 2009

Source: photograph by author, 2009
Figure 32: Informal advertising of accommodation on the *Via de la Plata*

Source: photographs by author, 2012
The *Camino de Santiago* as civil society

While the institutions of church and state are key to the contemporary promotion and development of the *Camino de Santiago* pilgrim itineraries, their work has been reinforced by an international civil society comprising country based membership organisations, sometimes with regional chapters, that have grown in number especially from the 1980s. Some are specifically recognised as primarily religious confraternities and are thus under the umbrella of the Arch Confraternity of Santiago established by papal declaration in 1942. Other associations have more a secular, cultural or spiritual mission. There is very high density coverage of civil society associations in Spain and

Table 1: Civil society associations and pilgrims by country (select data), 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Civil society organisations</th>
<th>Pilgrims in 2012 by country of origin</th>
<th>Share of total pilgrims in 2012 (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>95,275</td>
<td>49.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2,229</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8,121</td>
<td>4.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15,620</td>
<td>8.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12,404</td>
<td>6.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,955</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10,329</td>
<td>5.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,308</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2,904</td>
<td>1.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3,015</td>
<td>1.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2,307</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>822</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,885</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,772</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,682</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>720</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3,844</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>860</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>969</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>373</td>
<td>0.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3,758</td>
<td>1.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7,071</td>
<td>3.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>711</td>
<td>0.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

which unsurprisingly accounts for just under a half of the total official pilgrim market (Table 1). As illustrated in Figure 33, these organisations have adopted significant elements of the iconography of the heritage complex varying from the built environment to scallop shell in order to help brand their service role. Indeed in the case of Canada, where there are both French and English cultural alliances, one web page banner symbolically superimposes notions of east and west in common cause on the Camino Frances itinerary.

Figure 33: Camino de Santiago national association web-page banners

These not-for-profit associations provide advice and support to prospective pilgrims through the publication of guidebooks and news bulletins, undertaking research, the convening of lectures and conferences, and facilitating membership networking not least among those who have completed various itineraries. They act as official agents for pilgrim passports in an attempt by church authorities to reclaim the spiritual integrity of that document from its more profane availability in souvenir shops. In Spain the local associations assist with way-marking and signage as illustrated by the work of Amigos del Camino de Santiago de Zamora on the Vía de la Plata that has erected a series of terracotta tablets which give information about the historical significance of villages on the pilgrim route within the province. And, for example, in the case of the first English speaking confraternity, established in the UK in 1983, these organisations also invest in accommodation infrastructure. The Confraternity of Saint James, whose Registered Office is in London, sponsors refugios in Rabanal del Camino (opened in June 1991) on the Camino Frances and at Miraz (opened in May 2005 with an extension in 2011) on the Camino del Norte. These are available to all who travel by foot, cycle or horse on a first come basis and they depend in no small measure on generous financial donations and voluntary staffing (hospitaleros) year on year. For those associations that offer accommodation considerable emphasis is placed on hospitalero training, not just in regard to establishment health and safety matters, but also the personal wellbeing of volunteers who may on occasion be drawn into quasi-counselling roles.

There is also recognition by some civil society organisations, not connected with the Camino de Santiago, that their imperative to fund-raise can draw benefit from the tourism potential that these pilgrim itineraries offer. Figure 34 is evidence of how one such charity, the Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind, has tapped into this travel market with treks along and beyond the Camino Frances that offer excitement and an opportunity to assist a good cause. This of course is connected with a more widespread relationship between charity sponsorship and adventure expeditions that arranges for participants to travel to exotic and challenging locations for biking, trekking and sailing activities. Such challenge itineraries frequently embrace the Great Wall of China, Machu Picchu and Mount Kilimanjaro and it is within that elite company which the Camino de Santiago is frequently positioned. Various financial models exist regarding the calculus of trip costs, operator fees, and charity donations (see Turner et al, 2001) and it is not unusual to find the virtues of environmental sustainability and community action lauded as key added attributes of the overall package.
Figure 34: *Camino de Santiago* charity promotional advertisement

