

Georgia State University

ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University

Religious Studies Theses

Department of Religious Studies

Spring 4-11-2016

Embodied Contestation: Alternative Ritual Conclusions on the Camino de Santiago

Clare Van Holm

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/rs_theses

Recommended Citation

Van Holm, Clare, "Embodied Contestation: Alternative Ritual Conclusions on the Camino de Santiago." Thesis, Georgia State University, 2016.
https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/rs_theses/50

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of Religious Studies at ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Religious Studies Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gsu.edu.

EMBODIED CONTESTATION:
ALTERNATIVE RITUAL CONCLUSIONS ON THE CAMINO DE SANTIAGO

by

CLARE VAN HOLM

Under the Direction of Kathryn McClymond, PhD

ABSTRACT

Despite its nearly thousand year history as a Christian penitent ritual, the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage has undergone rapid transformation in the last three decades, attracting a specific community of people who see themselves as “authentic” Camino pilgrims. Upon arrival at the shrine of Santiago, the traditional end of the pilgrimage route, many pilgrims express feelings of dissatisfaction. Drawing upon field research and interviews, this paper analyzes the practices of pilgrims along the Camino de Santiago route, at the shrine in Santiago de Compostela, and at the alternative conclusion site in the Galician coastal town of Finisterre. I argue that pilgrim dissatisfaction relates to pilgrim experiences in Santiago that are incongruous with their pilgrimage up until that point. In response, pilgrims have created alternative ritual conclusions that more closely relate to their experience on the Camino route and affirm their identity as “authentic” pilgrims.

INDEX WORDS: Camino de Santiago, pilgrimage, ritual, identity, authenticity

EMBODIED CONTESTATION:
ALTERNATIVE RITUAL CONCLUSIONS ON THE CAMINO DE SANTIAGO

by

CLARE VAN HOLM

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Masters of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2016

Copyright by
Clare Van Holm
2016

EMBODIED CONTESTATION:
ALTERNATIVE RITUAL CONCLUSIONS ON THE CAMINO DE SANTIAGO

by

CLARE VAN HOLM

Committee Chair: Dr. Kathryn McClymond

Committee: Dr. Molly Bassett

Dr. David Bell

Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Graduate Studies

College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

May 2016

DEDICATION

To my parents, Margaret and John. Those childhood weekends spent hiking the California mountains began my love of walking. Whether the Desolation Wilderness or the Camino de Santiago, I think of you with each step.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe a debt of gratitude to many along my journey of completing this thesis. Firstly, to Dr. Kathryn McClymond, who helped guide me anytime my paper walked off the path. Your direction through the maturation of my topic and writing has been invaluable. To Dr. David Bell, for contributing a new dimension to my knowledge of pilgrimage during study abroad to Lourdes and Iona. To Dr. Molly Bassett, I am grateful for your professional feedback and advocacy for graduate students over the past two years. To my friend Sonia; your vivaciousness made all the difference during my field research in Spain. And to Dr. Abbas Barzegar. You know what you did.

To Courtney Benshoof and Lauren Cooper-Im, I could not have asked for better colleagues and friends during my graduate career. Angie Bush, I would like to thank you for your wisdom these last four years and the afternoons spent training for the Camino.

I would like to thank my family, from whom my love of hiking began in the mountains of California. Your unwavering support for my travel and adventures encouraged my first of many pilgrimages.

Finally, Eric, thank you for encouraging me to pursue my Masters degree in Religious Studies. Your love, support, and partnership contribute to the richness of my studies and the vibrancy of my aspirations. I look forward to our continued journeys together.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Brief History of the Camino de Santiago	6
1.2. Modern Camino.....	8
1.3. Camino Pilgrim Authenticity	12
2. SECTION II	23
2.1. Arrivals and Dissatisfaction	25
2.2 The Beginning of the End.....	27
2.3 Contesting the Camino Pilgrim Authenticity	32
3. SECTION III.....	36
3.1. Alternative Rituals in Santiago	36
3.2. Finisterre: The End of the World.....	41
3.3. Alternative Rituals in Finisterre	44
4. CONCLUSION	53
REFERENCES.....	56
APPENDICES	58
Appendix A. Interview Instrument	58

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure 1 Map of the Way of Saint James</u>	4
<u>Figure 2 Pilgrim walking the Camino path in Galicia</u>	11
<u>Figure 3 Wall graffiti near 100km marker to Santiago</u>	16
<u>Figure 4 Pilgrim rucksack with boots, walking stick and scallop shell</u>	19
<u>Figure 5 Pilgrims posing for photograph outside Santiago Cathedral</u>	28
<u>Figure 6 View of the Shrine of Santiago</u>	28
<u>Figure 7 Pilgrims at the Pilgrim’s Office kiosks</u>	33
<u>Figure 8 Certificate of Distance</u>	34
<u>Figure 9 Finisterrana Compostela</u>	44
<u>Figure 10 Pilgrim walks barefoot along Finisterre beach</u>	46
<u>Figure 11 Altar for burning clothes and pilgrim items</u>	47
<u>Figure 12 Memento pole</u>	47
<u>Figure 13 Pilgrims gather to Finisterre sunset</u>	49
<u>Figure 14 Graffiti at Finisterre Lighthouse</u>	51
<u>Figure 15 Pilgrims ritually burn clothing at “Hippie Beach”</u>	51

This is what [pilgrims] do and now I've done it.

Ingrid, 2015

1.

INTRODUCTION

Despite its medieval context as one of Catholicism's three major pilgrimages, the modern, secularized Camino de Santiago is dominated by a preoccupation with "authenticity" as an expression of religiosity. The "cult of authenticity," a phrase coined by American scholar Nancy Louise Frey in her foundational ethnography about Camino pilgrims, *Pilgrim Stories*, dictates pilgrim behavior on the 800 kilometer route. Building upon Frey's understanding of the "authentic" in relation to the Camino, I propose the use of an alternative phrase: Camino pilgrim authenticity. This specific system, comprised of pilgrims and their support network, draws inspiration of the "authentic" from an imagined medieval pilgrim experience and determines its membership not primarily by expressions of belief or motivation, but by adherence to "authentic" behaviors. Camino pilgrim authenticity differentiates between pilgrims and "tourists" as well as establishes a hierarchy of "authenticity" within the pilgrim community.

While the bulk of Frey's text focuses on modern pilgrims' experience on the Camino route, Frey establishes that some pilgrims express dissatisfaction upon arrival at the end of the route in the city of Santiago de Compostela. Frey attributes this perceived dissatisfaction to the fact that pilgrims do not always associate the conclusion of their pilgrimage with physical arrival at the shrine of Santiago, the Camino's traditional end. Instead, she argues that "the idea of the journey's goal is often flexible and variously situated. While Santiago is an obvious geographic goal, it is not necessarily the end of the interior journey. The journey's end and the pilgrims goal should not be conflated" (Frey, 138). In other words, pilgrims may feel as though their pilgrimage ended before arriving at the Santiago Cathedral, or feel that their journey is not over despite arrival at the shrine.

During my time in Santiago, both as a pilgrim and a field-researcher, I witnessed a more complex dynamic at play in connection to pilgrims' expressed dissatisfaction at the conclusion of the pilgrimage. Pilgrims' experiences upon arriving in Santiago are incongruent with their individual experiences while on the route. These incongruences are particularly sharp at the Santiago de Compostela shrine complex, where the authority of Camino pilgrim authenticity, which dominated the pilgrimage route, diminishes in favor of the Catholic shrine and related rituals. As such, the Church's pilgrimage ritual conclusions to the pilgrimage route do not affirm Camino pilgrim identity. The resulting expressions of dissatisfaction have led to the creation of alternative ritual conclusions that align with Camino pilgrim authenticity and reaffirm Camino pilgrim identity as expressed through ritual practices.

Existing theory on pilgrimage describe them as a "realm of competing discourses" and asserts that pilgrims are occasionally able to "impose their own meanings on situations and to pursue non-official practices — albeit within the constraints of the pilgrimage and shrine organizations" (Eade & Sallnow, 12). As an expression of pilgrim meaning-making, my research focuses on the embodied behaviors of pilgrims, both in Santiago and in Finisterre, an alternative concluding point for the Camino. Therefore, this paper analyzes the actions of pilgrims and how they behave in reaction to their incongruent experiences. The alternative rituals that have arisen at the end of the Jacobean pilgrimage are the *embodied* manifestations of pilgrims' contestation of the Church's authority over ritual conclusions at the shrine of Santiago.

Due to the revitalization and subsequent secularization of the Camino in the early 1980s, notions of pilgrim "authenticity" arose, in contrast with tourists or sightseers. Established by the Association of the Friends of the Camino, specific behaviors were deemed markers of an

authentic pilgrim: distanced walked, pilgrim attire, and following the “medieval” and natural path of the Camino. This Camino pilgrim authenticity favors pilgrims who most closely embody the imagined behaviors of their medieval counterparts. While these modes of behaviors are actively encouraged along the Camino route, the city of Santiago epitomizes all things considered inauthentic to Camino pilgrims: tourism, religious institutionalization and commercialization.

While the Santiago Cathedral complex prescribes specific behaviors in line with the Catholic tradition, many pilgrims reject this as an “authentic” or meaningful ending to their journey. Instead, they create new alternative rituals that seem to resonate with Camino pilgrim authenticity. In Santiago, these rituals reaffirm the pilgrim hierarchy, reestablish and ritually disperse the long-term pilgrim community, and reconnect the traditional Catholic rites to the medieval pilgrim experience. Finisterre, which has emerged as an additional ending location, offers an alternative ritual space for the reassertion of Camino pilgrim authenticity. Interestingly, the model of the ideal pilgrim in Finisterre has less to do with the medieval pilgrim, instead drawing inspiration from imagined pre-Christian cults. These transition rites, inspired by pagan rituals of purification and resurrection, involve washing in the ocean, burning items, and contemplating the sunset after their journey.

My interest in the Camino de Santiago began in the spring of 2009, when I took a leave of absence from University of California, Santa Cruz to walk the Camino. This journey became the foundation for my undergraduate senior thesis. Since then, I have returned to northern Spain twice, first to bike the Camino with my husband in 2012 and most recently to conduct field research on the last one hundred kilometers of the Camino. During these personal and academic

visits to Spain, I noted that, even in the years between 2009 and 2015, the ending of the Camino has changed significantly. Drawing upon field research during the summer of 2015, this paper focuses on the behaviors of Camino pilgrims, both in Santiago and the pilgrimage route that leads there, revealing the creative tension between the Catholic Church and Camino Pilgrim Authenticity through the embodied ritual conclusions of modern pilgrims.



Figure 1 Map of the Camino de Santiago route, courtesy of creative commons wikipedia ("Map of Way of St. James: The French Way," 2016)

Section I begins by giving a brief history of the Camino de Santiago and the context of its modern, secular revitalization. Drawing heavily upon Frey's exploration of pilgrim understandings of "authenticity," I discuss Camino pilgrim authenticity as the dominant system from which pilgrims construct community and model their practices on the Camino de Santiago.

Specifically, I discuss the connection between the constructed modern pilgrim community and their associated markers and practices.

