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Cover Page Footnote

We are grateful for the support given by the interviewees who took the time to share their experience of the route with us. In particular, we thank Lúcio Lourenço and António Herculano for giving us access to the guestbooks respectively of the hostel Cidade de Barcelos and the restaurant Pedra Furada.

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The pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela is a kind of proto tourism in a world where the number of pilgrimages has increased considerably. In the past the only motivation for such pilgrimages was religious, today we are witnessing the emergence of new motivations, such as cultural and even sporting ones. The research questions that guide this study are the following: Are faith and religion still strong enough motivations to justify pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela? Are there points of convergence between religious and secular pilgrims? Can the Camino be a means of awakening religious vocations? In short, what is the role of religion in modern pilgrimages along the Camino de Santiago? This research presents results of and applied case study based on the collection of data through semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis, focusing on the guest books of a hostel and a restaurant, both related to the Camino de Santiago. This researchers carried out a thematic analysis of the qualitative data collected. The main categories analysed in this article are three: the essence of the Way, evangelisation and, the pilgrimage process. The paper suggests that the Way of St James has given rise to a new spirituality based on values such as solidarity, cosmopolitanism, cooperation, friendship, empathy and mutual help.

Key Words: Portuguese Way, motivations, mixed methods, secondary data analysis, turigrinos, pilgrims

Introduction

The Way of St. James (or rather, the Ways of St. James) is one of the most successful tourists 'mega-products' in history. Year after year, the number of pilgrims who come to Santiago de Compostela on pilgrimage through the different routes of the Jacobean pilgrimage continues to increase. Only the years 2020 and 2021, marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, saw a break in this trend (Rodríguez-Vázquet *et al*., 2023).

In the Global North, it is often assumed that society is strongly secularised. Even though there are significant differences from country to country, each generation seems to be less believing and practising than the previous generation. It is this type of society that many authors refer to as a 'secular society'.

On the contrary, other authors such as Habermas (2008), qualify the previous statement and stress the importance that religion still has in social and cultural practices. For these authors, the new post-secular paradigm would be characterised by a return of religion to society, although in this return, religion would be transmuted, adopting a much broader and different meaning from the previous one.

In this new system, religion would widen, overflowing the limits of the sacred, and merging with the much more diffuse and liquid concept of spirituality. This new way of living religion, this spirituality, would be more circumscribed to the intimate sphere of the individual than before. Classical religion was above all a social practice (Collins, 2007). Now it is above all an individual, personalised, *à la carte* experience, closely linked to psychological and psychic factors.

The Way of St. James has traditionally been a place of pilgrimage in which faith has been the main driving force that has pushed pilgrims to travel hundreds and hundreds of kilometres to reach Santiago de Compostela (Heiser, 2021). It is clear that the motivation of pilgrims over the centuries has been religious. Moreover, several authors point out that the Way of St. James is an example of proto-tourism, understood as the distant ancestor of today's tourism (Lois González et alter, 2015).

It is in this context that questions arises.

Are faith and religion still strong enough motivations to justify pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela?

Are there points of convergence between religious and secular pilgrims?

Can the *Camino* be a tool to awaken religious vocations?

In short, what is the role of religion in modern pilgrimages on the Camino de Santiago?

Is the pilgrim to Santiago today a religious tourist or a cultural one? The Catholic Church affirms that the true pilgrim is the one who goes to Santiago for religious reasons. However, the '*compostelas*' (certificates attesting to having walked the St. James Way) are also given to pilgrims who claim to have walked the Way motivated by spirituality (Santos, 2021).

This research is relevant and necessary, as it seeks to clarify to what extent pilgrims to Santiago continue to be mobilised by religion. To this end, we will employ qualitative methods and approach the research from the point of view of the pilgrims, who are the main protagonists.

The research will follow the following structure. First, the research materials and methods used are presented, based primarily on qualitative interviews. This is followed by a review of the state of the art and the theoretical framework in relation to religion and pilgrimages. The results are then presented, with discourse analysis based on the qualitative methods mentioned above. It concludes with a final section containing both the discussion and conclusions.

Pilgrimages and Religion: The Sacred Journey

In recent decades we have witnessed a clear rise in pilgrimages in the vast majority of developed societies in the global North. The phenomenon of pilgrimage is almost as old as human beings and consists of a displacement of a collective of people through an open space, in a journey through time. This displacement or journey is associated with God, with different deities or with the divine, in many and varied ways (Lois, Paül, Pazos & Santos, 2015).

Pilgrimage is common to almost all religions practised in the world. The rituals carried out by pilgrims, their social and cultural practices *in itinere* and the main characteristics of these journeys (slow, for devotion, with an eye on the final goal or sanctuary) are often very similar both in substance and, often, in form. Pilgrimages are made to fulfil a promise, to thank God for intercession in a difficult moment, for penance or for an intimate religious or spiritual reason that impels the pilgrim on the way.

García Cantero (2010) explores the etymology of the word pilgrimage and explains that it derives from the Latin 'peragrare', which in turn refers to the fact of walking 'per agrum', that is, passing through fields. This first etymological approach allows us to visualise a person or a group of people crossing rural landscapes, far from cities, making efforts in more or less hostile spaces, in order to reach a place or final destination, almost always a city or a sanctuary.