![Advert Image]

Source: *The Irish Times*, 11 June 2013, p.26
An interesting turn on this connection between civil society engagement and expeditions can be found in the work of Oikoten (from Greek meaning 'away from home' and 'by one's own effort') and which offers young offenders from Belgium an alternative to and freedom from imprisonment by walking from Herent to join and complete the Camino Frances - a distance of some 2,500 km. Over the 30 years from 1982 more than 350 teenagers have completed this four months itinerary with adult leaders linked to this organisation and the evidence is that the journey and its completion can be transformational (Weymouth, 2012). The positive personal experience can be life-changing and a source of inter-generational pride, and as commented by a member of Oikoten:

For a young person, the best possible outcome of prison is that if the punishment is hard enough, they might not do it again. It's better to find another solution - something that will make the offender think. That's what a walk does, it makes you think. You're trying to give people the chance to experiment, to experience a different world. Trying things, trying things again, without giving up, without being watched and judged. A walk is medicine. Prison is not. (Weymouth, 2012, p.4)

Away from the Camino de Santiago itineraries within Spain, civil society groups are also involved in developing the heritage of feeder routes elsewhere in Europe. This work acknowledges the pan European reach of medieval pilgrimage linked to the cult of Saint James and the awakening of local interest in its revitalisation. The waymarking of the Via Baltika in Germany, The Slovenian Way, and The Lower Silesia Way are illustrative of this voluntary endeavour which depends on partnership with the relevant municipalities and local clergy. There is unquestionably an economic development motive to these initiatives and in some cases customised credentials and certificates of completion are now available for what can be regarded as stand-alone cultural itineraries. It could be argued that such an imitative approach in the long run may create confusion around the Camino de Santiago brand and perhaps dilute its embedded primacy in Spain under the curatorship of Galician gatekeepers.

The important point here is that this host-role leadership by civil society in relation to the pilgrim routes to Santiago de Compostela has multiple dimensions and which in turn adds to the heterogeneity among travellers, along with varied interpretations of what pilgrimage is, who pilgrims are, and where pilgrim routes are located. To reiterate a previous point, pilgrimage itineraries and venues provide ritual spaces for the expression of a multiplicity of perceptions and meanings, which travellers themselves
bring and impose on these cultural complexes. The next section of this Working Paper develops that perspective.

The *Camino de Santiago* as personal experience

Thus far my analysis has largely been concerned with elements of the evolving superstructure of the *Camino de Santiago* comprising the agency roles played by state, church and civil society. But there are also corresponding perspectives from 'below' that shape our appreciation of what these itineraries are and might be. Much of what is communicated by those who have followed the *Camino de Santiago* routes is merely the continuation of a long tradition of travel writing that describes the places, events and people encountered along the way. The self-expressed awe of Starkie (1957) as he watches a *botafumeiro* ceremony in the Cathedral at Santiago de Compostela (Fig. 35) has been replicated in a subsequent flood of publications that have intensified with the maturing of the internet age and the popularity of social media connectivity. Their focus is very much on stages completed, the enjoyment of accommodation and food, the admiring of architecture and landscape, and the spectacle of stumbled-upon special occasions (Fig. 36).

**Figure 35: Botafumeiro ceremony Santiago de Compostela cathedral**

Source: photograph by author, 2013
There is, however, an additional commentary that reveals the Camino as personal experience for many travellers; it takes us into a private world, at times laid bare and related to sensibility and emotion. It is about the shedding of burdens and living in the moment. The ethnographic research of Frey (1998) is important in that regard and in her book *Pilgrim Stories* the meanings of the *Camino de Santiago* are uncovered through narratives of feeling. The sheer breadth of these individual possibilities in various combinations is described thus:

