

## THE *CAMINO DE SANTIAGO* IN TWENTIETH CENTURY SPAIN

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The *Camino de Santiago* (The Way of Saint James) is a term used to describe any of the numerous paths in Europe that lead to Santiago de Compostela, a city in northwestern Spain where the remains of St. James were buried in the year 44 A.D. The popularity of pilgrimage to James's tomb peaked during the eleventh and twelfth centuries and then diminished to the point of near nonexistence thereafter. St. James's relics were even lost for almost three hundred years. Pilgrims were an increasingly rare site until interest in the pilgrimage re-surfaced in the 1940s, a time when the Catholic Church began encouraging mass pilgrimages. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, car and bus pilgrimage to Compostela became fashionable (Frey 9-10).

Then, during the 1980s and 1990s, suddenly tens of thousands of pilgrims began actually walking and bicycling the most well established medieval footpath, the *Camino Francés*, which had been largely ignored for centuries. The dramatic increase in walking pilgrims led to the development of infrastructure, including refuges, bars, hotels, and shops. As a walking pilgrim in the years 2000 and 2001, I was taken aback by the commercialization and crowding of the summertime pilgrimage. Westward of the city of León, we walked in a crowded line from morning to night, a sort of slow-motion race in groups, the goal of which was to reserve a clean bed and a shower before the others arrived. Though not a religious pilgrim myself, it occurred to me that we modern pilgrims were perhaps desecrating something holy, because I felt the pilgrimage lacked the austerity and sacrifice of "authentic" pilgrimage. In fact, I became so disgusted with the crowds that in the first year I stopped short of Santiago and finished the journey later only after having reflected for a year.

This experience of disillusion led me to investigate further how and why the *Camino* of today is so different from that of the past, or what I imagined to have existed in the past. I begin my historical analysis in the 1940s, from which time the transformation of the pilgrimage has been quite dramatic. Specifically, the *Camino* has changed in three distinct manners: (1) the leadership of the *Camino* has changed hands from the Catholic Church to secular organizations, (2) pilgrims themselves have become more secular, and (3) the touristic aspect of the trail has grown tremendously. In each of these cases, the *Camino* has been a reflection of Spain's evolving politics, society and economy, respectively.

## I. Politics

Obviously, the pilgrims themselves are the driving force behind any pilgrimage, but things like infrastructure, information dissemination, and regulation are all handled on a larger scale, and it is the control of this type of leadership position that has changed hands from the Catholic Church to secular organizations during the last century. Francisco Franco, who ruled Spain as dictator from 1939 to 1975, began a program of National Catholic Consolidation, which had far reaching repercussions. For instance, Franco practiced effective control over the naming of bishops, while divorce, abortion, and contraception were made illegal. The Catholic Church was the only church with legal status until 1966, and it controlled education, censored literature and films, and was funded in great part by the national government. During the years of *Franquismo*, Catholicism was not a faith of choice but rather *the* only acceptable lifestyle (Hooper 128).

Franco's policy of national Catholicism influenced the evolution of the *Camino* in several ways. Firstly, as a supporter of Catholicism generally and Catholic organization specifically, the Francoist government indirectly spurred a renewed interest in Catholic traditions such as the *Camino*. Suddenly mass pilgrimages gained popularity, such as the "Great Youth Pilgrimage" of 1948, which drew 80,000 young people to Santiago de Compostela under the direction of the newly founded Youth Catholic Action (Uli). Secondly, Franco publicly exalted the traditions of Holy Years and the cult of St. James as representative of traditional Spanish values, as well as reinstated Santiago as the patron saint of Spain, and he used "the image of *Santiago Matamoros* [Saint James the Moor killer] to equate himself and the Nationalists with the maintenance of an essential Spanish identity inexorably connected to Catholicism" (Frey 238). Most importantly, leadership of the *Camino* was naturally left to the Church, at least during the early years of Franco's rule. *Cofradias*, or religious brotherhoods, maintained the few refuges to be found, and the Church promoted youth pilgrimages during Holy Years that were "oriented toward the development of faith" (Frey 241). Franco's government did expand its role later in the 1960s and 1970s, as the Ministry of Information and Tourism began to take interest in the *Camino*, but nonetheless, throughout Franco's rule, infrastructure remained poor, and actual pilgrim numbers were small when compared with the boom of the 1980s and '90s.