Section II focuses on the dissatisfaction pilgrims express at the Camino's traditional end in Santiago de Compostela, detailing the traditional ritual conclusions prescribed by the Catholic Church. Frey attributes this expressed dissatisfaction to pilgrimage conclusions not being related specifically to the shrine in Santiago, as is the case with other major Christian pilgrimage routes, but instead may end before arrival in the Santiago Cathedral or may not be perceived to end at all. Frey elaborates, "Reaching the physical goal does not necessarily entail a parallel arrival of other goals — spiritual enlightenment, a decision made — as is clear from pilgrims stories of arrival in the city. For some, the end in Santiago marks the beginning of a new journey. For others, it is a great letdown or simply a stopover point" (Frey, 154). While there are undoubtedly many reasons why pilgrims express dissatisfaction upon arrival, I theorize that pilgrim dissatisfaction sometimes relates to pilgrim experiences in Santiago that are incongruous with their pilgrimage up until this point. I highlight Santiago's modern atmosphere and the Church's competing notions of "authenticity" that sharply contrast with the system, values and behaviors that dominate the Camino route.

Finally, Section III documents the alternative ritual conclusions I witnessed in Santiago and the Galician coastal town Finisterre. After detailing the emergence of alternative rituals in Santiago, as a product of both pilgrims' dissatisfaction and the Church's reaction to said experiences, I give a brief history of the emergence of the Finisterre pilgrimage route as an alternative to Camino de Santiago conclusions. I interpret these alternative ritual conclusions as the embodied pilgrim contestation revealing their rejection of the Church's understanding of

“authenticity” and creating ritual conclusions that more closely resonate with Camino pilgrim authenticity and thus their pilgrimage as a whole.

1.1. Brief History of the Camino de Santiago

During the Medieval period, the importance and popularity of pilgrimage to holy places in the Latin West grew with the increasing preoccupation with the saints and holy relics. Relics of the physical remains of the saint, whether fingers of the saint, the cloth he wore, or his crucifixion cross, were believed to retain *praesentia*, “the physical presence of the holy” and were endowed with a multitude of miraculous properties (Brown, 88). Christian devotees believed that touching, or simply physical proximity to the relics could transfer its miraculous power. As a result, relics were seen as intercessory, curative, and even salvific.

While Christian pilgrimage began as a devotional act to venerate a saint and beseech his protection, later Church involvement transformed the tradition of pilgrimage into a penitent act to bring about the remission of one’s sins (Van Herwaarden, 53). During the Middle Ages, the Church developed the theological principle that the soul of the sinner could be redeemed through the sacraments, a means of divine grace, available via the Church and the priestly authority (Van Herwaarden, 53). Therefore, travel to sacred sites, with the recognition of the Church, was seen as having more salvific value than ever before. As pilgrimage became more widely regarded as a mechanism to expiate sin, it became a popular form of religious ritual.

Thus pilgrimage as a form of religious expression pervaded medieval Christian culture of the Latin West. While pilgrims could travel to more humble shrines associated with popular local saints, three primary pilgrimage routes developed, attracting countless numbers of pious pilgrims

throughout the Latin West. These routes are the pilgrimage to the Holy Land of Jerusalem, the pilgrimage to Rome, and the Camino de Santiago de Compostela.

Biblical references note that Saint James (Santiago), brother of John, son of Zebedee, was a fisherman in Galilee before he became a disciple of Jesus. As an apostle he was assigned to proselytize in the West. In the New Testament book of Acts, Saint James is reported to have been martyred by Herod Agrippa in 44 CE (Acts 12:1-2). According to legend, two faithful disciples gathered Saint James' body, including his head, and returned him to northwestern Spain, where reportedly he had preached before his return to Jerusalem and his subsequent martyrdom. He was buried in Galacia, with the permission of the converted pagan queen Lupa. His body lay undiscovered for nearly eight centuries until a religious hermit named Pelayo followed a glowing star to the tomb of Saint James in Compostela. Pelayo alerted the local Bishop Teodomiro, who, after further investigation and confirmation of the miraculous discovery, ordered the construction of a shrine around the tomb. While there is no reliable evidence to substantiate the claim that Saint James ever visited Spain, let alone was buried there, the belief in the apostle's presence and patronage in Spain gained wide acceptance by the laity and clergy alike (Cazaux, 356).

Pilgrimage to Santiago from the ninth to eleventh century mainly constituted Spanish devotees, especially in relation to Saint James' depiction as *Santiago Matamoros* (Moor Slayer) and the reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula. In the mid-11th century, pilgrimage to Santiago spread to the wider Latin West, as a result of the diminishing access to Jerusalem post-Crusades. The Church further promoted the pilgrimage to Santiago, through the publishing of the *Codex Calixinus*, considered to be the first ever pilgrim guide (Cazaux, 356). At its height of popularity

in the 12th century, Santiago de Compostela drew thousands of pilgrims from throughout Western Europe.

To accommodate the increasing numbers of pilgrims, extensive resources and hospitals developed to care for pilgrims along the journey to Galicia. The pilgrimage roads run from four principle starting-points in France: Tours, Vezelay, Le Puy, and St. Gilles du Gard. The roads converge at Puente la Reina and become the *Camino Frances*, the French Route. For almost 800 kilometers, the route winds westward across northern Spain via Logrono, Burgos, Carrion, Sahagun, Leon, and Astorga, to its ultimate destination of Santiago de Compestella in Galicia (Figure 1).

While the twelfth century witnessed the height of popularity for pilgrimage in the Medieval West, the Camino drew fairly consistent numbers of pilgrims up until the sixteenth century. At this point, due to the Protestant Reformation, the Spanish Inquisition, and a number of wars throughout the Pyrenees and southern France, pilgrimage to Santiago dramatically decreased (Cazaux, 356). This decline remained through the twentieth century, although the pilgrimage route was never completely abandoned.

1.2. Modern Camino

The deliberate revitalization of the Camino in the late twentieth century was a product of European unification efforts post-World War II. As the patron saint of Spain, Santiago had never ceased to attract Spanish devotees. That being said, moves towards pan-European cultural unity resulted in the Camino being titled one of the European Cultural sites, attracting secular visitors from throughout Europe (Cazaux, 357). This led to the joint efforts on behalf of local and

national governments, Church authorities, and secular groups such as the Pilgrim's Way Friends Association to signpost the route, establish infrastructure, and to generally promote the pilgrimage to Santiago. At the beginning of the renewed interest in pilgrimage to Saint James' shrine in the 1960s, "most pilgrims came to the apostle's grave via car or bus...But by the end of the 1970s, an idea spread: that the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela has to be done on foot" (Cazaux, 357). While government sponsorship of the Camino declined after the death of Franco, the Friends of the Camino Organizations continued to support its revitalization, ultimately resulting in profound shifts in the Camino's character and notions of how pilgrims "ought" to arrive in Santiago.

In 1987, the Pilgrims Way Friends Association "established the current rules of [Jacobean] pilgrimage mandating that it should be based on its traditional form...Walking and hospitality thus constituted the two basic formal elements of the traditional sense of the Christian ritual that were set out by the associations as conditions for the current pilgrimage" (Herrero, 134). This development was further expounded upon by the Church decree that to obtain a *compostela* (a certificate fashioned after the medieval document confirming a pilgrim's arrival in Santiago), pilgrims must walk, at minimum, the last 100 km (200km for bicycle riders) to Santiago, a somewhat arbitrary number decided by the Church (Herrero, 134). The Church's proclamation intended to require pilgrims to put forth a substantial physical effort and the sacrifice of time and money, "while allowing the greatest number [of pilgrims] to do the pilgrimage" (Cazaux, 358).

The influence of the Friends of the Camino Associations encouraged the joint efforts of local and national governments, Church authorities and secular groups to signpost the route for

walkers and to establish infrastructure and an extensive *albergue* (hostel) network to accommodate pilgrims. During this time, the Camino underwent general secularization, allowing broader participation beyond religious motivations. Additionally, the Friends of the Camino's involvement was instrumental in propagating the idea that the Jacobean pilgrimage should be inspired by the ideal model of medieval pilgrims, specifically walking and hospitality. As a result, modern pilgrims to Santiago developed a preoccupation with how to do the Camino "properly" and "authentically."

Unlike other Christian pilgrimage destinations, such as Lourdes and Rome where pilgrims arrive at the shrines by modern transportation, the manner of the Camino de Santiago's revival resulted in a pilgrim community that distinguishes itself through behavior. Of the "four to eight million visitors [who] spend a few hours or even several days in Galicia's capital, about two hundred thousand of them [have] made the journey by foot, by bike, or on horseback" (Cazaux, 357). Rather than focusing on miracles at the sacred site, Santiago pilgrims "believe they will find 'something' — God, friendship, themselves, other — *while on the road*" (Frey, 87, my emphasis). The pilgrims who walk to Santiago characterize themselves as a distinct population from "tourists" that simply visit the shrine of Saint James. It is these pilgrims, rather than those who arrive in Santiago via modern transportation, that are the focus of this thesis.

As was true during the Medieval period, the most popular of the modern routes that arrives in Santiago is the Camino Frances, the French Way.¹ It begins at the French-Spanish

¹ Many characteristics of the modern pilgrimage and pilgrim behaviors can be applied to the other, less populated routes. My study focuses specifically on the Camino Frances. For this reason, moving forward, I will refer to the Camino Frances simply as the Camino.

border, in either Saint Jean Pied de Port, France, or twenty kilometers across the border at a monastery-turned-hostel outside the town of Roncesvalles, Spain. Guided by yellow arrow way-markers, modern pilgrims typically walk or bike through the Pyrenees followed by vineyards of Leon, and green wheat fields and the “big skies” that characterize the Meseta. After a steep climb over O’Cebreiro mountain pass and through wet, verdant Galicia, pilgrims finally arrive at the city of Santiago de Compostela roughly 800 kilometers later.



*Figure 2 Pilgrim walking the Camino path in Galicia.
Note the yellow way-marker, rucksack and walking staff.*

In terms of demographics, Camino pilgrims draw from a generally educated, middle class, Western European population and express a variety of motivations, including religious, adventure, spiritual, “soul searching,” opportunity for reflection, cultural experience, and the

physical challenge. According to the demographic data of 2015, published by the Pilgrims Office in Santiago, modern pilgrims are 53% male and 47% female (Peregrino, 2015). The majority of pilgrims are between the ages of 30 and 60 (55%), followed by under 30's (28%), and the remainder being over 60 (16%). Pilgrims draw from countries all over the world, although the largest group are unsurprisingly Spanish nationals (46%). Other major countries represented are Italy (8%), Germany (7%), the United States (5%), Portugal (4%), France (3%), England (2%) and Ireland (2%).

A 2012 study by sociologists Lluís Oviedo, Scarlett de Courcier and Miguel Fariás's analyzed whether the Camino de Santiago reflected a "religious revival," a secular or 'post-secular' expression of nature travel, or if it forms part of a wider movement of eclectic and 'fuzzy' spirituality" (Oviedo, de Courcier, & Fariás, 434). Focusing on the meanings, motivations and religious identities of 470 pilgrims, the study revealed that, in fact, "individuals with various, often contrasting, motivations and expectations walk side by side on this pilgrimage route" (Oviedo et al., 433). While Oviedo et al. do not address pilgrim behaviors or pilgrim identity, they do confirm Frey's finding that motivations for walking the Camino are varied and the Catholic church is not the dominant religious system with which pilgrims identify.

1.3. Camino Pilgrim Authenticity

Despite its origins as a Catholic pilgrimage, modern pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago do not correlate their pilgrim identity with Catholic religiosity. Instead, pilgrim identity relates to a system of values and associated practices that creates a loose association of pilgrims and shapes individual pilgrim behaviors on the Camino de Santiago. This is what I refer to as

Camino pilgrim authenticity. Enforced by a community comprised of current and former pilgrims, *hospitaleros*, Camino associations, and other actors along the route, Camino pilgrim authenticity draws upon an imagined medieval pilgrim as inspiration for its standard of authenticity, specifically its central values of walking and hospitality. These standards act to both distinguish non-Catholic Camino pilgrims from traditional Catholic pilgrims and “tourists,” as well as create a hierarchy of “more authentic” pilgrims within the Camino pilgrim community.