For all religions, pilgrimage is a very important practice (Sharpe, 2003). For centuries, different religions have venerated different sacred places (shrines), which have become destinations of collective mobilities of many faithful. In some cases, the places of pilgrimage are tombs where the body of a saint or notable figure has been found or buried (Santiago de Compostela). The pilgrimage may take place to a site with a strong role in the tradition of the religion in question (Mecca, for example) (Cobbold *et al*., 2008). There are religions in which pilgrimages are made to places with a strong symbolic content derived from the supernatural or from the identification of a particular landscape with certain deities, be they more or

less historical or current (Mount Olympus, the Acropolis of Athens) (Tortorelli Ghidini, 1991).

Pilgrimages are constitutive of the Geography of Religions and form a central part of its object of study (Lois, Paül, Pazos & Santos, 2015). Similarly, shrines or sacred spaces are another of the basic pillars of the territorial and cultural study of Religion. For Yorgasson and della Dora (2009), Stump (2008) and Kong (2004) there is a great interaction between the territorial component of religion and sacred spaces. In this line, we could even affirm that sacred spaces and pilgrimage routes are the clearest spatial imprint of religious practice. This whole set of rituals and sacred spaces can give rise to interesting connections between different religions, such as the twinning between the Kumano Kodo (Japanese Shintoism) and the Way of St. James (Catholicism) (Rodríguez del Alisal, 2018).

A fundamental aspect is that the hegemonic reason for pilgrimages is religiously based. In the past, the only reasons for pilgrimages were religious. Today, there are new motivations that explain why people still go on pilgrimages, but the deep substratum and the real basis of pilgrimages is religious.

An interesting reflection is the following: can it be said that the medieval pilgrims to Santiago de Compostela, to give an example of a religious destination, are proto-tourists? According to Collins-Kreiner (2010), the traditional pilgrimage is the origin of modern tourism. If we take the city of Santiago de Compostela as a base, where pilgrims from all over Europe flocked throughout the Middle Ages, we can observe how the city adapted by developing a series of hotel and hostel establishments to serve the pilgrims. As López Alsina (1988) states, in the Barrio de San Pedro, located outside the walls and in the middle of the Via Francigena, there was an abundant proliferation of inns, taverns and establishments providing accommodation for pilgrims, just as is the case today, at the height of the contemporary mass tourism boom.

This continuity between exclusively religious pilgrimage and today's pilgrimage, largely understood as a tourist practice, is explained by the fact that today's pilgrimage in secularised societies has mutated (Ivakhiv, 2003). In the countries of the Global North, and especially in Western and Nordic Europe, religious sentiment has clearly declined in recent decades. What is interesting is that in parallel, a mutation of today's religion into something that many authors call spirituality, has been developing (di Giovini *et al*., 2019). This spirituality is a different feeling, more individual, more detached from rituals and customary obligations, but unlike traditional forms of religiosity. This is why today's spirituality is so closely linked to medieval religiosity and why pilgrimage practices are still so relevant today.

Today's pilgrims seek peace, spiritual renewal, tranquillity, culture, scenic stimulation, contact with other people and many other and diverse purposes (Hart, 1996). These very concrete and tangible goals can be collected in a series of abstract categories that bring us closer to the ideals of religion: doing good, improving as a person, temperance, appreciation of goodness and beauty, sharing with others, and so on. Thus, as Frey (1988) and Coleman and Eade (2004) argue, although the form of pilgrimages has changed, the destinations and the pilgrimages themselves have remained unchanged.

It is very pertinent to ask what the role of religion in today's peregrinations is. In this sense, Berger's (1999) critique is directed towards the very concept of 'secular society', claiming that it is false, since religion continues to play a very important - albeit less visible - role in today's society. In the same vein, Habermas (2006) questions the 'disappearance' of religion in secular society.

If religion has not disappeared from secular society, then what is the meaning of the concept of a post-secular society (Habermas, 2008). We believe that it may make sense to speak of a post-secular society insofar as in today's world there are all kinds of beliefs, opinions and practices, often contradictory, in relation to religion and pilgrimages. Thus, there are many cases of pilgrims who begin the Way of St. James defining themselves as secular or atheist, and end the pilgrimage as believers (Frey, 1988). They have had, therefore, a real conversion along the way. Similarly, the coexistence of pilgrims from very different religions along the way fuses beliefs with very different principles and practices into a single fraternal religion (Pereiro, 2019). In this case it is not so much spirituality as the emergence of a 'common

religious-spiritual language' associated with the sense of 'communitas' (Turner, 1974).

The Pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela

It is paradoxical that at a time when religious practice apparently decreases, the number of pilgrims increases year after year, according to statistics (Santos & Lois, 2015). This apparent paradox is explained by the differentiation in practice between two apparently different concepts, such as religion and spirituality. In practice, the concepts of *liminality* (Maddrell, 2009), *communitas* (Turner, 1974) and slow mobility (Urry, 2007) act as bridges between tradition and modernity and bring these concepts closer together.