When Franco died in 1975, he left behind Juan Carlos de Borbón, the rightful king of Spain, expecting that he would continue Franco's policies. However, the new king opted for democracy, and a deconstruction of the alliance between Church and state ensued. Juan Carlos "unilaterally renounced" his inherited right to the appointment of Catholic bishops (Hooper 130). The new government soon

revoked the bans on divorce and abortion and began a plan to end Church subsidies (Library of Congress; Hooper 130). However, one should note also that the Second Vatican Council in 1965 condemned the Church's alliance with Franco's regime, so in reality the Church had also begun to withdraw from state politics (Library of Congress). The Church began to lose influence on a broad scale as the state and various private organizations broke up its monopoly on social functions, such as education and charity. The Church's role also diminished in the *Camino*.

The boom in *Camino* popularity amidst an epoch in which the Catholic Church was losing influence seems paradoxical, but in fact it was the secularization of politics that helped boost the appeal of the *Camino* in a secularizing society by allowing the government and other secular organizations to take leadership roles traditionally reserved for the Church and direct the *Camino* towards an increasingly secular future. Then the boom of the 1980s created the need for an extensive chain of refuges and support services, which in turn created new opportunities for state involvement and otherwise secular leadership in the 1990s.

The federal government has promoted the *Camino* for economic benefit to its northern regions, and regional governments, especially Galicia, have promoted the uniqueness of the *Camino* within their borders to further their interest in promoting regional identities, a campaign that was certainly not possible during the years of Franquismo, when they were denied autonomy. Another new secular leader is the European Union, which named the *Camino* "Patrimony of Humanity" in 1992 and continues to promote the route as a part of its mission to "bring [what it sees as] the common cultural heritage of Europe to the fore," as outlined in Article 151 of the Maastricht Treaty (Europa). The European Union funds the *Camino* indirectly through its Regional Development and Cohesion Funds, which develop economically depressed regions throughout Europe, such as many regions of northern Spain (INFOREGIO). These government bodies tend to focus on the history and touristic potential of the *Camino*, thus in effect decreasing the influence of the Church on the *Camino* and encouraging secularization of the pilgrimage. The same is true for the *Amigos del Camino de Santiago* (Friends of the Way of St. James), which are numerous secular organizations that have a tremendous presence in the *Camino* today. The Friends maintain refuges, fund research conferences, maintain information booths along the route, and lead infrastructure improvements.

The Church certainly still maintains a presence, in the *cofradías* that maintain some refuges, in the credentials given by the Church that are in effect the pilgrim's passport, and in the pilgrim's masses offered nightly along the route. However, the Church increasingly finds itself competing with secular organizations, such as the Friends of the *Camino*, for leadership and conflict has ensued. Members of the Friends criticize the Church for its apathetic attitude towards growth of the

pilgrimage. One president of a Friends group told me that the worst enemies of pilgrims are dogs and priests (Mencos). On the other hand, some members of the clergy have criticized the irreligious stance of the secular organizations stating that the best thing one can do spiritually for the pilgrimage is to leave it alone.

It is interesting to note that the secularization of Spanish politics did not result in a decrease in pilgrims, but rather an explosion of them. After Franco's very restricted rule in terms of religious freedom, one might suspect that a Catholic pilgrimage would be construed as an unwanted remnant of the repressive dictator's government, a form of forced identity. But obviously that type of negativity did not prevail in the minds of the Spanish people. Instead, the National Catholic character was dropped from the *Camino*. But was the deeper religious or spiritual character obliterated also? To answer that question, one must first understand the secularizing trends of Spanish society and its effect on the *Camino*.