Throughout *Pilgrim Stories*, Frey references pilgrims’ preoccupation with “authenticity.” In her chapter, “Landscapes of Discovery,” Frey begins the task of wading through pilgrims’ nuanced, varied, and sometimes contradictory notions of “authenticity” and the cluster of associated behaviors. She ends the eleven-page discussion with the conclusion “that there are many authenticities” (Frey, 136). She never actually presents a clear, coherent definition of “authenticity,” though she does point to a cluster of values of “self-sufficiency, humility, decency, solidarity, generosity, and respect for nature, oneself and others” (Frey, 125) Further, Frey asserts that to Camino pilgrims, “One can be an authentic pilgrim in the present by emulating the image [of the medieval pilgrim] through behavior, model of travel, and attitude” (Frey, 125). For the purposes of this thesis I find it helpful to analyze her employment of the term “authenticity,” not simply as an ethnographic account of what pilgrims report, but to understand more fully the dynamics related to the influence of what I call the Camino pilgrim authenticity in relation to community and behavior on the Camino de Santiago.

The emerging discourse related to the Camino pilgrim authenticity can be traced to the secular revitalization of the Camino and publications of the Associations of the Friends of the Camino. In 1987, as a joint effort of European Cultural Heritage Movements and partially funded

by the Spanish government, the Association of the Friends of the Camino distributed pamphlets establishing the ideals of the “true” pilgrim and declaring that the Camino would be based on its “traditional form” of walking and hospitality (Herrero, 134).² Combined with general values of the “post-industrial, post-materialist society in which the past feels more authentic than the modern present,” Camino discourse came to be dominated by expressions of “a sense of nostalgia — particularly for the medieval past” (Frey, 40). Frey continues, “In the medieval pilgrimage and pilgrim, modern pilgrims find a direct link to the past, an authenticity based on sacrifice, endurance, and austerity imagined to have been lived by the medieval pilgrim, and a community of souls united by the rhythm of their feet” (Frey, 15). As such, the concept of “the authentic pilgrim is implicitly understood to be the one who most closely represents the iconographic image of the medieval pilgrim who walked to Santiago with staff, cloak, scallop shells, felt hat and small pouch” (Frey, 125). While my own experience on the Camino, both as a pilgrim and field researcher, confirms the dominance of the ideals dictated by the medieval pilgrimage in modern Camino narratives, what I find most striking about this preoccupation with “authenticity” are the profound influences it has on the formation of the Camino community, specifically dictated by pilgrim behaviors.³

Membership in the Camino pilgrim community is most closely tied to “authentic” behaviors. In Frey’s discussion of authenticity, she identifies three categories related to the

² The influence of the Pilgrims Way Friends Association should not be undervalued. Although Camino pilgrim discourse references an imagined medieval pilgrim as its inspiration for “authentic” practices, these criteria stem back to this specific 1987 document published by the Pilgrims Friends Association. Interestingly, pilgrims have internalized the idea of a medieval pilgrim, yet I did not encounter a single pilgrim who expressed knowledge of this decree.

³ Despite the pilgrims’ preoccupation with the nostalgic past, concepts of the “medieval ‘are used very imprecisely by modern pilgrims” (Frey, 40). Modern pilgrim behavior rarely results in historically accurate emulations of their medieval counterparts. Even the necessity of walking, determined by the Association of the Friends of the Camino, was not, in fact, a requirement of medieval pilgrims. Instead, it just happened to be the only mode of transportation available to the vast majority of the Latin West.

pilgrims' understandings of authenticity, specifically a pilgrim's mode of travel, pilgrim behavior, and pilgrims' expressed attitude (Frey, 125). Drawing upon the imagined experience of medieval pilgrims, modern pilgrims articulate the importance of traveling to Santiago under their own power rather than relying on modern transportation. Walking, and to a lesser extent bicycle riding, are the most significant markers of a pilgrim. Travelers to Santiago by car, or worse, in groups by bus, are negatively differentiated as "tourists." Frey elaborates:

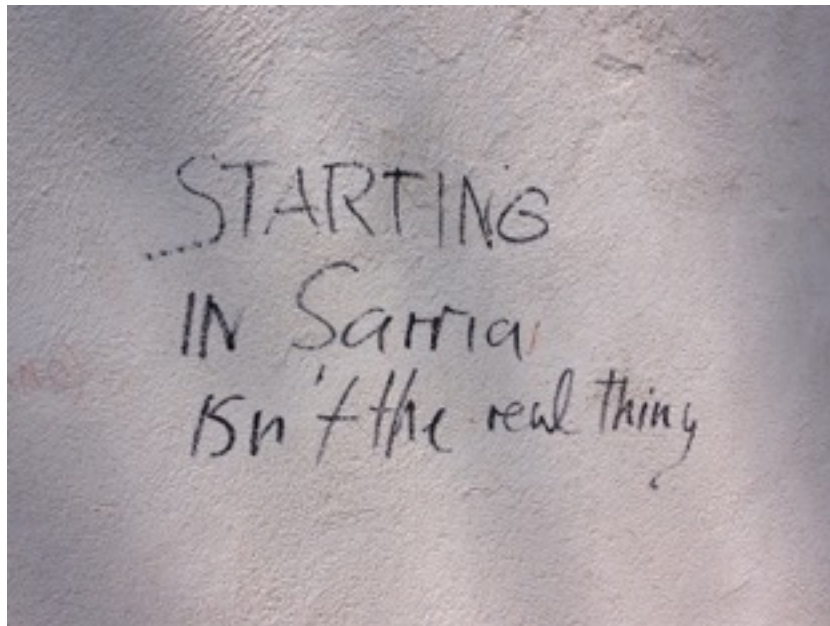
Therefore, when bus pilgrims are labeled "tourist" by foot or bicycle pilgrims it is not a pejorative statement about their motives, but about their movement choices. Tourists, understood to be frivolous, superficial people, travel en mass by bus, car or plane. Pilgrims, understood to be *genuine, authentic*, serious people, walk and cycle. (Frey, 27, my emphasis)

Within the community of walking pilgrims, authenticity is further measured by the distance a pilgrim walks. Starting in Le Puy (1300km) is considered more authentic by long-term pilgrims than starting in St Jean Pied de Porte (800 km). Joanne, a pilgrim I interviewed in Finisterre, noted, "I have a deep respect for the people who do sacrifices to do the whole Camino. *That's* a real Camino I think" (Joanna 2015).⁴ Pilgrims starting in Sarria, the 100km minimum established by the Church, are almost ubiquitously dismissed as "tourists." This point is illustrated by graffiti just outside of the 100km marker on the route that reads, "Starting in Sarria isn't the real thing" (Figure 3).

Figure 3 Wall graffiti near 100km marker to Santiago

It should also be noted that tensions between the "authenticity" of the arbitrarily determined distance of 100km required to obtain the *compostela* is still hotly contested. Posted

⁴ Although pilgrims I interviewed did not use the term "authenticity," for the purposes of this paper I understand the terms "real" and "authentic" to be used interchangeably.



on the Camino de Santiago blog forum in March 2016, a translation of an explanatory document titled “The Proposal to Expand the Minimum Distance Required For Awarding of the *Compostela* to 300 Kilometers” details the reasons that the Frateridad Internacional del Camino de Santiago (the Camino de Santiago International Fraternity) is petitioning the Church to extend the minimum distance required. As an affiliate of the original Pilgrim Way Friends Association that published the first documents describing a “true” pilgrim and the virtues of walking and hospitality, it is not surprising to find the Camino Friends Associations reflecting the common tensions expressed by pilgrims who align with the values of Camino pilgrim authenticity. The document references the tensions between pilgrims and “tourists,” stating, “The 300-kilometer shift will ease the antagonism that rises up between long-distance pilgrims and those on a ‘short haul.’ Attempts to turn the last stages of the Way into a pure tourist ‘Disneyland’ will be blunted” (Scott, 2016)

Frey points out, “The authentic says ‘We are all pilgrims’ but at the same time it is clear that ‘some are better pilgrims than others’. For some, being an authentic pilgrim raises one’s status instead of serving as an equalizer,” contrasting Turnerian ideals of egalitarian pilgrim *communitas* (Frey, 1998). Further, pilgrims who utilize transportation services to cover some areas of the Camino are likely to be marginalized in the modern pilgrim community. During my interview with Ken, he proudly stated that he “Never took a cab. Never took a bus. Nothing. It’s just straight. So that was exciting to do that. And I think about the Camino, I’m glad to say I didn’t send my luggage or I didn’t take that taxi, or bus. The real Camino.” Entire blog threads are devoted to debates about “pilgrim shame” resulting from the use of taxis or buses (Seb, 2016)

During an interview I conducted in the small village of Olveiroa along the Finisterre route, pilgrims Sean and Michael echoed these common sentiments. After they passed the 100km marker, Mitchell described a significant shift in the Camino milieu. In addition to massive crowds, a plethora of souvenir shops popped up, restaurants started accepting credit cards instead of only cash, and there was a sudden race for beds. Michael recalled his frustration, saying,

“Every town we’ve walked into, we’ve walked into by ourselves. There wasn’t these massive crowds cruising on in to their luggage. I remember one town, there might have been thirty people sitting on the wall of the *albergue* that wasn’t even open yet. None of them had any bags. And not one of them said ‘hello’ or ‘*Buen Camino*’ to us when we walked past. And at that point, I was like, I was like, I’m just gonna walk back and tell them what I thought. Like. ‘You don’t know. Just say hello!’...It even says in the guide books not to hate them...Yea, the Brierly book, ‘the Bible’ as I’ve heard some people call it” (Michael, 2015)

Michael amended his diatribe, stating: “I’ve definitely changed my attitude towards them now. By “Them” I mean the 100 k’ers...We talked to people who started in St Jean that wouldn’t call them pilgrims. They would call them tourists.” These so-called “tourists,” despite meeting

the Church criteria of walking the last one hundred kilometers to Santiago, are marginalized within the pilgrim community. Despite not having even talked to the “100 k’ers,” Michael determined that they were not “real pilgrims” because of their reliance on vehicles to transport their packs but more significantly because they were not participating in Camino culture, the expressions of greetings (*Buen Camino*, or “Good Way”) exchanged within the pilgrim community.

The pilgrim community, influenced by the Pilgrim community’s preoccupation with “authentic” behaviors, is significant beyond distinguishing walkers versus those who utilize modern transportation. Camino pilgrim authenticity also establishes a certain pilgrim hierarchy. This differentiation is almost always in relation to how pilgrims behave on the Camino, “demonstrat[ing] how the existence of an authentic model can influence a participant’s behavior” (Frey, 131).