Although the Santiago pilgrimage has a religious foundation based in Catholic doctrine regarding sin, its remission and salvation, in its contemporary permutation these religious elements endure, but they also share the same stage with transcendent spirituality, tourism, physical adventure, nostalgia, a place to grieve, and esoteric meaning. The Camino can be (among many other things) a union with nature, a vacation, an escape from the drudgery of the everyday, a spiritual path to the self and humankind, a social reunion, or a personal testing ground. (Frey, 1998, p.5)
What becomes apparent from this book are the personal motivations that initiate engagement with the *Camino*, the transformational discoveries and learning that so frequently occur, and the challenges and problems that need to be addressed *en route*. Ritual and routine often elide, the sacred and profane can co-exist and at the conclusion (wherever that may be) a daily linear progression changes to the circuit roundedness of the inevitable home-coming at journey's end (Fig. 37 and Fig. 38). In that vein, anecdotal and observational evidence that I have collected suggests four key attributes that illuminate the *Camino de Santiago* as a personal experience: meeting with others, suffering and pain, new awareness, and repeating the journey.

**Figure 37: A journey's end in Santiago de Compostela**

![Image of Santiago de Compostela](image.png)

Source: photograph by author, 2009
There can be a gregarious camaraderie among strangers on the Camino de Santiago that is particularly the case with those walking equivalent distances each day. Walkers and cyclists by virtue of different capabilities are seldom able to establish that quiet familiarity. But yet for all this easy company, many walkers usually do not progress beyond nodding recognition, first name greeting and knowledge of country of origin. It is considered impolite to ask for surnames and occupation, and reasons for pilgrimage are not queried unless volunteered. Quite simply, these are the unstated rules of the road. Evening meals taken together allow for discussions to range widely across global affairs to the tribulations of the day completed and what lies ahead. The close living in the dormitories of the refugios contrasts with the more detached roaming in hotels, though for both sets of occupants there is the opportunity to meet up in the local bars and restaurants where English among world travellers is the essential lingua franca. Rest days and use of public transport can interrupt these routines of conversation among casual acquaintances; it is the itinerary to be followed that is important. But people may meet up again some days later and messages are passed between travellers that are asking after a person's wellbeing, or perhaps simply indicating that they have completed their journey and are returning home. Accordingly, meeting with
others is bounded by the space and time of the *Camino* (Fig. 39) and a fleeting sense of common purpose to get to where each person has set as their destination. The sheer volume of walkers along the *Camino Frances* greatly facilitates that interaction. It contrasts with a more heightened sense of physical and social isolation that is commonplace for those walking the *Via de la Plata* and where it may be possible to complete a 30km stage and not have met anyone that day.

**Figure 39: Conversations in the Meseta on the Camino Frances**

Source: photograph by author, 2008

The suffering and pain endured by some of those undertaking a *Camino de Santiago* journey can of course be interpreted as symbolic atonement in line with the discipline of other pilgrimage activities worldwide. It is commonplace, for example, to find small cross-like artefacts carefully attached to fences at the summit of a steep trail along the *Camino de Santiago* that is emblematic of the arduous climb to Calvary. But for those afflicted by deep discomfort, the personal experience is real and present. Blisters from ill-fitting footwear and tendonitis from over-exertion abound, but mostly it is simply sheer exhaustion over long distances and extreme heat that takes its toll. End of trip short illness is not unusual as the body seeks to readjust to less demands. The availability of shady resting places and water fountains to refresh tired feet are much sought after amenities (Fig. 40). One response, especially noticeable along the *Camino*
Frances has been the opening of physiotherapy practices in many of its towns and which are complemented on occasion by first aid services offered by local branches of the Red Cross. Pilgrims will frequently share remedies and offer advice to each other, but for those afflicted with injury the consequences can mean an earlier and sad departure from the Camino than intended. There may or may not be an opportunity to return. An added dimension to the tribulations imposed on those walking or cycling the Way, and their relatives and friends, can be found in the informal memorials of bereavement that have been erected along the edges of trails and roads. They commemorate those killed by accidents or who have died from illness en route (Fig.41). On occasion the memorials may be elegant sculptures and artwork, or more commonly just simple wood or metal crosses to which a plaque has been added with a name, country of origin and date of death. The placing of personal amulets by others on these memorials suggests empathy with that loss.