## II. Secularization

In Spain in the past few decades, patterns of religious practice and belief have shifted dramatically, most likely due to a combination of factors, such as the rapid urbanization and industrialization of the 1960s and 1970s and the political and cultural changes of the 1980s (Orensanz 144). Though the explanations for secularization vary, most quantitative measures of institutional religiosity in Spain do corroborate the theory that a rapid secularization of Spanish society has taken place in the past decades. That is, though the vast majority of Spaniards are Catholic, their propensity to believe in dogma or attend religious services, for example, has sharply declined. Spanish youth especially are far more irreligious than the older generations, and much less religious than the youth once was during *Franquismo*.<sup>1</sup>

Spaniards are not irreligious people in the broader sense, but their ties to institutional religion have for the most part been broken. This new type of religiosity has been described in different ways. González-Anleo claims that Spaniards practice "light" religion. That is, they prefer the

soft zone of religious attitudes, [which is] circumscribed by a generic belief in God, without compromising specifications of Judge or Father, [instead of] the hard zone of institutional loyalties, ritual attachments and ethical coherence. The soft zone is a comfortable religious space, demanding little and coexisting with other loyalties and ideological preferences. (12, my translation)

Spaniards, and especially young Spaniards, are also practicing other forms of popular religion, such as horoscopes and palm reading. Many are joining the ranks

<sup>1</sup> See Elzo, Eurobarometer, González-Anleo, Hooper, Montero, and Orensanz.

of the spiritually indifferent, the atheists, or agnostics, but the majority are still self-proclaimed, non-practicing Catholics. They are searching for guidance and spirituality but no longer look to the Church as the only channel through which to achieve such ends. Instead they have become religious pluralists, searching for alternative religious experiences, of which the *Camino* is one.

The irony of the 1980s and '90s was that the secularization of Spanish society coincided with ever-greater numbers of pilgrims experiencing the *Camino*. The *Camino's* growth in popularity amidst a profound religious revolution was made possible by an evolution of the *Camino* itself, which has been transformed from an outward expression of religious faith to an inward, secular, yet still spiritual path traveled by monks and atheists alike. Though it is difficult to judge the religiosity of pilgrims in the past, we may assume that those involved in mass pilgrimages led by the Church during Franco's time were in fact often religiously motivated, while by 1999 (according to one survey) only 13.2% of pilgrims claimed to be religiously motivated, a number outweighed by both those looking for an athletic challenge (14.1%) and those interested in seeing nature (19.8%) (*Peregrino* 67, 16-17). Though statistics vary, on the whole most pilgrims today do not interpret their pilgrimage experience as a purely religious one.

Some conflicts have arisen from the growth in "secular" pilgrims. For instance, some refuge workers complain that "true" pilgrims attend evening mass, and therefore those who do not, which is the majority of pilgrims, should not be allowed to use the pilgrim refuges at all. Some pious pilgrims complain that the pilgrimage is being overrun by inauthentic pilgrims, and even some priests would like to eliminate the pilgrim benedictions from their duties altogether, because they are so poorly attended that they seem a waste of resources (Uli).

Though it is true that for most pilgrims, institutional religion does not play a major role in their experience, the spiritual element of the pilgrimage is still very much present, and perhaps even growing. Most pilgrims are searching for some sort of peace in their lives and a better knowledge of themselves, or are otherwise pursuing spiritual goals. One meets a host of such spiritual pilgrims each day along the journey. For instance, older pilgrims may complete the *Camino* to show appreciation for their good health. Many use the pilgrimage as time to heal from emotionally traumatic experiences. Others are determined to finish the *Camino*, even when racked with blisters or stricken with tendonitis, because they want to be made stronger by the experience, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Most pilgrims are at least in part spiritually motivated, as attested by the fact that the refuges are full of pilgrims recording the day's hardships and joys in personal journals, drawing quietly, or reading books that are often of a self-reflective nature. One also notices a heightened sense of generosity and friendship among pilgrims

who relate to each other's suffering, much like the *communitas* described by Victor and Edith Turner.