The modern pilgrim community also differentiates itself through their attire. Inspired by the iconic medieval pilgrim, modern pilgrims almost ubiquitously carry a rucksack, use a staff or walking stick, and wear the scallop shell, a symbol of the Jacobean pilgrimage (see Figure 4). Clothing is typically limited to athletic gear, including hiking boots, Gore-tex quick-dry shirts and multi-use zip cargo pants. During an interview with Kellen, a Californian pilgrim, he noted that before even arrival at the route, he could identify fellow pilgrims. He landed in France during a transportation strike and was stranded at the airport. He told me,

“So I ended up wandering outside of the airport. And there were a group of us that had gotten off the plane. And you could see, everyone with the pilgrim’s. What you realize right away is that there’s definitely a camaraderie. It’s like, “ah, you’ve got a backpack. I can talk to you” kinda thing, you know? They’re safe” (Kellen, 2015)



*Figure 4 Outside an albergue in St Jean Pied de Port, France:
Pilgrim Rucksack with boots, walking stick and scallop shell*

Another essential marker of pilgrim identity is that of staying in *albergues*, the hostel-like accommodations, rather than *pensions* (hotels). Taking advantage of any “unnecessary” luxuries is viewed as out of line with the traditional pilgrim experience, and thus deemed on some level inauthentic. Sean, a New Zealander, while making suggestions on how to pack for the Camino, also elaborated upon the changes he saw between the Camino pre- and post-Sarria and the expectation that pilgrims should be minimalists in regards to uniform:

“Bring less. You don’t need to bring your laptop. You don’t need to bring your phone. I’ve got my phone cause I use it as a camera, but I don’t have a sim card. Don’t bring makeup. Its amazing, the last 100k we started seeing makeup. Hadn’t seen that before. Girls in dresses and stuff at the *albergues*...Where’s your trekking pants? What kinda shoes you got on?” (Sean, 2015)

Values of Camino pilgrim authenticity are not just expressed by pilgrim discourse and practices; the ideals are enforced by the institution of *hospitaleros* (host of *albergues*) and the Spanish support network along the Camino. Some pilgrims may be aware of the values of Camino pilgrim authenticity before arriving on the Camino through reading Camino preparation blogs, watching films such as *The Way* and *Six Ways to Santiago*, reading pilgrim guidebooks, or talking to friends who are seasoned pilgrims. Even if pilgrims arrive on the Camino without prior knowledge of Camino pilgrim authenticity, they are quickly informed of behavioral gaffes by fellow pilgrims and *hospitaleros*. Signs posted at doors of *albergues* commonly read “the tourist demands; the pilgrim give thanks” (Cazaux, 365).

Hospitaleros also play an institutional role in enforcing ideals of hospitality and the cohesion of the Camino family. Sean and Michael, friends from Australia and New Zealand, recalled their favorite memory on the Camino as staying at a *albergue donativo* (donation), where instead of paying for accommodation guests would contribute to the *albergue* through communal tasks of cooking, serving dinner, or clean-up. After the communal meal, pilgrims from each country were asked to perform a short presentation related to their country. Some members sang their national anthem, or a short song.⁵ Sean presented the *Haka*, an indigenous war dance from New Zealand that has been appropriated by rugby teams. He reflected, “It’s just a big part of New Zealand culture...Everyone else has shared something real from their country. I thought I’d give them a little bit of culture from my country that will impact them...On the Camino, you travel around the whole world in 800 kilometers.” While Sean and Michael did not explicitly attribute this meaningful experience to the *hospitalero* at this *albergue*, it is not uncommon for

⁵ Sean and Michael reported that the Americans performed “Sweet Caroline” and “Take Me Out to the Ball Game.”

hospitaleros to set the tone of the *albergues*. Examples of this dynamic I encountered during my research include facilitating community building through communal meals and the performative exchange of culture, or enforcing a strict schedule of “lights out” and doors locked at 10:00pm followed by kicking pilgrims out of the *albergue* at 8:00am sharp. As part of the Camino institution, *hospitaleros* and their *albergue* rules create structured environments in which pilgrims interact with and then internalize “authentic” values (Cazaux, 361).

Establishing the Camino pilgrim authenticity as the influential system from which pilgrims derive meaning, construct identity and model their practices is central to my argument moving forward. First, the majority of pilgrims on the Camino whose values align with what I call Camino pilgrim authenticity describe feelings of dissatisfaction upon arrival in Santiago. In addition to complexities that arise from the conflation of physical arrivals and psychological transformations identified by Frey, I theorize that pilgrim dissatisfaction in Santiago results from having pilgrimage conclusion experiences that are incongruent with the pilgrims’ practices in relation to route. Resulting from competing notions of authenticity, these incongruent pilgrimage ritual conclusions fail to confirm Camino pilgrims’ status as an “authentic pilgrim” despite the entirety of their previous experience on the Camino confirming such. To cope with this discontinuity and the resulting dissatisfaction, pilgrims establish ritual conclusions that confirm their pilgrim identity markers that they have been performing throughout the whole pilgrimage route.

Understood within the context of some pilgrims’ expressed dissatisfaction, I hypothesize that these embodied behaviors point to a creative tension between competing discourses and pilgrims’ attempts to infuse Camino pilgrim authenticity within the dominant space of the

Catholic Church in the city of Santiago.⁶ Reflecting the Camino pilgrim community's preoccupation with behavior, the alternative rituals that have arisen at the end of the Jacobean pilgrimage are the *embodied* manifestations of pilgrims' contestation. In Santiago, these rituals reaffirm the pilgrim hierarchy established on the route, reestablish and ritually disperse the long-term pilgrim communities, and dislocate traditional Catholic rites from their traditional context and align them with Camino pilgrim authenticity, thus making them part of the modern pilgrim experience. In Finisterre, alternative ritual practices allow pilgrims to create ritual conclusions that more closely align with the values of the route: mirroring medieval (or older) traditions and thus reaffirming an "authentic" pilgrimage ending. Regardless of their form, these alternative rituals seem to reorient and connect pilgrims' ritual conclusions to their experience on the route and are influenced by Camino pilgrim authenticity.

⁶ I use "creative" (rather than "destructive") to describe these tensions because they have led to the creation of new and alternative rites, not the displacement of traditionally Catholic ritual conclusions.

2.

SECTION II

Throughout *Pilgrim Stories*, Frey establishes the prominence of pilgrim's focus on "authenticity." Her discussion focuses on the cluster of values and associated behaviors, arguing that pilgrim "authenticity" specifically relates to mode of transportation, behaviors, and attitude. Her discussion also reveals modern pilgrim's discourse focuses on behaviors on the Camino route itself. For Camino pilgrims, the Santiago shrine typically holds little importance, other than as the physical marker of the Camino's conclusion. Frey argues that pilgrims' perceived experiences of dissatisfaction relate to pilgrim's focus on the journey, in addition to pilgrimage conclusions not being related to specifically to the shrine in Santiago, as is the case with other major Christian pilgrimage routes. Instead, modern pilgrims may feel their pilgrimage ended before arrival in the Santiago Cathedral. Other pilgrims express dismay at not perceiving any inner change upon arrival.

While there are undoubtedly many reasons why pilgrims may express dissatisfaction upon arrival, my research suggests that pilgrim dissatisfaction often relates to pilgrim experiences of arriving in Santiago that are incongruous with their pilgrimage experience up until this point. I observed these incongruences specifically in relation to the city of Santiago's milieu, in contrast to the environment on the Camino pilgrimage route. Correlated is the feeling that Santiago is pervaded by obvious commercialism that contrast sharply with the Camino prior to the last 100km. Finally, within the city of Santiago and the shrine complex, the Catholic Church asserts itself in relationship to Camino pilgrims in ways that is has not over the route. I will detail each of these incongruences later in this section.

The traditional Catholic pilgrim rites in Santiago arise from the historic roots of the pilgrimage as penitent ritual and the veneration of the saint. As detailed by the Church's website, these pilgrimage ritual conclusions include hugging the saint, praying at the crypt, attending mass and confession, and obtaining the *compostela* to authenticate their pilgrimage. For the Church, authenticity is understood as related to Catholic religiosity and veneration of the saint.⁷ Therefore, rituals in Santiago function as pilgrimage ritual conclusions and confirm the pilgrims' status of individuals who perform this specific form of authenticity. While the Church has nodded towards the special merit of the walking pilgrim, it explicitly states that to receive the *compostela* as an authentication of the pilgrimage, "You need to have made the pilgrimage for religious reasons or for a similar motivation such as a vow" (Santiago, 2016b). While tensions over these contested authenticities arise throughout the city of Santiago, its effects manifest most clearly in the interactions of pilgrims and Church representatives at the Pilgrims' Office when pilgrims obtain their *compostelas*.

As such, pilgrimage ritual conclusions that are designed to confirm pilgrim identity according to the criteria of the Catholic Church may be unappealing to modern pilgrims with whom Camino pilgrim authenticity resonates. Not only are these rituals unappealing because modern Camino pilgrims do not meet these standards, the Camino pilgrim community rejects these Catholic standards of authenticity outright. This creative tension between competing authenticity results not only in pilgrims' expressions of dissatisfaction, but ultimately led to the

⁷ Moving beyond Turner's somewhat limited ideal structure of pilgrimage, Eade and Sallnow's *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage* discusses the complexity of pilgrimage as a space of competing discourses of religious expression and belief. The authors articulate new ways in which understandings of sacred space are constructed and enforced by pilgrims, church authorities and other social actors. The volume challenges Turner's focus on *communitas*, instead interpreting pilgrimage as an "empty vessel" into which competing interpretations of meaning are imbued.

establishment of alternative ritual conclusions that reflect the criteria of Camino pilgrim authenticity and confirm Camino pilgrim status based on meeting this criteria.

Before moving forward in this section, I begin by taking time to elaborate upon Frey's argument about arrivals and dissatisfaction in order to differentiate my own arguments.

2.1. Arrivals and Dissatisfaction

As noted by Cazaux, "Until the 1990's, most anthropologists focused their attention on holy shrines, forgetting the journey that leads to it. Yet, when one pays attention to Saint James pilgrims' motivations, it is clear that it is not so much Santiago but the Way itself that represents the goal of this journey" (Cazaux, 358). A vast majority of these modern platforms, including contemporary guidebooks and Camino web-forums, that communicate information about the Camino focus on the route, its landscapes, and the accommodations and amenities along the way.⁸ Very few address experiences in the city of Santiago itself or prescribed behaviors for completion of the pilgrimage.

Given modern pilgrims' preoccupation with how to complete "authentically" the pilgrimage to Santiago, it is not surprising that pilgrim discourse focuses heavily on the journey, sometimes to the neglect of the shrine of Santiago de Compostela. As a result, the Santiago shrine, rather than representing a sacred space to non-Catholic Camino pilgrims, instead becomes simply a physical marker of the end of the Camino pilgrimage route.

⁸ In the 231 pages of *Pilgrim Stories*, Frey devotes only thirty-two pages to pilgrim experiences of the conclusion to their pilgrimage. Of those, only 16 pages specifically discuss pilgrims' experiences in the city of Santiago. Additionally, John Brierley's *Pilgrim's Guidebook to the Camino de Santiago*, over the course of 287 pages, gives preparation advice, detailed maps, alternative routes, restaurant and *albergue* information, and contemplative suggestions along the Camino route (Brierley, 2014). Six of those pages detail what to do in Santiago, including the suggested traditional rituals per the Catholic Church.

Although she notes popular narratives of joy and accomplishment upon arriving at the shrine of Santiago, Frey also attends to pilgrim arrivals that are surprisingly marked by anxiety and disappointment. In her chapter “Arrivals and Endings,” Frey argues that pilgrims’ ambivalence or dissatisfaction associated with arriving in Santiago is the result of pilgrims’ focus on the pilgrimage journey. She elaborates, “Endings and arrivals may or may not be place- or space- specific. Depending on the pilgrim’s goal and motivation, different internal endings or resolutions can come at any moment and may not be linked to the physical arrival in Santiago” (Frey, 137). In contrast to other major Christian pilgrimages routes, non-Catholic Camino pilgrim conclusions are not always associated with the Santiago Cathedral.