Figure 40: Pilgrim fatigue at Viana on the Camino Frances

Source: photograph by author, 2008
A not uncommon conversation among those walking the Camino is having the capacity to go on, another day, another week and to complete the intended itinerary. That resilience is underpinned by a combination of determination and self-awareness which places less emphasis on the speed of movement, but rather a personal courage to continue. The impediments encountered along the way whether fast watercourses, angry dogs, nasty flies or heavy rain can cause people to reach deep into a reservoir of
inner strength which they may not have imagined is present in their personality. The daily grinding out of kilometres is also acknowledged as a time for reflection, about what a person has left behind and may be going back to. Walkers on occasion can be heard singing to themselves from within their reverie, while others will sketch on notepads and write as an alternative form of self expression and connectedness with their immediate world. The Camino de Santiago arguably for some provides that inner eye on what is, and can induce new sensations of understanding, acceptance and tolerance. Frequent testimonies to tears being shed evidence that emotional release and as one pilgrim commented in a public forum “Life is richer, but more simple”. The commonplace abandonment and occasional burning of pilgrimage clothing and footwear at Finisterre, the edge of the medieval world, is emblematic of this personal self realisation and celebration. The cut measuring tape on the ground is a particularly poignant indicator of serious accomplishment (Figures 42a & 42b).

Figure 42a: Pilgrim belongings and messages at Finisterre

Source: photograph by author, 2013
And lastly there is, following completion, the enduring question as to whether the Camino as personal experience will be revisited at some stage in the future. Visitor numbers point to the popularity of the Camino Frances as a journey of initiation with other routes such as the Via de la Plata being selected by those who are keen to pursue a different, less pressured and arguably more challenging expedition. For some, the wish to return may only emerge much later when the hardships previously encountered have rescinded into the back pockets of comfortable memory; for others, the Camino may become likened to a necessary medicine that with regular doses can calm the human condition. In both instances, however, it would seem that the route followed has power to fire imaginations as travellers seek to connect with heritages drawn from the past and to live more fully in the landscapes of the present (Fig.43).

Previous encounters do assist with preparations to do things differently and better, but they also provide a window through which to make comparisons on the nature of experienced difference. Thus, for example, the Via de Plata as a religious pilgrimage has been likened by one Canadian walker to a DIY retreat given the absence of church services that might be attended compared with their frequency along Camino Frances.
and where there are dedicated daily pilgrim services, for example, at Roncesvalles or Rabanal del Camino; that shortcoming, however, was insufficient to reverse her opinion that this second trip was worth undertaking.

**Figure 43: Continuity and change at Alto del Perdon on the Camino Frances**

Source: photograph by author, 2008

**Concluding discussion – towards a synthesis**

As noted above, my initial exploration of the *Camino de Santiago* took place in 1994 involving an expedition from Saint Jean Pied de Port to Santiago de Compostela. It required trekking in deep snow over the Pyrenees to Roncesvalles and then to journey's end by a combination of car and walking - the former invaluable for the cities and large towns, the latter allowing for appreciation of some stunning landscapes and rural life. My first *Compostela* was granted on 20th April of that year following a memorable meeting with the then Director of the Cathedral Pilgrims' Office, Canon Jaime Garcia Rodriguez, and who was particularly well informed about the civil unrest in Northern Ireland at that time. Following on from that journey, two academic papers were published in *Tourism Management* (Murray and Graham, 1997) and in *Ecumene* (Graham and Murray, 1997). Included in these reflections was a model of pilgrim route-
based tourism (Figure 44) which sought to capture, in an evolutionary way, the linked phenomena of accessibility, mobility and activity. Over the period 2008 - 2009 the *Camino Frances* was re-visited and during three stages the entire itinerary was completed by foot. Needless to say, a very changed *Camino de Santiago* was observed when compared with earlier fieldwork results. In 2012 attention turned to walking the *Vía de la Plata* and an initial transect was undertaken along the 300 km pilgrim trail from Seville to Caceres. In 2013 the remainder of the route between Zamora and Santiago de Compostela and onwards to Finisterre and Muxia was completed by car and walking. It is clear that the *Vía de la Plata* is a formative pilgrim itinerary that is substantially different in its personality from the currently mature *Camino Frances* and which, after taking all these more recent experiences into account, invites a review of the published 1997 model. This concluding discussion addresses that task. It outlines the features of this early model of pilgrim route-based tourism which draws essentially on an analysis of the *Camino Frances* at that time before going on to offer some substantive additions which arguably fit better with the contemporary patterns of engagement across a much more extensive and varied *Camino de Santiago* heritage complex as discussed in this Working Paper.