Mikaelsson (2012) argues that Santiago is probably the best example of a post-secular trend towards a spiritual destination. This reference to the concept of post-secular must be understood as post-modern, where the syncretism of religious, spiritual and cultural practices in general is a reality and gives meaning to the historical continuity of pilgrimages over the centuries.

Materials and Methods

This research is based on the Case Study as a research strategy. According to Stake (1995), the Case Study is both a process of research on a case and the product of that research. Thus, a case, i.e., an example of the phenomenon being studied (Veal, 1997), may focus on multiple objects about which data are collected over time (Finn, Elliott-White, & Walton, 2000). This research deals with subcases (Beeton, 2008) that were chosen because they are representative of the Portuguese Camino de Santiago (Yin, 2009). The research seeks to analyse the context and processes inherent to the Portuguese Way of Saint James. The Case Study herein will cover groups of individuals who are located within its boundaries (Beeton, 2008).

The collection of evidence for this research focused on participants belonging to organisations that promote the Portuguese Ways of St. James. The instruments of data collection used were interviews, whose use aimed to deepen the knowledge of the action of the organisations in question and the behaviour of their agents, both as professionals and as pilgrims. Table 1, shows the identity of the interviewees, the function they perform and the connection between the organisation to which they belong and the path.

According to Yin (2010), there are six sources of evidence that are most often used in case studies: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observations and physical artefacts. The present study was based on the conduct of semi-structured interviews. This type of interviews is an intermediate version, between interviews with an excess of structure and interviews that lack a script, although, according to Bernard (2006) they correspond to a research plan (i.e. unstructured).

Thus, according to Altinay and Paraskevas, this

> [This] *interview technique is used to find out what is happening, seek new insights, identify general patterns and understand the relationship between variables.* [According to the authors, researchers] *using this technique have a list of topics, and have greater freedom in terms of sequencing questions and modifying them according to the flow of conversation* (2008:113).

The interviews have strong points (of which the fact that they are targeted, directly addressing the topics of the case study) and weak points (partiality of the accounts and possible incorrectness of the same). Thus, the present study was also based on analysis of documentary information contained in the guestbooks of the hostel *Cidade de Barcelos* and the restaurant *Pedra Furada* (cf. Table 1). According to Yin (2010:128), this type of documentation proves useful to 'corroborate and augment evidence from other sources'.

Analysis of the interviews and documentation was undertaken using an inductive approach, based on familiarisation with the data, open coding of the interview transcripts and texts from the guestbooks, the conceptualisation of the data and sorting. The themes, concepts and relationships that emerged from the analysis were compared to the existing literature, in order to identify similar themes and those which contradicted the literature, as well as those which were somehow original (Altinay & Paraskevas, 2008; Bryman, 2012).

Table 1: Identification of Interviewees and Organisations Linked to Portuguese Way of Saint James

Date of Interview	Name of Respondent	Function Performed	Connection to The Way
23 February 2023	Alberto Barbosa (AB)	President of the Association of Friends of the Way of Santiago in Viana do Castelo	'*The association was born in the city of Viana do Castelo in the Jacobean Year of 2004 by the enthusiasm and the dream of a group of pilgrims who wanted to offer more people the experience of 'Being a pilgrim' as well as to work on the dissemination and promotion of the Portuguese Way of Saint James*' (AACS, 2004-2023)
02 March 2023	António Herculano (AH)	Co-owner of the ***Pedra Furada Restaurant***, in Barcelos	*'António Herculano ... this man ... receives customers with a hugging gesture ..., telling amazing stories ... stories that never end ... also pointing out the fifteen guest books from people from 129 countries'* (Evasões, 2020)
02 March 2023	Lúcio Lourenço (LL)	Vice-President of the ACB Association - ***Albergue Cidade de Barcelos***	*'The Albergue Cidade de Barcelos (the responsibility of the Association ACB - Albergue Cidade de Barcelos, a private non-profit association, without any kind of public support) has as its main objective the support of Pilgrims (against free and voluntary donation) who are on pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, Fátima or any other place of pilgrimage'* (ACB, 2023)
06 March 2023	Varico Pereira (VP)	Responsible for the Pastoral Care of Tourism of the Archdiocese of Braga and Vice-President of the Confraternity of the Bom Jesus do Monte	*'The Pastoral Care of Tourism - Portugal (PTP) intends that all those who carry out activities related to tourism (workers in the sector, visitors, lay people and priests who exercise functions in this pastoral care, among others) understand that this is an activity of the Church (therefore, always carried out in order to fulfil the Church's mission, in whatever sphere), which allows the Word of God and the Catholic identity to reach everyone, contributing to the dynamics of the tourism sector, as a promoter of respect for the dignity of the human person and the search for the common good* (Obra Nacional da Pastoral do Turismo, n.d.)
13 March 2023	Maria da Graça Sanches da Gama (MG)	President of the Jacobean Study Centre; Vice-President of the Portuguese Federation of the Way of Saint James; Hermana Mayor of the Universal Archicofradía del Glorioso Apóstol Santiago	*'Thus, the Portuguese Federation of the Way of St. James resulted from the need to have an organisation that would allow the concentration of all matters related to the Ways of St. James in Portugal, associating around this project the Municipalities, Pilgrims' Associations and all the private or public Institutions related to this theme'* (Federação Portuguesa do Caminho de Santiago, 2023)
13 March 2023	Mário Aguiar (MA)	Higher Technician at the Maia Interactive Tourism Store	*'The Way of Saint James is the oldest pilgrimage route in Europe. ... World Heritage and the first European cultural itinerary, it has, in Maia, three integral routes. The Portuguese Way of the Coast, the Portuguese Way (Central) and the variant of the Portuguese Way (Central) through Braga. A Way to discover for spirituality, religiosity, culture and well-being'* (Visit Maia, 2023)
23 March 2023	Nuno Rodrigues (NR)	Head of the Culture, Tourism, Youth and Sports Department of Barcelos City Hall	*'Barcelos is one of the richest territories in terms of tradition and Jacobean vocation in Portugal. After the medieval bridge was built in the 14th century, the region became a meeting point for pilgrims on their way to Santiago de Compostela. In Barcelos, there are hostels and various help points exclusively for pilgrims. The city route intersects with the medieval core of the city'* (Município de Barcelos, 2019)