Pilgrims may feel that their pilgrimage concluded in the form of a climatic inner transformation or resolution well before their arrival at the Cathedral. Other pilgrims, interpreting their entire lives as one long pilgrimage, do not experience Santiago as a marker for the end of their pilgrimage. Instead, as illustrated by Andy during our interview in Finisterre, pilgrims sometimes interpret Santiago “as the beginning of the next half of their life” (Andy, 2015). For these pilgrims, “the idea of the journey’s goal is often flexible and variously situated. While Santiago is an obvious geographic goal, it is not necessarily the end of the interior journey” (Frey, 138).

Further, Frey argues that arrivals can be interpreted as disappointing when they do not act as a catalyst for the changes that pilgrims expect to happen during their journey. Briefly connecting pilgrim endings to their understandings of “authenticity,” Frey highlights the pilgrim understanding that “authentic” behaviors effect the transformative potential of the experience.

Therefore, “when the Camino is over and they do not feel any different, even though they did it authentically, they wonder what they missed” (Frey, 135).

To summarize, Frey attributes pilgrims expressed dissatisfaction upon arrival in Santiago to pilgrims “internal” conclusions as flexible and distinct from the physical endings of the pilgrimage at the shrine of Santiago. While I acknowledge that there are many reason pilgrims may experience dissatisfaction, my research reveals that pilgrims’ expressions of dissatisfaction are more broadly related to incongruences between pilgrims’ experience on the route and their arrivals in Santiago.

2.2 The Beginning of the End

As pilgrims approach Santiago de Compostela, the official end of the pilgrimage route, they are guided by yellow arrows from the outskirts of the modern city, through the old walls of the medieval city, finally arriving at the facade of the Santiago Cathedral. Typically, pilgrims take a moment to rest in the square, celebrate with pilgrim friends, and take pictures in front of the iconic facade (Figure 5). From this point, pilgrim progress varies, although a majority of pilgrims complete the following rituals: attend mass, hug the saint, pray at the crypt, confess, and obtain their *compostela*. While pilgrim guides inform pilgrims of these traditions, the Catholic Church directs how pilgrims participate in each of these rituals, as documented on the “*Ritos del Peregrino*” (Pilgrim Rites) website, published by the Santiago Cathedral (Santiago, 2016c)

Upon entering the Cathedral, pilgrims are faced with the magnificent golden shrine of

Santiago (see Figure 6).⁹ After circling the church or taking a moment to pray in the pews, participants typically approach the shrine, where they are allowed to climb a short flight of stairs to stand behind the statue of Santiago. Pilgrims are instructed to hug the saint, thank him for a safe arrival, or offer their prayers. This may take the form of a swift touch to a prolonged embrace, with the arms of participants wrapped around the statue visible from the pews. Next, pilgrims descend from the statue and turn down a second flight of stairs below the shrine. Here they find a small velvet-cushioned kneeler that faces the silver tomb that houses Santiago's purported relics. Again, pilgrims are encouraged to pray to the saint and give thanks for protection during the journey.



Figure 5 Pilgrims posing outside the Santiago Cathedral



Figure 6 View of the shrine of Santiago

⁹ At the Santiago Cathedral, my use of the term “pilgrim” refers to any visitors of the shrine, as most attendees of the church participate in these rituals, regardless of how they arrived in Santiago. Obtaining the *compostela* is the only tradition that is limited to walking or biking pilgrims.

Mass at Santiago Cathedral is typically held daily at 7:00am, 12:00pm, and 7:30pm. The service is conducted in Spanish, but if international religious authorities or representatives of specific tour groups are present, part of the service is presented in the additional language. The swinging of the *botafumerio*, the massive incensory, happens typically once a week during the summer high season of pilgrimage. This expensive display is customarily reserved for special occasions, but can also be sponsored by visiting religious groups (Santiago, 2016a).

Although most pilgrims attend Mass at the Cathedral, only pilgrims who identify as Catholic participate in confession. Confessionals are scattered throughout the Cathedral and are attended by priests who speak the languages of the dominant pilgrim populations, including Spanish, French, and German, among others.

During the last one hundred kilometers of the Camino, pilgrims note the dominance of commercialism and tourism. Sean's experience of arriving at Sarria nicely demonstrates common pilgrim sentiments:

“And then, I cried again at the 100 k marker, and after 600 up until that point, another 100 kilometers is nothing as it seems. But after that becoming angry again because it turned into like, just commercialism. It was, like, very spiritual, until we hit that (100km) marker. Everything had so much depth and meaning...and it just changed. Like, before that, you had to pay with cash for everything, before the 100k marker. And the last 100k everything you could pay with card. Everyone's got Visa, Mastercard. Every window's got TripAdvisor sticker on it. It just wasn't the same, you know...”

Pilgrims negatively associate these qualities with the sudden surge of short-term Spanish pilgrims carrying small day-bags (who also represent a threat to the guarantee of a bed at *albergues*), the appearance of restaurants that accept credit cards (instead of only cash), and the

emergence of a slough of cheap souvenir shops, among other things (Sean, 2015). This shift in the Camino milieu is even more profoundly felt upon entrance into the city.¹⁰

While the development of the city of Santiago de Compostela is intimately tied to the history of the Camino and the destination of the shrine, the city has flourished in its own right. Now the home of nearly 180,000 residents, the city stands in stark contrast to the sleepy Spanish towns pilgrims are accustomed to along the Camino. As articulated by Frey, “traveling through many rural environments, being constantly exposed to the history of the Way, almost builds the hope in pilgrims that they may find Santiago as it was many years ago. Instead the city looms large” (Frey, 150). Like other modern mid-sized cities, Santiago de Compostela has flashy, bright billboards, noisy traffic and concrete buildings. Not only does this present a startling sensory contrast to the quiet, natural paths that wind through sleepy Spanish towns, these environmental factors contrast with pilgrims’ expectation that the shrine (and surrounding city) should mirror the rest of their experience as a pilgrim, if not exemplify the most medieval, and thus “authentic,” of the Camino destinations. An English pilgrim I met while walking the last day into Santiago during my field-research was so startled by the noisy atmosphere of the city that she described feeling “paralyzed,” to the point where she stopped walking and waited for her Camino family to accompany her during the last few kilometers to the city center (Denise, 2015).

¹⁰ The embodied markers of pilgrim identity also begin to dissolve upon completion of the pilgrimage. Some pilgrims begin to wear clean, “regular” clothes that they shipped ahead to Santiago. Others indulge in shopping, purchasing luxuries previously interpreted as out of sync with pilgrim values. Brida, a German woman who arrived in Santiago in 2009, immediately sought out the closest Sephora cosmetic store and excitedly restocked her toiletries with blush, mascara, and lipstick. Pilgrims also infrequently stay in the albergues in Santiago, instead opting for pensions or hotels. In this way, pilgrims begin the process of shedding the outward markers of their pilgrim identities as well as their connection to the values of Camino Pilgrim Authenticity, although identity and community attachments persist after pilgrims return home. Frey further investigates these themes in her chapter “Going Home” in which she explores pilgrims’ experiences of returning home after the Camino.

Equally startling, interactions between locals of the city of Santiago and pilgrims differ dramatically from the treatment to which pilgrims are accustomed on the route. The Camino route milieu is constructed to support walking pilgrims, limiting *albergue* access to non-modern pilgrims and giving preference to walkers over cyclists. Many times, a sense of superiority arises as pilgrims differentiate themselves from tourists. During an interview in Finisterre, Kellen expressed this common pilgrim sense of entitlement during an interaction along the Camino. He elaborated, “We’re standing at *Cruce de Faro* and two bus loads of Asian tourists roll up with their little day packs and high heels. And we just walk up and are like, we’re just carrying all our stuff. And they’re just standing there. And you’re kind of like, “Get out of my way!” (Kellen, 2015)

In contrast, any perceived notions of preferential treatment of Camino pilgrims above “tourists” fall away in Santiago. First, of the four to eight million visitors to the shrine in Santiago each year, only a small portion of them arrive on foot. For the tourist economy, pilgrims of any sort represent economic opportunity. This conflation of pilgrims and tourists from the Church’s perception is compounded by the fact that the vast majority of pilgrims to the Santiago shrine, regardless of their form of transportation, are Spanish nationals, Catholic or both. While these “tourists” may be considered “inauthentic” by Camino pilgrim authenticity, those who travel to Santiago de Compostela to honor Saint James align with Catholic notions of the authentic pilgrim and are treated as such.

2.3 Contesting the Camino Pilgrim Authenticity

While examples of the jarring effects of modernity and the loss of the authority of Camino pilgrim authenticity pervade pilgrim experience in Santiago, the most striking example of this tension appears at the Pilgrim's Office. Within the Cathedral pilgrims have the option to participate in Catholic rituals that resonate with their journey, to appropriate and reinterpret traditional rituals, or to completely avoid the Church's prescribed rites altogether. In contrast, the Pilgrim Office and the experience of obtaining the *compostela* offers little room for contested interpretations of authenticity and their associated behaviors.

Nieves Herrero, in his article "Reaching Land's End: new social practices in the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela," clarifies how the Church attempts to control the meaning and interpretations of the Camino, and the subsequent effects on pilgrim behavior at the Pilgrim's Office:

[The Catholic Church] tries to control this by means of a form pilgrims must fill out stating their motivations. Only those who declare 'religious' or 'religious-spiritual' motives receive the Compostela, the rest only receive a document without historical significance acknowledging their arrival at the cathedral. This detail is well-known by pilgrims and many of them state that they do the pilgrimage for religious reasons not because they are believers but because the Compostela *authenticates* the link with tradition, a central part of the contemporary pilgrimage. (Herrero, 135, my emphasis)

Despite the historical function of the *compostela* as part of the Catholic indulgences system, the significance of obtaining the *compostela* reveals the complex interplay of the modern Camino pilgrim authenticity, its associated embodied rituals, and pilgrim identity. To contemporary pilgrims, the *compostela* not only becomes the object that certifies that they "authentically" completed the Camino, but becomes another ritual connection to pilgrims'

medieval counterparts who obtained the same document. Tension arises from the Church's determination that pilgrim identity (and authentication through the *compostela*) are inextricably tied to religious motivations. When the *compostela* is denied due to lack of religious motivation, the Church's simultaneously discredits the Camino pilgrim's identity. Not only can this interaction contradict the participants' pilgrimage as a whole, it also reveals the subversive behaviors that appear in response to such contestations and potentially result in pilgrims' expressions of dissatisfaction.



Figure 7 Pilgrims at the Pilgrim's Office kiosks in Santiago

In addition to the tension that arises from contested authenticities in relation to the *compostela*, the Pilgrim Office structure also functions as a physical manifestation of pilgrims'

concern that the Camino has become bureaucratic and commercial. Pilgrims lament the recent institutional changes in the procedure for processing newly arrived pilgrims and certifying the *compostela*. During the peak season, pilgrims may experience queues exceeding 150 persons and taking over two hours to reach the office attendants. While the long lines are not a recent development, the new system informs pilgrims of the next available kiosk via a digital board that displays the booth's corresponding number (Figure 7). Some attendants engage in brief conversations, while other pilgrims describe being shuffled along as quickly as possible. In my experience, it feels reminiscent of US Departments of Motor Vehicle.