Pilgrims are attracted to the sacrifice, austerity, human contact, and natural beauty of the pilgrimage because they feel these things are lacking in their everyday existence. By walking in solace or with loved ones for hours they have revelations about their direction in life, find closure to traumatic experiences, or experience other types of spiritual awakening. Most pilgrims would likely agree that finding spirituality in the *Camino* is not surprising, but *not* finding it would be. The hours spent wading through high grass on the plains under the burning sun, trudging through ankle-high mud in a storm, or simply being in close quarters with other kind people moves almost everyone somehow. Those who begin looking for just a physical challenge or for another non-spiritual reason leave the *Camino* impressed deeply with the beauty of the countryside and the kindness of the townspeople, feeling spiritually moved. Thus while one may speak of a secular *Camino* because its traditional Catholic identity has been drastically reduced, its spiritual element has remained and has been honed to the needs of contemporary pilgrims, creating a new spirituality of the *Camino*.

### III. Tourism

During the last half of the twentieth century, tourism has been one of Spain's strongest industries. Yet with the exception of Madrid, most of Spain's interior has seen little economic benefit from tourism. The Southern coast and islands have experienced rapid and often unchecked development resulting in environmental and cultural degradation (Gómez and Sinclair 70). To balance this situation, there has been an effort to shift the focus from beach tourism to alternate forms of tourism, of which the *Camino* is one. The *Camino* has wide appeal because it combines cultural, religious, historical, and artistic attractions with a sport and naturalist appeal.

The regions that are home to the *Camino* have been capitalizing on its tourism potential, especially since they have gained autonomy. Galicia has been the most successful by far. In 1999 Santiago de Compostela attracted eleven million visitors, bringing in revenues equaling roughly three billion dollars (*Peregrino* 67, 3). Each local or regional government attracts visitors by promoting itself as a unique locale along the *Camino*. As one Friends of the *Camino* member put it: "for some time now everyone has wanted the *Camino* to pass just in front of his house" (*Peregrino* 65-66, 12).

UNESCO declared Santiago de Compostela a World Heritage City in 1985, the Council of Europe adopted the *Camino* as "the premier 'European Cultural Itinerary'" in 1987, the EU declared the *Camino* a "Patrimony of Humanity," in 1992, and yet the 1993 Holy Year surprised everyone by drawing millions of

visitors to Santiago, and over 100,000 walking and bicycling pilgrims (Frey 250). Since then, the element of tourism in the *Camino*, especially in Santiago, has grown tremendously, and many people declare that the authentic experience is being degraded.

Some pilgrims feel as if they are no more than one of thousands in a superficial journey stripped of its meaning by the crowds and commercialization. For many, the question of pilgrim authenticity is of great importance. Perhaps the most common distinction made between tourists and pilgrims has to do with the length of the journey and the mode of transport. Walkers are considered to be the most authentic, since they are both mimicking the historical mode of transport and exerting much physical effort. The next most authentic are horseback riders, then bicyclists, followed by those traveling with support cars, and finally those traveling by car or bus, who are generally not considered pilgrims, but rather tourists (Frey 131). The practice of designating space in many refuges according to this ranking reinforces these hierarchies of authenticity. Authenticity is also thought to increase with the distance of the journey, which should be at least two weeks in duration and preferably a month or more, though long-distance walking on the *Camino* is actually a relatively new phenomenon. Also, the more physical and mental hardship a pilgrim appears to be suffering, the more authentic he is thought to be. Ironically, though the Church maintains that true pilgrims must be religiously or spiritually motivated, motivation is not often discussed among pilgrims themselves. Whether pilgrims are religious or not seem almost irrelevant, according to the majority view today, when authenticity instead refers to physical and mental vigor. Nonetheless, motivations can and often do evolve over time as pilgrims progress in their journey. Thus the person beginning as a tourist may upon arrival in Santiago feel like a true pilgrim, although the reverse is also possible.