Source of data: own elaboration

Findings

Data analysis, via thematic analysis, was carried out. The themes discussed in this paper concern the core themes that emerged from the coding of the interview transcripts (i.e., the data were fragmented and labelled) and the guestbooks. The data analysis aimed to recognise recurrences in incidents, while the data interpretation sought to address the research questions. The following

Figure 1: Pedra Furada Restaurant

(Source: Authors)

sections highlight the core topics that emerged from the analysis, namely: the essence of the way, evangelisation, and the process of pilgrimage.

The Essence of The Way

The Way of Saint James, for AB, presents a very specific dynamic, substantiated by the yellow arrows, the hostels, the conviviality that is established with other nationalities in that common space and the spirit of healthy conviviality that is described by AB as a 'spirit of love', of brotherhood. AB mentions that this spirit is rooted in the Christian religion. This spirit is the antithesis of the spirit of competitiveness, calling for interiority and contact with nature. AB places the emphasis of the path on spirituality rather than religiosity. In fact, the Way is not exclusive to a religious communion but is open to all kinds of people.

The Way is also a search for self-knowledge: 'as if the path were speaking'. The Way is a space of welcome and solidarity, and this is the only way to explain why, nowadays, a Russian and a Ukrainian can happily share the same table at a hostel. This 'bath in humanity', for AB, justifies the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to The Way. This experience of Humanity gives a unique character to the Way and incorporates the experience of pain, of sharing, of contact with nature and of managing the bad (and good) moods of the person with whom one shares the Camino. For AB, the Way 'is a church without a roof', that is, a space of evangelisation. This is one of the attributes of the path that moves him.

AH, for his part, in his activity, as host of the *Pedra Furada* restaurant, collects postcards and guestbooks of the pilgrims (Figure 1) who come to this place, which he co-owns.

The way of Santiago for LL is essentially a spiritual way, certainly not a religious one. This concept is exemplified by the same interviewee as follows:

> *But when, for example, they come to say that Santiago isn't even in the Cathedral:*
>
> *- Ah, you go there on foot and Santiago isn't even in the Cathedral. It doesn't matter to me if he is there or not, because his spirit is there. The spirit of the Way is there. Man, if the bone is not his bone, it makes no difference to me. What interests me is that force that makes it so that the Way can be for all. Because we can't give this idea that the Way is only for the religious, and then the others feel apart.*

As mentioned above, the path can bring together people from different nations. This happened in the Barcelos hostel - which for some time served as a refuge for Ukrainians - when a Russian citizen, who had come to the path to flee the war, was served by a Ukrainian refugee, who was in the hostel for the same reason. As soon as the pilgrim explained the reason why she had decided to leave her country, the two embraced and began to cry. As LL affirms 'respect between people is common' on the way.

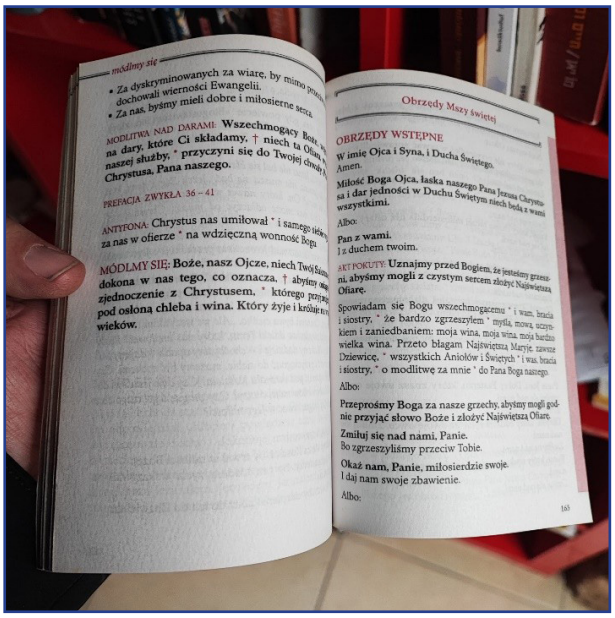
The path is a learning experience, for LL, along the way we can be presented with small signs and 'small things about people'. Although some of the interviewees believe in the spirituality of the path, they are also of the opinion that the path is a tourist product.