Figure 8 Certificate of Distance

Recently, the Pilgrim Office started offering pilgrims the option to purchase an additional document stating the distance they had walked, as the traditional *compostela* only notes the arrival date in Santiago. Some pilgrims eagerly pay the three euro for the supplementary certificate of their distance traveled (Figure 8). Other pilgrims see this additional document as “inauthentic,” arguing that it reflects the increasing amount of superfluous trinkets and souvenirs

associated with the commercialization of the Camino. This reflection is further validated by the establishment of a gift shop through which all pilgrims walk after obtaining their *compostela*.

In addition to complexities that arise from the conflation of physical arrivals and psychological transformations identified by Frey, I theorize that pilgrim dissatisfaction in Santiago results from experiences of the city's economic indifference and the Church's dismissal of Camino pilgrim authenticity. This leads to experiences where modern pilgrim identity is ignored or outright contested. To cope with this discontinuity and the resulting dissatisfaction, I theorize that the pilgrims establish ritual conclusions that more closely relate to their experience as a whole and reaffirm their identities as "authentic" pilgrims as determined by Camino pilgrim authenticity.

3.

SECTION III

During the three times I visited Santiago over the span of six years, both as a pilgrim and researcher, I noticed that ritual conclusions of the pilgrimage shifted, were reimagined, and that completely new rituals had developed. Understood within the context of some pilgrims' expressed dissatisfaction, I hypothesize that these embodied behaviors point to the creative tension between competing discourses and pilgrims' attempts to infuse concepts of Camino pilgrim authenticity within the dominant space of the Catholic Church in the city of Santiago. This concept further extends to growing popularity of pilgrims continuing their pilgrimage to the Galicia coastal town of Finisterre, the "End of the World," as an alternative ending to the Camino de Santiago.

While Frey's *Pilgrim Stories* clearly establishes the contested meaning and interpretations within pilgrim narratives, I argue that the alternative ritual conclusions that have arisen in Santiago over the past decade are embodied manifestations of pilgrims' contestation of the pilgrim identity on the Camino de Santiago. While there are examples of traditional Catholic, and thus "authentic," rituals resonating with long-term pilgrims because of the ritual's interpreted connection to medieval pilgrim experience, many of the rituals I observed relate to an elaboration of traditional Catholic rites or the creative appropriation of rituals that more closely resonate with the pilgrim's journey.

3.1. Alternative Rituals in Santiago

Pilgrim dissatisfaction in Santiago results from experiences that are incongruent with the pilgrims' practices in relation to the route. To cope with this discontinuity and the resulting

dissatisfaction, I theorize that the pilgrims establish ritual conclusions that more closely relate to their experiences on the Camino and affirm their identity as “authentic” pilgrims. These rituals range from embellishment or reinterpretation of traditionally Catholic rituals to the creative revival of “pagan” practices. Regardless of their form, these rituals seem to reorient long-term pilgrims’ experience of ritual conclusions towards the entirety of their experience as influenced by Camino pilgrim authenticity.

Judith, a pilgrim I spoke with in Finisterre, lamented that although she felt overwhelmed by her feelings of accomplishment of having walked the entire 800km to Santiago, very little of their experience in Santiago reaffirmed her achievement (Judith, 2015). The people of the city did not stop to greet her, congratulate her, or in any way acknowledge that she and her pilgrim companions had done something special. To compensate, Judith and her friends decided to provide a small gesture of recognition to other arriving pilgrims during their three additional days in Santiago (Judith, 2015). They described to me that they would spend hours at an outside bar table along the last few hundred feet of the Camino. While enjoying sangria and beer, they would clap and shout general words of encouragement to pilgrims on their final steps. Further, Judith revealed to me that she would not clap for short-term pilgrims, instead saving her cheers for “real pilgrims” who could be identified by their tanned skinned, large, dirty packs and overall dishevelment. Not only does this reveal a new embodied behavior in relation to the pilgrims’ expression of dissatisfaction, but also reaffirms the pilgrims’ preoccupation with the hierarchy established by Camino pilgrim authenticity.

One of the most common, and thus generally predictable, supplemental rituals of pilgrim conclusions are the somewhat bittersweet dissolution of the long-term pilgrim community.

Although pilgrims value solitude and undertaking the Camino alone, the importance of the relationships developed on the Camino dominate their narratives. Before modern social media and email, these final pilgrim meetings acted as important moments of closure. From quick hugs, to long talks over *cafe con leche*, to extravagant dinner parties with wine and seafood, some pilgrims expressed that these conclusions were their most valued experiences within the city of Santiago. Although the connection of these rituals and the cult of authenticity is not glaringly apparent, these meetings typically involve a reflection upon the pilgrimage as a whole and mark the end of “Camino families,” the *communitas* of long-term pilgrims.

Recently, the *botafumeria* presentation has taken on special significance for pilgrims. As a fairly expensive ritual, costing around three hundred euro per ceremony, the swinging of the massive incensory was limited to once a week during high season of the summer months and special occasions. While fulfilling its liturgical function as a spectacular incensory, the medieval *botafumeria* ceremony also served practical purpose of covering the overwhelming stench of medieval pilgrims. For contemporary pilgrims, witnessing the *botafumeria* presentation has become somewhat expected pinnacle experience at the Cathedral.

A Canadian Catholic, Ingrid, described witnessing the *botafumeria* as the “culmination of her whole trip” (Ingrid, 2015). After arriving in Santiago in the early morning, she and her friend Peter attended the noon mass and obtained their *compostela*. They then enjoyed dinner, consisting mainly of wine, and returned to the Cathedral for the evening mass where Enya’s music was playing softly in the background. Ingrid also had the rare experience of hearing part of the mass in English, as a priest accompanying a pilgrimage tour was in attendance. The participation of the English pilgrimage group also resulted in the special swinging of the

botafumeria. Ingrid described feeling emotionally overwhelmed, both at the unexpectedness of the ritual, but also its connection to the pilgrim experience. She remarked, “This is what [pilgrims] do and now I’ve done it. It was such a gift.” Although Ingrid, as a self-described Catholic, appreciated and participated in the traditional Catholic rituals, including confession, her connection to the ritual of the *botafumeria* is grounded firmly in its connection to her pilgrim identity. While her remarks point to a further layer of pilgrim community, one can conclude from her comments that even as a Catholic, Ingrid expresses connections to an imagined pilgrim community in addition to the Church as an institution.

Interestingly, the Catholic Church has also acted in response to pilgrims’ expression of dissatisfaction, specifically the perceived need for reflection and closure. While I stood in line at the Pilgrims’ Office to obtain my *compostela*, an Irish nun (although I did not know this at the time) named Sister Katherine walked along the line passing out small unofficial business cards congratulating pilgrims on finishing the Camino and inviting pilgrims for tea, coffee and reflection. Sister Katherine and Sister Marion, officially known as Camino Companions, offer morning and afternoon sessions. Returning the next day for the morning session, I met with Sister Katherine to discuss the mission and history of Camino Companions.

In her discussion of the evolution of Camino Companions, Sister Katherine described her experience volunteering as the English-speaking chaplain at the Cathedral de Santiago. During this time, she “heard stories of arrival and heavy hearts” (Katherine, 2015). As a chaplain, she could sit with pilgrims and guide their reflection on their experience. Many times these conversations would be interrupted by visitors wandering through the English chapel. While

Sister Katherine attempted to follow up with these pilgrims to chat over tea, many times the later meetings seemed to lack the genuineness of the initial interaction.

After a season of hearing pilgrims' confusion or dissatisfaction upon arrival in Santiago, Sister Katherine petitioned the Church for funding a full-time group devoted to providing a space for pilgrims to reflect outside of the Cathedral. Upon approval, Sister Katherine and Sister Marion moved to Santiago and started Camino Companions. The group typically invites pilgrims to meet for tea near the pilgrims office before moving to a private meeting room at the University Residence, Cristo Rey. During these meetings, the Catholic Sisters facilitate "a quiet atmosphere, reflection and group sharing" for English speaking pilgrims. While each session is tailored to the group's makeup, whether "Believers, Protestants or others," a typical gathering includes reflections on questions provided by the Sisters, quiet time, conversation and concludes with a prayer, hymn, or poem, again tailored to the group's needs. Between its foundation in March 2015 and my interview in June 2015, the Camino Companions had facilitated seventy-three groups, ranging from three to seven attendees.

When asked about other alternative or supplemental ritual conclusions in or around Santiago, Sister Katherine alerted me to a vigil held at the Cathedral on Saturday evenings. The vigil begins with the distribution of black cards, which participants burn "as a symbol of purification and culmination of the Way" (Gallego, 2016). El Correo Gallego, a Galacian online news source, quotes diocesan delegate of pilgrims Genaro Cebrian, "*Queremos ahondar más en nuestra renuncia a nuestro pasado de pecado, quemando este papel negro,*" loosely translated as "We want to delve deeper into our renunciation of sins of our past, burning the black paper" (Gallego, 2016) The bishop then blesses participants. This intimate experience is

followed by tour of the Cathedral, a short prayer reading and then participants are invited to share about their personal experiences during the pilgrimage to Santiago. Finally, the group is lead through the tomb of Saint James and conclude their experience with singing “Salve Regina.”

Although I did not witness this ritual conclusion, Camino blogs reveal that the prayer vigils and burning of the black card, inspired by accounts in the medieval pilgrim guide *Codex Calixtinus*, were reintroduced by the Cathedral authorities in 2006 (Robins, 2016). Interestingly, the news article describing the revitalization of the vigil notes that its participates in the vigil are “all those walker can go to find themselves and visit the Apostle in a more intimate way,” while respondents on the Camino de Santiago Forum explicitly states that “It’s emphasized these [services] are for pilgrims to the shrine of St. James, and not for tourists” (Robins, 2016). While the Church, as a whole, is interested in maintaining authority over the culmination of the Camino in Santiago as a Catholic religious ritual, the Church has been responsive to the Camino pilgrim community. The emergence of these Catholic alternative rituals speak to what I call Camino pilgrim authenticity, addressing some forms of pilgrims’ expressed dissatisfaction, and revealing the Church’s willingness to engage and respond to Camino pilgrims’ experience.

3.2. Finisterre: The End of the World

While Santiago itself has witnessed the creation of numerous alternative and embellished rituals by pilgrims, rituals have emerged beyond the shrine of Santiago in the Galician coast village of Finisterre. Although only a small portion of pilgrims continue on to Finisterre,¹¹ Frey

¹¹ About 10% of pilgrims continue on the Finisterre by foot (Frey, 172)

noted that “Themes of disillusionment with Santiago, the significance of Finesterre’s geographic placement, the contact with a physical end, the personalized rites of ending and purification, the relations to the past, and the sense of closure are all elements commonly found to motivate and inspire pilgrims’ journeys to Finesterre” (Frey, 174). These alternative ritual endings are not only marketed towards a broader pilgrim audience that would have found Santiago dissatisfying, but also provide an environment that more closely resonates with notions of Camino pilgrim authenticity.

Herrero’s article chronicles the recent history and principle authorities that have led to surge of pilgrims arriving in Finesterre. Herrero begins by noting:

The existence of a Jacobean pilgrimage to Finesterre and Muxia has been widely documented since the twelfth century. Having reached Santiago, pilgrims would often move on to these villages and venerate the images of Christ in Finesterre and the Virgin of La Barca in Muxia. Both villages have been traditionally associated with the Jacobean cult by legends about the Apostle’s preaching in the area and the journey of his ashes from Jerusalem to Santiago de Compostela. (Herrero, 140)

Herrero’s article also points towards the popular accounts of Finesterre’s pre-Christian connections to Celtic sun cults. While these links have been academically discredited, “these ideas are very attractive for the syncretic spirituality characteristic of today’s society expressed in phenomena like the New Age movement, a kind of sensibility that many pilgrims share” (Herrero, 141). Despite their historic inaccuracies, these culturally syncretic qualities of Finesterre are reinforced by Galician nationalist groups, local tourism offices, and pilgrim associations. Not surprisingly, the Catholic Church condemns the practice of continuing one’s pilgrimage to Finesterre, “considering it to be based on a false interpretation of the signification of the Jacobean pilgrimage and the introduction of esoteric and heterodox ritual” (Herrero, 138).