Figure 44 below represents the five stage stylised 1997 model of the *Camino Frances*. The original medieval route comprised a broad zone of movement which was subsequently codified by the provision of a support infrastructure comprising paths and bridges, hostels and hospitals, intermediate shrines and churches (Stage 2). Unlike the medieval *Camino Frances*, defined by its four traditional starting locations of Paris, Vezelay, Le Puy and Arles, the then contemporary format - depicted in Stage 3 - is characterised by a multi-entry configuration, reflecting wider accessibility opportunities and participatory time constraints. Travellers opt in and out of the route. Thus, the medieval emphasis on origin and destination is replaced by mobility, with committed pilgrim and recreational walkers coexisting alongside those following the route on a partial walk and ride or fully motorised basis. The modes converge at various intermediate points of attraction and major tourist-historic cities in which accommodation and tourist information is concentrated. As visitor numbers increase, the less attractive areas and sections of the route are increasingly by-passed, while potential capacity constraints begin to build up in key sites and within prominent amenity landscapes. The final two stages are based on the premise of multi-use and the assumption that for some travellers the experiences to be gained along the Way are as - or more - important than the destination. The increasing secularisation of the *Camino* means that the religious / spiritual destination recedes in relative importance,
with sections of the route being consumed without necessarily involving any linkages to Santiago de Compostela itself. Stage 4 - with its emphasis on multiple entry and direction - envisages an attempt at managing the tensions between pilgrims and tourists, walkers and motorised travellers. It recognises the multiple motivation of participants and by introducing enhanced modal integration, loop based, multi-directional walk and ride behaviour is facilitated and dispersed across a wider territory. There is complementary investment in signposting, waymarking, information and accommodation. However, such strategies are likely to accentuate usage of the most attractive off road tracks. Thus Stage 5 envisages a conscious attempt to extend the holding time of those areas with a weaker tourism profile through diversification into new products. Diversification can also incorporate the concept of the route as a spine of information and accommodation but from which deviations are possible, thereby widening the spatial scope of the heritage offer. In short, spatial planning strategies by Stage 5 are concerned with diffusing demand and expenditure along the route itself and within its hinterland communities.

Figure 44: The 1997 model of pilgrim route-based tourism

Source: Murray and Graham (1997)
It is some two decades from when the fieldwork that informed this initial model was carried out in 1994. During the interim the *Camino de Santiago* has shifted from formative pilgrim / tourist use largely along key parts of the *Camino Francés*, to becoming an assembly of itineraries with an especially concentrated and mature activity profile along the entire length of the *Camino Francés* that peaks within the last 100km into Santiago de Compostela. A number of contextual considerations evidence those changes:

- in 1994 only 15,863 *Compostelae* were issued having increased from a very modest 2,491 *Compostelae* in 1985 when systematic official data collection commenced. In 1994 the recorded motivations of *Compostela* recipients were some 61% religious, 35% religious / cultural and 4% cultural. By 2009 the corresponding proportions were 43% religious, 46% religious / cultural and 9% cultural among much larger pilgrim numbers claiming a *Compostela* (n=145,877);