The *Camino* is not unique in that the authenticity of its participants is scrutinized. Other pilgrimages and religious phenomena in general raise the same questions today. In fact, the contemporary meaning of tourism in itself is debatable, as it may refer to a veneration of unique aspects of different cultures and is therefore an authentic experience in and of itself, or simply a form of leisure with no greater purpose other than diversion for the tourist that can degrade authentic rituals like the *Camino* (Schudson 1251). Many scholars and theologians see tourism and authentic religious experiences as opposite extremes of a linear scale. Some use the term religious tourism to describe the gray area between the two extremes, while others deny this possibility (Smith et al). For example, the Catholic Church's view is that motive separates the pilgrim from the tourist. Others argue that the religious meaning behind the object of pilgrimage makes the difference. Vukonic argues that "the contents of a pilgrimage may, or even must, have a profane character to ensure the success of the pilgrimage" (137). He cites

administrative concerns such as organizing arrival and departure, food, accommodations, and health care as aspects of pilgrimage that are parallel to tourism yet are absolutely necessary to the success of the pilgrimage. Others, such as Victor and Edith Turner, distinguish tourists from pilgrims based on how they see themselves. Thus "one who feels 'pious' is a pilgrim, while those seeking 'pleasure' are tourists" (Smith 2).

In conclusion, the democratization and secularization of Spain, coupled with increasing pressure from the tourism industry, have completely transformed the *Camino de Santiago* in a few short decades. Though the Church has lost influence, and pilgrims themselves are increasingly secular and tourist-like, one cannot argue that the pilgrimage today is simply a degradation of the past. Rather we should further examine our categorizations of the authentic and inauthentic, as well as the pilgrim versus the tourist, and in doing so we will realize that the ideal pilgrim and the ideal pilgrimage have probably never existed.



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¿POR QUÉ MURMURA CUANDO DEBE GRITAR? LA MUJER EN  
LOS PAZOS DE ULLOA Y EN ALGUNOS ARTÍCULOS DE PARDO BAZÁN

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De la multitud de mujeres que escriben y publican en la España decimonónica, Emilia Pardo Bazán (1851-1921) es de las más prolíficas y distinguidas. Seguramente no hay ninguna mujer que haya producido tanto en cantidad y en calidad como esta autora que escribió desde la década de 1870 hasta su muerte. Como escritora maestra estuvo siempre al tanto de las novedades sociales y políticas, reflejando ambas en su escritura. Cuando la revolución científica empezó a cobrar importancia, ella contribuyó con ensayos sobre el darwinismo; cuando el naturalismo literario era todavía un tema oscuro, ella escribió una serie de artículos, introduciendo el movimiento en España con su obra *La cuestión palpitante* (1891). En un momento cuando pocos españoles conocían la novela rusa, ella dio una serie de charlas sobre las obras de los nuevos novelistas, en el Ateneo de Madrid. Al mismo tiempo que el movimiento feminista ganaba importancia en otros países, Pardo Bazán intentó movilizar al público español con la traducción de *La esclavitud femenina* de John Stuart Mill. Durante cuatro décadas, mientras mantuvo su posición de novelista y cuentista, ella expuso nuevas ideas en varias revistas y congresos, cuestionando a la vez asuntos culturales, sociales y literarios en ensayos informativos, a veces apasionados y frecuentemente polémicos.

Por medio de varios ensayos, Pardo Bazán dejó constancia de su curiosidad intelectual, sus ideas sobre la cultura y la crítica social. Ella analizaba cómo la sociedad construía a la mujer, y cómo la categorizaba a través de preguntas centrales de su época. Como defensora incansable de los derechos de la mujer, luchó por conseguir igualdad de oportunidades educativas para la mujer española a la par con el hombre. Combatió por obtener para sus paisanas un lugar en la sociedad basado exclusivamente en los valores morales e intelectuales, independientemente de su sexo.

Es significativo que fue en 1868 cuando se produjeron los primeros intentos para mejorar la condición de la mujer porque ese intento también se refleja en la literatura, por ejemplo con la publicación de libros como *Los Pazos de Ulloa*. Cinco años después de publicar esta novela, Emilia Pardo Bazán expone algunas de sus teorías feministas en varias revistas, como *La España Moderna* y *Nuevo Teatro Crítico*. La última de estas revistas estuvo dirigida y escrita en totalidad por ella. Durante los años 1891 y 1893 aparecen mensualmente varios artículos sobre la literatura, cultura y sociedad española. En particular, aparecen cuatro artículos