The path is also prone to breaking hierarchies - supposed or real. As VP says, 'it has this capacity to put people on the same level', which is 'the level of the human condition'. When one is part of a group one has to 'respect the practices of that group'. The contingencies of the *Camino*, such as the inexistence of a place in the hostel, may force the group to sleep in the firemen's hall. In this

Figure 2: Holy books in Different Languages (i)

(Source: Lúcio Lourenço)

Figure 3: Holy Books in Different Languages (ii)



(Source: Lúcio Lourenço)

scenario, pilgrims will sleep on the ground regardless of their social, economic or other status.

However, there are interviewees who emphasise the transcendence and the divine character of the path, bringing the essence closer to religion. MG refers that 'there is an intervention'. In his turn, MA, an experienced pilgrim, maintains that

> *no matter how open-minded we may be, how secular we may think, on the way we are going to have a moment: man, there is something here.*

This religious essence is manifested in the guestbooks of the hostel City of Barcelos, in messages such as these:

> *May the Lord save us. Thank you for everything*
>
> *Very grateful for the welcome in this pilgrim place - may God from above continue to bless this hostel and multiply these gifts*
>
> *God bless you for your hospitality and inspiration to all the pilgrims on Camino*
>
> *We will remember you in our prayers*
>
> *Was blessed staying here. Will take god's blessing from you & here every step*
>
> *May faith guide your steps and the Camino your destiny*

The hospitallers who volunteer to welcome pilgrims also seem to share this religious spirit:

> *We were here, hospitallers, from 1-20.04.2022. We are very happy to do it (sic)! It was for us wonderful place; it was really big gift for God to stay here and help pilgrims! We love this* albergue*, pilgrims, Barcelos...'.*

Figures 2 and 3 show bibles of foreign pilgrims that were deposited in the library of the hostel.

The guestbooks of the *Pedra Furada* restaurant also exudes the same religious ardour

> *Thank you for your warm hospitality - bless you and your family and your business*
>
> *Obrigado António + family for a beautiful experience here at Pedra Furada. The food was nourishing both for body + spirit. I felt very cared for and grateful we found you. Lots of love.*

MG refers to the search for transcendence, adding that although the intention is to pay homage to the apostle Santiago, this does not imply that the path cannot be a means of paying a promise

> *If I arrive at Santiago and have a sick child, of course I ask for the sick child. And I have already prayed many times.*

The possibility of the path becoming a mere tourist product worries some interviewees, such as NR:

> *What we want is that people do the path, but do the path with content and that they understand the path, so that the path does not become just another itinerary, whatever it may be, like so many others that exist'.*

For this interviewee, the idiosyncrasy of the path lies in its religious and spiritual identity. The essence of the path is summed up by NR as follows:

> *The soul of the path is in the people, it is in the religious spaces, it is in the heritage, it is in the message itself of what is pilgrimage, what is the purpose of pilgrimage.*

Therefore, the pilgrim should let the path pass through him/her, continues NR, bringing the teachings of the path '*the values of solidarity, of help, of interaction, of multiculturality*' to his/her daily life.

According to NR, on the path, a universal language is spoken, a language common to all:

> *The language of the human being, of solidarity, of living together, of sharing, regardless of the linguistic dimension.*

The relationships on the way are perennial, NR advocates,

> *I receive messages every day, a little bit from all over the world'.*

Evangelisation

The Way can be a means of evangelisation. Young people who do not adhere to the teachings of catechises can be attracted to the Church through their condition as pilgrims on the Way of Saint James. Nevertheless, according to several interviewees, the Catholic Church does not seem to be doing enough to take advantage of the Way as a privileged space for evangelisation. For AB,

> *the Church ... should have said what brings these people to Santiago, what do people want?*

Nevertheless, the accounts of conversions on the Way are common among the interviewees:

> *I started out as an atheist,* [or] *I started out as an agnostic and today I believe perfectly in the existence of God* (AH).

According to MA, the path is itself a transcendence:

> *many people go in a sportive way and then, along the way, they find the path.*

NR, corroborates this testimony, according to him:

> *effectively the sensation of arrival and the aura of arrival led them to question their spiritual position, because in some way, if you will excuse the expression, they were touched.*

Therefore, pilgrims who had motivations unrelated to religion (e.g. sports or cultural), end up facing religion and spirituality differently.

Also commonly discussed by the interviewees is an awareness that a substantial number of the churches that punctuate this cultural and religious itinerary are closed. This circumstance presents an inaccessibility to religious heritage. The reasons given for this constraint are related to the lack of individuals who can ensure the surveillance of the churches throughout the day, avoiding any risk of damage or theft of the sacred art that is exposed there.