Interestingly, the development of infrastructure, both way-marking and the establishment of additional *albergues* to accommodate the increasing number of pilgrims to Finisterre, directly relates to the Pilgrim's Association's "particular interest in marketing alternative routes to the French Way... given that the large influx of people who follow it contradicts the conditions of silence and solitude that pilgrims are seeking" (Herrero, 142). Herrero elaborates:

The Pilgrim's Association denounces the overcrowding, consumerism, destruction of the landscape and noise that have invaded especially the French route...The increasing number of pilgrims on routes like the one to Finisterre can be seen as the result of the search for alternative spaces that provide the proper conditions of tranquility required by pilgrims for their appreciation of the meanings associated with pilgrims. (Herrero, 146)

Although many Camino pilgrims do arrive via bus, pressed for time and urgency to return home, the infrastructure developed in Finisterre takes into account the values dictated by Camino pilgrim authenticity. As one of the first stops for pilgrims arriving in Finisterre, the municipal *albergue* has developed their own authentication certificate, the *Finisterrana*, inspired by the classic *compostela* controlled by the Catholic Church (Figure 9). In contrast to the Church's requirement for religious motivation in addition to walking to Santiago, obtaining the *Finisterrana* simply requires that pilgrims walk the ninety kilometers from Santiago to Finisterre. Additionally, the limited beds offered at the municipal *albergue* are given only to pilgrims that have walked, rather than arrived by bus, as a majority of visitors do, including long-term Camino pilgrims.

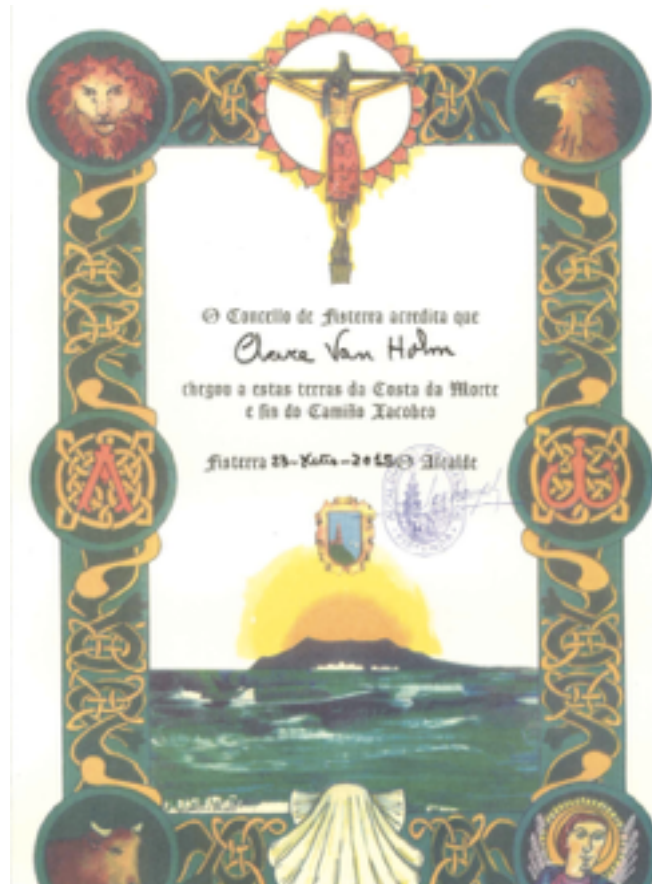


Figure 9 Finisterrana Compostela

3.3. Alternative Rituals in Finisterre

Further, rituals related to the culturally and “spiritually” syncretic values of the larger Camino route flourish in Finisterre. Although less developed at the time of her publication, Frey’s *Pilgrim Stories* reveals the development of ritual conclusions in Finisterre in relation to the connection with nature, purification, and relationships to the past (Frey, 175). During my research in June 2015, many of these themes endured or have been further elaborated upon.

For pilgrims who walk from Santiago to Finisterre, the transition from city life back to the “rhythm” of walking is a welcome comfort. The familiar way-markers lead pilgrims west out

of the city and up a steep climb, revealing a final picturesque view of the city before absorbing pilgrims into an eucalyptus grove. Due to the limited accommodations on the Finisterre route, pilgrims continuing on were typically forced to walk over thirty kilometers per day, in contrast to the accustomed distance of eighteen to twenty-five on the Camino Frances. While the emergence of additional albergues have alleviated this problem, many pilgrims continue to complete the ninety kilometer walk in three days.

As pilgrims approach the last ten kilometers of the route, they wander through a variety of coastal towns. Climbing the final hilltop, they are guided down to the far edge of the north eastern beach, Playa de Langosteira, paralleling the small town of Escaselas. Although pilgrims have the option of veering right to a wooden path along the edge of the beach, guidebooks instruct pilgrims to take a moment to rest and remove their shoes. Some even take a dip in the turquoise waters, paralleling their experience with that of medieval pilgrims who would wash, and thus purify, themselves before entering Finisterre. Many pilgrims continue barefoot through the sand and quiet surf, collecting scallop shells that they will likely place on the cross erected atop a boulder as once enters the village of Finisterre (Figure 10). Jenna, a California attorney, described her arrival at the beach as “magical,” alluding to the natural end and “something about the sea” that confirmed for her that her pilgrimage “was over” (Jenna, 2015). For her, soaking her feet in the waters near Finisterre was the emotional ending she wanted, in contrast to “commercialized Santiago.”



Figure 10 Pilgrim walks barefoot with small rucksack along Finisterre beach

Although the Finisterra route officially ends an additional three kilometers down the peninsula, many pilgrims, exhausted from their long day of walking, choose to find accommodation from one of the various albergues and pensions available in the town. After dropping their bags for a rest, or even the next day, pilgrims walk the final stretch towards the lighthouse, the 0.00 km marker and the medieval “end of the world.”

Despite some pilgrims’ vision of literally “leaping off the edge of the known world,” the lighthouse and official end of the Finisterre route are located atop cliffs. As noted with disappointment by Yvette, a somewhat jaded Australian pilgrim, jumping into the waters below would literally be suicide. Instead of diving into the sea, this area becomes a central point for ritualization of the end of the Camino. As noted by Frey, “Consistent with the idea that people must symbolically die or cleanse themselves before passing from the Camino to daily life,

pilgrims often engage in rites of purification... The burning of objects — boots, socks, and walking sticks — is common” (Frey, 175).

Pilgrims’ desire to ritually manifest this symbolic death and resurrection has not gone unnoticed by the local tourism departments. In the early 2000’s, “the municipal council installed a burner for garments presided over by a cross and a statue of Saint James as pilgrim carved in stone that has become a sort of altar where pilgrims leave small objects that they have carried during their pilgrimage” (Herrero, 143) (Figure 11).



Figure 11 Altar for burning of clothing and pilgrim items

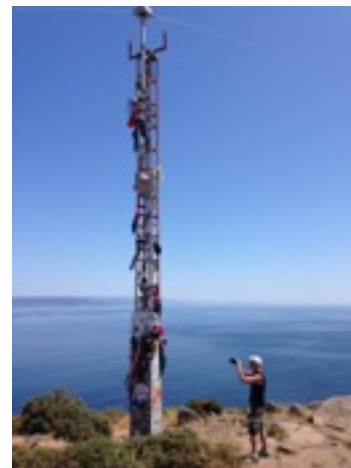


Figure 12 Memento pole

In addition to the burning of objects, the lighthouse area has become a centralized location of a variety of ritual conclusions. Despite signs prohibiting its marking, two large metal structures near the burning altar have hundreds of mementos attached to them, ranging from bandanas as flags, to notes taped or written directly on the structure, to rocks or small items picked up along the Camino route or brought from home (Figure 12).

Climbing down through the brush and craggy rocks, one can also find photos of deceased loved ones, in whose name the Camino was undertaken, with notes attached to walking sticks. It is also not uncommon to hear of pilgrims who have come to Cape Finisterre to spread the ashes of loved ones. Andy and Ralph, two good friends and ministers from San Diego and Seattle respectively, walked the entire Camino with the ashes of a friend who had intended to walk the Camino with them before losing his life to cancer. After leaving small amounts of his ashes at emotionally resonant places along the Camino, Andy walked to Finisterre to spread the remaining ashes. Despite his discomfort with the institutionalization of the Catholic Church, as well as rejection of his actions as ritual, Andy took a moment of prayer and remembrance, “building up to the moment” of spreading the ashes with “talking and tears.” Unfortunately, as with most emotional moments of the Camino, the experience was interrupted by “noisy tourists,” oblivious to the emotional moment (Andy, 2015). Unfazed, Andy moved further down the precarious cliffs and found a quieter, undisturbed nook to place his friend’s ashes.

Herrero elaborates upon the appeal of Finisterre and the rituals associated with the lighthouse, stating,

In the traditional religious framework, the rebirth and renewal at the need of the pilgrimage comes from contact with the source of sacredness waiting at the end point: the relics of the body of a saint, in this case Saint James. Rebirth and renewal spring at Finisterre from its mythopoetic symbolism. As Land’s End, this goal displays in a dramatic way the end of the pilgrim’s walking days: the name of the place, the experience of contemplating the immensity of the ocean — the unknown — and the sunset, all these evoke death as well as the incessant renewal of life with the arrival of dawn. That is why pilgrims, after performing their rites of renewal — burning their worn garments and abandoning boots — look for a suitable place to contemplate the sunset. (Herrero, 143)

The final rite associated with Finisterre, in addition to purification rituals of bathing in the ocean and ritual burning, involves pilgrims participating in the ubiquitous experience of watching the sunset, although the location of this ritual varies. Located at the tip of a thin southern peninsula with views to both the east and west, the cliffs near the lighthouse provide pilgrims with the special vantage of seeing the sun both rise and set over the ocean. John Brierly's pilgrim guides, some of the most popular English language pilgrim guides, suggests a ritual process of three stages beginning with bathing in the eastern beach, burning items and contemplating the end of the world at the light house, followed by watching the sunset at the western beach (Brierly, 55). Some pilgrims perch on the lower cliffs watching the sunset in silence and solitude (Figure 13). Others gather together, sharing bottles of wine, conversing and laughing in celebration despite language barriers, and singing folk songs from their home countries. Still others make bonfires on the western beach and sleep under the stars.

These rites, purification in the ocean, burning of mementos, and watching the sunset, result from the creative tension related to some pilgrims' expressed dissatisfaction as a result of incongruous endings in Santiago, the extension of the pan-European cultural secularization of the Camino Frances, as well as the government supported tourism opportunities in Finisterre. Although the connections between the Celtic sun cults and the development of the pilgrimage to Santiago are thin, these pagan-inspired rituals allow pilgrims to create ritual experiences that more closely align with the values of the route by mirroring medieval (or older) traditions and thus reaffirming an "authentic" pilgrimage ending.