- personal computers, social media exposure and, in particular, the permeability of the *Internet* has transformed the information sharing and selling environment to the extent that insertion of "Camino de Santiago" into the Google search engine will now generate 4.3 million results. The celebrity status of the *Camino Francés* as a quasi lifestyle experience, in particular, is underpinned by an ever growing travel literature and film footage focussed on that culturally rich itinerary. In 1994, by way of contrast, it was far from easy to acquire a *Camino Francés* guidebook written in English and with accompanying maps; in 2013 the *Via de la Plata* as a formative itinerary has echoes of that constrained situation;

- recent years have witnessed the attempted reclaiming of the religious and spiritual meaning of pilgrimage by Galician church authorities and, as discussed above, this can be viewed as a response to the emergent global awareness and populist status of the *Camino de Santiago* as a cultural phenomenon. It has resulted in a recasting by the cathedral authorities of the *Compostela* eligibility criteria whereby a mandatory walk-in or cycling distance within Galicia to the tomb of the apostle in Santiago de Compostela is denoted, even though individual starting locations may be many hundreds of kilometres to the east, south or north.

- accessibility into Spain and within Spain has been transformed over the period from 1994. Significantly, Spain, having joined the European Union in
1986, invested considerably in transportation infrastructure derived from its Structural Funds assistance. High speed rail and motorway construction along with the provision of quality bus services have strengthened connectivity between cities, while market penetration by budget airlines using improved airport facilities has enhanced traveller affordability. Quite simply, it is now much easier to access and exit the multiple *Camino de Santiago* routes at various locations and have mode of travel choice to, or at least towards, Santiago de Compostela;

- the demand driven visitor accommodation and hospitality base is substantially broader than what was the case in 1994 and now almost every village on the *Camino Frances and Via de la Plata* has a minimum of one bar or cafe and most have some basic overnight accommodation for pilgrims. However, on the *Camino Frances* the very many walkers and cyclists invariably compete for available bedspaces with pre-dawn departures commonplace, whereas on the *Via de Plata* establishments compete with each other by way of informal advertising by bundles of leaflets on way-marking stones, fly-posting and signage. There is some evidence in villages on the *Via de la Plata* that the more modest numbers of walkers and cyclists are insufficient to compensate for lost custom in now closed restaurants and hotels with passing vehicle traffic diverted from the N630 on to high speed new-build motorways, notably the A66;

- and lastly since 1994 the governance arrangements in place are substantially thicker and involve a combination of multi-level state intervention, Church oversight and civil society engagement. More particularly, there has been significant growth in religious and secular civil society organisations on the international stage beyond Spain that promote and invest into the *Camino de Santiago* heritage complex within Spain and also within their domestic domains.

Turning then to the 1997 model it is clear that the analysis of the way things were and might be remains remarkably robust, certainly through to the contemporary format depicted in Stage 3. Dedicated pilgrim and recreational walkers / cyclists coexist alongside those following the route on a partial walk and ride or fully motorised basis. The modes converge at various intermediate points of attraction and major tourist-historic cities in which accommodation and tourist information is concentrated. The role of Pamplona, Burgos and Leon along the *Camino Frances*, for example, is mirrored by Merida, Caceres and Salamanca on the *Via de la Plata*. With generally more visitor
numbers the model highlights the emergence of capacity constraints at key sites and within areas of outstanding landscape quality. However, experience on the ground would now suggest much higher levels of saturation along the whole of the Camino Frances and which is especially pronounced in Galicia. Concentration is offset to a degree by seasonality. Moreover, movement for walkers and cyclists is almost always ever westwards, northwards or southwards depending on the selected itinerary rather than loop based. The model also draws attention to the increasing secularisation of the pilgrim experience and both the Compostela data and the response of the Cathedral authorities illuminate that trend. However, while diversification into alternative forms of tourism and new heritage tourism attractions away from the Camino may appeal to motorised travellers, there is scant evidence that any widening of the spatial scope of the local heritage complex is availed of by walkers and cyclists; their daily goal is simply to complete a section of the itinerary as efficiently as possible, find accommodation and avoid tiring detours. Finally, concerns can be expressed around the potential degrading of the Camino Frances arising from the visitor pressures noted above and in that regard the 1997 model did underestimate contemporary outcomes with serious implications for the long term managing of tourism / pilgrimage investment and use. A post-2009 revisionism by the Santiago de Compostela authorities regarding the traditional and much acclaimed pilgrim entry to the Cathedral from Praza do Obradoira via the Portico de Gloria that now diverts access solely via side doors except in Holy Years is illustrative of the blunt response thus far to the realities of these unintended and unforeseen consequences. (Those wishing to gaze at the seated Santiago in the Portico de Gloria must now pay the required entry charge and walk though a roped-off enclosure manned by the most vigilant of Cathedral attendants!)