Churches or monasteries if they are open, may offer the blessing to the pilgrim, besides the retreat that they provide to pilgrims exhausted by physical effort. LL is categorical about the evangelising potential conferred by the opening and operation of the Churches of the Way:

> *After that tiredness you enter the chapel, which is in silence, background music, air conditioning ... And you know that you are tired. And when you are tired you are also available, receptive to what they give you. And the blessing ... they begin to sing and at the end there is the one-to-one blessing. The friar puts his hands on your head and the sister takes your face and looks into your eyes. They have the text and ask what the languages are. They have a very small text, and they say it in all the languages of all the pilgrims present and then there is a personal moment when the people hug you and look into your eyes ... I always, the times I went there with friends, they all leave in tears, because it is tiredness with ... a very strong spiritual aspect. Humanity.*

According to most of the interviewees, this evangelising potential that churches have for pilgrims, which would allow the Catholic Church to attract believers, is not properly used. MA also speaks about the recollection that the Church provides

> *the best places to go to are the churches, aren't they? We're tired [and] there's nothing better than a Church to go into. It's a cool place.*

VP, on his part, sees in the cooperation between local institutions and the Church the key to solving the lack of human resources that guarantee the opening of the Churches to the public. A possible solution is to resort to the volunteering of the elderly so that

> *they become guardians of this heritage and show this heritage to visitors.*

LL also refers to the impossibility of taking photographs inside Churches, which may prevent the future visual memory of that moment 'when you felt an incredible peace', or even rule out the possibility of sharing the snapshot with the family 'and say look, I'm here, I prayed for you'.

The security issues also constrain the pilgrim's freedom, namely not being able to take backpacks inside the Cathedral or give a hug to the Saint. For LL, these restrictions contradict the discourse conveyed in the hostels which states that the backpack is part of the pilgrim.

The issue of conversion or reconversion to Catholicism was triggered by Paulo Coelho, in his book *The Diary of a Magus*, as VP mentions. According to this interviewee, religious tourism, of which the *Camino* is a manifestation, constitutes an 'opportunity for a new evangelisation or for an evangelisation'. This conversion is not immediate, but these pilgrims are touched by faith.

Most parishes seem to have a very low interest in providing information about the *Camino* in the hostels. As a substantial part of the hostels are privately owned, or even owned by municipalities, religious services are usually not available. In this sense, VP is categorical: 'the greater the religious accompaniment, the more sense this path will make'. For his part, MG stresses the need to have more confessors during the journey.

NR, in fact, says that the task of ensuring that churches are accessible to the pilgrims that come to them and that they provide them with the pilgrim's blessing is easier in an urban setting than in a rural one. The 240 km that separate the city of Porto from Santiago de Compostela illustrates the difficulties in structuring the offer of tourist-religious services in churches in peripheral localities. There is not always a 'priest available to stamp a Compostela'.

The Process of Pilgrimage

According to LL, the pilgrim's path starts when they begin to pack their rucksack:

> *You put in your rucksack what you need, you put your fears, don't you? Fear if it rains, fear if I have no internet, fear if I have no power bank. The more fear you have, the heavier your rucksack is. You put everything in it. And that's when your journey begins'.*

The pilgrim should take the essential, as this is part of their experience, this way their path will be more fruitful. For the same interviewee, whoever goes to the beach and does not intend to get dirty with sand or bathe in the sea should stay at home.

With regard to the pilgrim / tourist duality, AH mentions the following about a pilgrim he met:

> *Once a pilgrim was here, she passed by, and I noticed that she wasn't carrying a rucksack. Then I met her in Barcelos. I was free, I was going to have dinner in Barcelos, and we ended up, at dinner time, having dinner together. And then, when I took her to Alfredo, to the hotel, she was in the hotel of the rosary, it was open at the time, I kept telling her that:*
>
> *I said You're making your way like a 'turigrina'* [1]
>
> *And she: What? 'Turigrina'!*
>
> *And when we said goodbye, I took her to the hotel and she spoke: I'll pass by your door as a pilgrim.*
>
> *And she did. Two or three years later. We even have those photos of that Dutch woman.*

Everyone makes their own way, therefore. LL is wary of touristy experiences with a guide who tells the 'turigrino' where to eat and where to go. He does not advocate interdictions, but 'it is the genuine experience that makes the path grow'. VP says that he chooses the path, even if this leads him to disregard the signposting, using shortcuts: the signposting 'is very important, but it is the pilgrim who makes the journey'.

The pilgrim, whatever their more or less lay motivations, never leaves the path indifferent. LL uses the experience

1 'turgrina' is a somewhat derogatory term derived from 'turista' and 'peregrina' (tourist pilgrim), and used for people who are not 'real' pilgrims.

of a foreign pilgrim to argue that it takes a month to achieve this genuine experience. Thus, in the first week, the thoughts of daily life, the most trivial things come to the pilgrim's mind, while in the last part 'one already speaks of things that are meaningful for life'. During the journey, the pilgrims will free themselves 'from the smallest and most basic everyday things'. On the way, according to the same interviewee, as time goes by 'there is always some reflection that forces change'.