Figure 13 Pilgrims gathered to watch sunset; Finisterre Lighthouse

Interestingly, between my first visit in 2009 and most recent visit of 2015, new tensions related to “authenticity” have developed in Finisterre. Despite the Pilgrim’s Association’s attempt to cultivate an environment conducive to “a spiritually significant experience along the Pilgrim’s Way,” the institutionalization and commercialization of the Camino, and now Finisterre, is unavoidable (Herrero, 146). As demonstrated by the government support of way-making the Finisterre route, the establishment of the *Finisteranna compostela*, and the erection of the burner altar, “public institutions encourage institutionalization of the practices so that they can be repeated by tourists including those who arrive there by vehicle and do not see themselves as pilgrims” (Herrero, 143). In response, many pilgrims express dissatisfaction, even in Finisterre, due to the “inauthenticity” they see as have penetrating the rituals at the Galician cape. One of the most visible examples of this sentiment is the spray-paint stencil art scattered throughout the

lighthouse complex reading “Leave energy, not garbage” and “Make love, not fire. Do not burn” (Figure 14).



*Figure 14 Graffiti at Finisterre Lighthouse;
“Leave Energy, Not Garbage”*



*Figure 15 Pilgrims ritually burn clothing at
“Hippie Beach”; Finisterre*

The point was acted out further during an interaction I witnessed during a sunset at the western beach, now called “Hippie Beach.” While a hundred or so pilgrims had gathered on the beach to watch the sunset, two or three groups started a bonfire (See Figure 15). One of the groups then proceeded to burn some of their clothing, to the outrage of local *albergue* and restaurant owner Diego. Slightly intoxicated and wearing a costume German spiked helmet, Diego continued to berate the pilgrims, screaming in broken English “Real pilgrims don’t burn! No burn! No plasticos!” (Diego, 2015). While a somewhat aggressive response, the reaction

reveals the emerging sentiments about the ritual tradition. Not only are pilgrims seen as leaving waste in the form of their discarded items, the items that they choose to burn are almost always synthetic, littering the cape and beaches with tarry ash and releasing toxic chemicals into the atmosphere. As elaborated by Yvette, the jaded Australian who found both Santiago and Finisterre equally distasteful, the Camino is now confronted with “issues [of pilgrims] not treading lightly upon the earth” (Yvette, 2015).

4.

CONCLUSION

Despite its nearly thousand-year history as a Christian penitent ritual, the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage has undergone rapid transformation in the last three decades, attracting a specific community of people who see themselves as “authentic” Camino pilgrims. These pilgrims on the route to Santiago construct their identity through emulation of an imagined medieval pilgrim experience and determine membership not by expression of belief or motivation, but by “authentic” practices, specifically related to mode of travel, behaviors, and expressed attitude. I refer to these values and associated practices as Camino pilgrim authenticity.

Upon arrival at the shrine of Santiago, the traditional end of the pilgrimage route, many pilgrims that align themselves with the values and practices of Camino pilgrim authenticity express feelings of dissatisfaction. While there are many reasons pilgrims might express feelings of dissatisfaction at the conclusion of their journey, my research points to a specific dynamic that explains this, at least in part. Along the 800km pilgrimage to Santiago, values of Camino pilgrim authenticity pervade the pilgrim experience, enforced not only by fellow pilgrims, but also by the Camino support network including former pilgrims, *hospitaleros*, Pilgrim Friends Associations, and other Spanish actors along the route. In contrast, the city of Santiago and the shrine complex are influenced by the Church’s interpretations of authenticity as being determined by Catholic religiosity.

Non-Catholic Camino pilgrims experience the tension between Camino pilgrim authenticity of the route and the traditional Catholic ritual conclusions upon arrival in Santiago. For Catholic pilgrims, traditional rituals at the shrine of Santiago successfully function as

pilgrimage conclusion rituals and authenticate their identity as pilgrims. In contrast, the contested notions of authenticity expressed in these rituals lead to non-Catholic Camino pilgrims identities left unconfirmed or undermined. For the non-Catholic Camino pilgrims whose values align with Camino pilgrim authenticity, these pilgrimage conclusion rituals are ineffective, not only because this community of pilgrims do not meet the standards set by the Church's authenticity criteria, but because Camino pilgrims typically reject these standards altogether. Therefore, the tensions surrounding the pilgrimage conclusion rituals and contested notions of authenticity may result in Camino pilgrim's perceptions of dissatisfaction.

In response to these dissatisfying ritual conclusions over the last several decades, Camino pilgrims have created alternative ritual conclusions that more closely relate to their experiences on the Camino route and affirm their identity as "authentic" pilgrims. These rituals range from embellishment or reinterpretation of traditionally Catholic rituals to the creative revival of "pagan" practices. Regardless of their form, these rituals not only reorient long-term pilgrims' experience of ritual conclusions towards the entirety of their experience as influenced by Camino pilgrim authenticity according to the pilgrim community's criteria, but act to confirm their status as pilgrims according to the pilgrimage community criteria: the performance of specific embodied practices.

These findings do not just point towards contested discourse of the "authentic" within the Camino pilgrim community; they also reveal the variety of institutions that have staked a claim in the conversation. The resulting changes to the Camino illustrate these competing interests. Camino pilgrims are concerned with the confirmation of their identity and their experience as an "authentic" pilgrimage. The Church is interested in maintaining authority over the culmination of

the Camino in Santiago as a Catholic religious space, although it has shown (through the likes of Sister Katherine and the Camino Companions) its willingness to respond to pilgrims' expression of dissatisfaction. The local Spanish government has attempted to both benefit from the increase in tourism economy and struggled to accommodate the ever-growing numbers of pilgrims to Santiago. International Pilgrim Friends Associations express angst about the general devaluing of the *compostela* and reorienting the Camino towards its "original medieval incarnation" (Scott, 2016). Again, the resulting conflict among these competing Camino authorities is not simply a culmination of an internal conversation about pilgrim "authenticity." It has resulted in substantial transformations on the Camino, as each community explores the idea of "This is what [pilgrims] do, and now I've done it."

REFERENCES

- Andy. (2015, June 17, 2015) /Interviewer: C. V. Holm.
- Brierley, J. (2014). *A Pilgrim's Guide to the Camino de Santiago: St. Jean • Roncesvalles • Santiago* (Camino Guides): Camino Guides.
- Brierly, J. (2015). *A Camino Pilgrim's Guide Sarria - Santiago - Finisterre: Including Muxía camino circuit* (Camino Guides) (J. Brierley, Trans.): Camino Guides.
- Brown, P. (2014). *The cult of the saints: its rise and function in Latin Christianity*: University of Chicago Press.
- Cazaux, F. (2011). To be a pilgrim: A contested identity on Saint James' Way. *Turizam: znanstveno-stručni časopis*, 59(3), 353-367.
- Denise. (2015, June 9, 2015).
- Diego. (2015, June 23, 2016) /Interviewer: C. V. Holm.
- Eade, J., & Sallnow, M. J. (1991). *Contesting the sacred: the anthropology of pilgrimage*: University of Illinois Press.
- Frey, N. L. (1998). *Pilgrim stories: On and off the road to Santiago*: Univ of California Press.
- Gallego, G. E. C. (2016). *Comunión peregrina mundial*. Retrieved from <http://www.elcorreogallego.es/?idMenu=3&idNoticia=93872>
- Herrero, N. (2008). Reaching Land's End: new social practices in the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. *International Journal of Iberian Studies*, 21(2), 131-149.
- Ingrid. (2015, June 10, 2016) /Interviewer: C. V. Holm.
- Jenna. (2015, June 13, 2015) /Interviewer: C. V. Holm.
- Judith. (2015, June 21, 2015) /Interviewer: C. V. Holm.
- Katherine. (2015, June 10, 2015) /Interviewer: C. V. Holm.
- Kellen. (2015, June 16, 2016) /Interviewer: C. V. Holm.
- Map of Way of St. James: The French Way. (2016). Retrieved from https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/0/06/French_Ways_of_St._James.svg/2000px-French_Ways_of_St._James.svg.png

- Michael. (2015, June 14, 2015).
- Oviedo, L., de Courcier, S., & Farias, M. (2014). Rise of Pilgrims on the Camino to Santiago: Sign of Change or Religious Revival? *Review of Religious Research*, 56(3), 433-442.
- Peregrino, O. d. (2015). Ad Sancti Jacobi Limina Peregrinatio: Informe estadístico Año 2015. Retrieved from
- Robins, P. (2016, July 24, 2006). Cathedral reintroduces pilgrim prayer vigils. Retrieved from <https://www.caminodesantiago.me/community/threads/cathedral-reintroduces-pilgrim-prayer-vigils.1292/>
- Santiago, C. d. (2016a). the Botafumeiro | Pilgrims to Santiago. Retrieved from <http://peregrinossantiago.es/eng/services-for-pilgrims/the-botafumeiro/>
- Santiago, C. d. (2016b). The Compostela | Pilgrims to Santiago. Retrieved from <http://peregrinossantiago.es/eng/pilgrimage/the-compostela/>
- Santiago, C. d. (2016c). RITOS DEL PEREGRINO. Retrieved from <http://www.catedraldesantiago.es/es/ritos-del-peregrino>
- Scott, R. (2016). FICS Forum: Why Change the 100 km. rule to 300 km.? Retrieved from <https://www.caminodesantiago.me/community/threads/fics-forum-why-change-the-100-km-rule-to-300-km.39220/>
- Sean. (2015, June 14, 2015) /Interviewer: C. V. Holm.
- Seb. (2016). Pilgrim shame. Retrieved from <https://www.caminodesantiago.me/community/threads/pilgrim-shame.38522/>
- Van Herwaarden, J. (2003). *Between Saint James and Erasmus: Studies in Late-Medieval Religious Life: Devotions and Pilgrimages in the Netherlands* (Vol. 97): Brill.
- Yvette. (2015, June 9, 2015) /Interviewer: C. V. Holm.

APPENDICES

Appendix A. Interview Instrument

PILGRIMS ON CAMINO - focus on pilgrim culture, the embodied forms of pilgrim identity and pilgrim's thoughts/expectations of arriving in Santiago

- Are you a first time pilgrim? Have you completed any other pilgrimages?
- Do you consider yourself religious / spiritual? Elaborate.
- Where did you start? How long have you been walking?
- What is a typical day like on the Camino? Describe it.
- Where do you expect to end?
- How do you feel about approaching Santiago / end of the pilgrimage?
- What do you expect to happen upon your arrival in Santiago?
- How will you know when your pilgrimage is over?
- Is there something you were hoping to get out of this experience?

PILGRIMS IN SANTIAGO - focus on arrival in Santiago, rituals at Cathedral, possible other rituals in Santiago outside of sanctioned church activity, how pilgrims conceive the end of their pilgrimage and how pilgrims mark it with ritual

- Describe your arrival in Santiago.
- Was the experience different than you expected?
- Have you been to the Cathedral? What did you do there?
- Describe the experience of receiving the compostela.
- What do you consider to be the end of your pilgrimage? Did you mark it / celebrate it in any way?
- Did you expect to get anything out of your pilgrimage experience? Did that happen?
- Have you felt different since finishing the Camino? Do you behave differently since ending the Camino?

PILGRIMS IN FINESTERRE - focus on alternative ritual conclusions to pilgrimage and purpose it serves, with emphasis on alternative bodily experiences constructed by non-Catholic pilgrims

- Describe your arrival in Santiago / Finesterre.
- Why did you decide to go to Finesterre?
- How did you arrive in Finesterre? (foot, bus, etc)
- What do you consider to be the end of your pilgrimage? Did you mark it in any way?
- Was the experience of arriving in Santiago / Finesterre different than you expected?
- Have you felt different since finishing the Camino? Do you behave differently since ending the Camino?