Taking all these matters into consideration allows for the representation of the Camino de Santiago heritage complex in a new layer to be added to the 1997 model. Figure 45 is a very stylised illustration of itinerary choice, accessibility and governance that recognises the contemporaroy interplay of four territorial dimensions: the Camino as a Galician project, as a Spanish project, as a European project and as a global project. The multiple Ways within Spain are more fully interpreted comprising the primacy of the Camino Frances, its link routes and those that connect directly into Santiago de Compostela such as the Via de la Plata. Added emphasis is given to the mandatory qualification criteria for the Compostela that are embedded in the geographical reach of Galicia and which also explicates the close interaction of the Xunta, the Cathedral and the University (with its international Camino de Santiago heritage educational programmes) as principal stakeholders within this governance arena. The contribution
of civil society outwith Spain is now expressly acknowledged: firstly, within other parts of Europe as a constellation of territorial associations which have invested in feeder routes and autonomous *Camino de Santiago* itineraries; and secondly, overseas as an archipelago of national associations that essentially promote interest in the Spanish complex.

**Figure 45: The *Camino de Santiago* heritage complex**

Models such as the analysis presented in this paper are designed to provoke critical examination and debate in regard to how well they interpret the phenomena examined. For purposes of strategic planning they throw light on existing and potential constraints and opportunities in regard to better management of a heritage complex such as the *Camino de Santiago*. While the case of the *Via de la Plata* is different and may well not duplicate the *Camino Frances* experience over the next two decades, the urgent need now emerges to understand and to plan for a more complete and extensive *Camino de Santiago* pilgrimage infrastructure. The significant point that this Working Paper identifies is the continued promotion by multiple agents, including civil society organisations, of the *Camino Frances* and alternative regional scale itineraries, including the *Via de la Plata*. Arising from this analysis of the *Camino de Santiago* there are issues related to the wider planning of these pilgrimage itineraries and venues that can shape a follow-on research trajectory and which require consideration by way of a
concluding comment. Firstly, itineraries such as the Camino de Santiago demonstrate their attraction for the development of route based tourism where the key driver is the representation and consumption of cultural heritage. Key to success in this sphere of product creation must be the interdependency between travellers, host communities and land owners, and governance policies implemented at multiple scales. Secondly, and embedded within that functional attribute is the importance of religious pilgrimage and its connectedness with church authority. Again there is the power of agency at work in shaping and regulating the pilgrim experience in the context where modes of travel and personal motives are diverse. Cutting across both dimensions are issues related to the contribution of sustained investment and endorsement. That requires the presence of champions who can operate within the politics of influence and decision-making regarding how and where the cultural heritage of pilgrim itineraries and venues can be represented and managed over time. The contemporary profile of the Camino de Santiago attests to the contribution made by diverse interests from varying backgrounds. Accordingly, there are interesting research questions which arise around that type of engagement and the challenges and choices that inform action. These "narratives of leadership" would form a significant adjunct to the many narratives of personal experience now available in better understanding the complexities around the cultural heritage of the Camino de Santiago pilgrim itineraries.

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