VP is of the same opinion, sustaining that during the journey the pilgrim questions ones self about existence, because they spend long periods of time walking alone: 'there are several questions, there is a lot of time available to us to think about our condition as human beings'. This process finds its zenith in the cathedral of Santiago, in whose place the pilgrim's emotions 'come to the surface and mix and mingle'.

As mentioned above, the condition of pilgrim is levelling, it is the condition of pilgrim which allows us 'to be at the level of those who walk beside us'. This circumstance means that, for example, a bank director of a much higher social and economic status than the average, acts and lives like the most anodyne of pilgrims.

For VP, the Way of St. James is an itinerary that begins at the door of the pilgrim's home and only ends when they return home. Therefore, a period of preparation of the pilgrimage is necessary. This moment

> *of preparation of my pilgrimage and this moment of preparation of the pilgrimage of the* Camino *from the religious point of view goes through what may be a religious preparation, a pre-pilgrimage.*

In this introductory phase, there is a meeting between the parish priest and the pilgrim or the group to which they belong. There is a spiritual preparation, according to VP, so that the pilgrim becomes aware of what the Way and the Shrine represent. There is a process of pilgrimage that is not reduced to arriving at the Cathedral but includes the return. NR shares this opinion:

> *the set of experiences that comes from a pilgrimage experience, whether it lasts four, five, or six days, is very rich.*

Thus, the parish priest is someone who is close to the pilgrim from the religious point of view and who offers them religious assistance, without which 'we can get a bit confused about what this journey was'.

VP also alludes to cases in which pilgrims do not stop at Santiago, but walk to the end of the journey, to *Finisterrae*. When they reach their goal, many pilgrims 'undress everything, burn their clothes and start a new life'. The journey sometimes upsets the psyche, 'values change' and sometimes some pilgrims go to the extreme of committing suicide in Finisterre. VP states: 'there are two or three cases, I think'. It is in these moments that the action of a priest 'who confesses, who accompanies' becomes urgent. His action mitigates the imbalances and decompensation that can affect certain pilgrims. The following account of VP is suggestive of the anguish that can seize the mind of a pilgrim:

> *This has to do with the storm that rages in our thinking. Imagine what it is like for you to go on a pilgrimage. I have been with pilgrims along the way. Imagine a man who already had 1200 kilometres in his legs and was there 30 or 40 kilometres from Santiago and said to me:*
>
> *- Look, I want to catch the bus, where do I catch the bus here to Santiago?*
>
> *- You have travelled 1200 kilometres?*
>
> *- Look, I no longer know what I want, I think I have done my pilgrimage, I want to leave, I want to catch the bus and leave.*
>
> *So, there is confusion. There are many emotions. Have you ever seen what it is like to walk 1200 kilometres alone? People think about anything and everything. They wonder about anything and everything. About their condition as sinners, as human beings, about their life. They have time to think about a lot of things. And that thinking, if it is not accompanied, if people have a weakness* [through which] *they may have, in short, a more fragile psychological inclination, there may be problems. But there are many cases where they burn their clothes. Where they evict themselves and where they think like this:*
>
> *- Okay, I'm going to start a new life.*

This habit of burning clothes has even resulted in spaces being created specifically for this purpose.

Sometimes pilgrims choose to walk alone, in an intimate way, which opens up the space for religious practice, the encounter with the Other and with God. In this sense, what MG mentions is suggestive:

> *Oh, that happened to me a lot ... people who organise pilgrimages and then come up to me [and say]: - O Madam, now I have decided to go alone with my wife*

MA corroborates this opinion:

> *those who do the Pilgrimage - you can talk to several people about this - even those who do it in a less religious or even secular way, the second time they do it, they are already looking for spiritual paths.*

According to NR, The Way helps to dilute pre-conceptions, through the multicultural contacts that are generated

> *often* [there are examples] *even of acculturation, some values about which they had a set of dogmas, a set of pre-formed notions, which they then end up shaping, because the contact leads to clarification, leads to a better perception.*

During the journey, the pilgrim is also subjected to the evangelising message of the heritage that they encounter, this encounter

> *naturally marks people and makes people question [their] values, question their attitude, question their knowledge, fall in love with knowing more, to go deeper (NR).*

Figure 4: PEP - Pilgrims Event Meeting Point in Vila de Prado

(Source: Associação Espaço Jacobeus, Araújo & Fernandes, 2019)

Although there is a putative decrease in religious motivation, there are places where the pilgrim's blessing gains more supporters, as it is associated with the recollection that many walkers seek, as the walk 'needs moments of isolation, of reflection' and in NR's opinion 'this is one of the main religious practices of the path'.

This intention to participate in religious practices, namely the Eucharist, justifies the eagerness with which pilgrims position themselves

> *to get to Santiago, preferably for the pilgrim's mass, at midday, preferably with a bota-fumeiro (i.e. incense), because naturally it is an experience that marks on top of this whole experience that is the way of St James.*

Also, adds NR

> *always in that perspective that these practices are similarly a form of purification, prayer, thanksgiving and overcoming* [as well as renewal].

A final insight from the research is the existence of Pilgrims' Meeting Points which are promoted by certain Santiago associations (Figure 4). These pilgrims' meetings are held every month, every three or six months. In these sessions, pilgrims get together 'with people who are preparing to go on the way'. According to NR, they mainly talk about the way, they are

> *people who come to share their experience and say categorically, my motivation was neither spiritual nor religious, I wanted to do the way in 3 days, to go from Porto to Santiago in 7 days, or something similar, and then they end up looking at the way in another perspective.*

According to the website of the PEP - Pilgrims Meeting Point of the parish of Vila de Prado, located in the municipality of Vila Verde and in the district of Braga (Figure 4), the PEP is: 'a place for discussion and sharing of information and experiences of the Way', where its proponents are 'available to welcome, inform, clarify, sensitise... those who want to go on pilgrimage' (Associação Espaço Jacobeus, Araújo & Fernandes, 2019).

The pilgrimage process is a cycle and, for NR, when the pilgrim arrives in Santiago, a new path begins. The Pilgrims' Meeting Points share this philosophy.

Discussion and Conclusions

Religion is one of the cultural manifestations that best defines the individual and collective identity of human beings. In turn, pilgrimages are a constitutive element of many religions that have existed in the world throughout its history. Pilgrimages can be considered as a religious activity in movement, whose destination is always a sacred place, a place of worship or a space with a strong symbolic content for a given religion.

Of all the pilgrimage routes, the Way of St. James is probably the best known throughout the world. Since the Middle Ages, millions of pilgrims have taken various routes across Europe to reach the tomb of the Apostle St. James the Great, discovered in the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula. After a phase of medieval splendour, followed by a period of decline in the Modern Age and, to a large extent, in the 19th century, the Way of St. James regained its relevance and prominence in the 20th century. This trend has continued to consolidate and grow in the 21st century.

Nowadays, the Way of St. James is not only a great pilgrimage route, but a real human highway that brings together *in itinere* people driven by religious faith and by other types of motivations. It is precisely the unravelling of these motivations that has prompted the authors to carry out this research.

At its inception the Way of St. James was a totally religious phenomenon. It was religion and faith that moved the medieval pilgrims. Nowadays, however, the Way of St. James seems to be considered more of a cultural tourism route. The First European Cultural Itinerary (a distinction obtained by the Way of St. James) appears then as a huge cultural corridor through which pilgrims pass for many different reasons. Among these reasons, a large part of the current scientific literature identifies, of course, religion and faith, but does not attribute a pre-eminent place to them.

On the contrary, other motivations such as spirituality, the practice of sporting activities or the enjoyment of cultural tourism are seen as equally valid and important. In this debate, it is very interesting that the Catholic Church itself claims that the only valid pilgrimage is the one of a religious nature.

However, when issuing the '*compostelas*' (certificates attesting the completion of the Camino de Santiago), pilgrims are asked about the motivation that led them to make the pilgrimage to Santiago, and both religious and spiritual motivation are accepted. On the other hand, most academics consider that both religious and non-religious motivations are equally valid, without assessing the extent to which each of them is valid and whether there is any place that can be considered as an 'intersection' or intermediate point between the two.

The debate, therefore, is whether this spiritual dimension is of a religious nature or something entirely different. An analysis of the literature on religions and pilgrimages indicates the existence of a secular society that has emancipated itself from the weight and influence of religion. This would be a society in which religion no longer plays a predominant role in people's personal and collective lives. However, alongside the secular concept, the post-secular concept later emerged, referring to a return of religion to individual and collective life, adopting new forms, characteristics, and manifestations.

Habermasian, post-secular society would be characterised by a new experience of religion, more individual, more relative, less categorical and detached from ritual elements that were more or less incompatible with the advanced, post-modern capitalist society in which we live. In this postmodern context, Religion would adapt to the new times with great flexibility, allowing individuals to configure a new 'spirituality' (that is the new word that emerges), which is *à la carte*, and adapted to the concrete characteristics of each individual.

This new spirituality would emerge as a kind of universal Religion, where values, aspirations and ambitions of many different religions meet, and which constitutes a kind of 'creed of minimums' that can be acceptable not only to people with strong religiosity but also to agnostic and even secular people.

The research has shown that the Way of St. James is one of the places where this new 'spirituality' is most evident. If we consider this spirituality as a form of religion, it seems clear that religious motivation has not decreased in recent decades but has even increased.

According to the qualitative analysis applied on the Portuguese Way of St. James, a series of values such as solidarity, internationalisation, spirit of cooperation, friendship, empathy and mutual help, which can be easily associated with traditional religious manifestations, stand out strongly among pilgrims.

The Way of St. James still maintains its religious dimension, since it is religion that explains the meaning of the Way itself and that which traditionally gives meaning to the pilgrimage. However, there is an extraordinary level of tolerance and respect for people from all countries of the world, for people of all religions and for agnostic and secular people. Having grown in such a significant way, the *Camino* has become a Meta-Path, absorbing and embracing values associated with Human Rights and Peace in general. In the interviews, several people pointed out the relevance of awarding the Nobel Peace Prize to the Way of St. James. As can be seen, the level of spiritual transcendence goes beyond the strictly religious to become a meta-religious space that embodies the aspirations and longings for a better world.

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