

Chapter 2

Imagining an End of the World: Histories and Mythologies of the Santiago-Finisterre Connection

Peter Jan Margry

A popular Camino Finisterre guidebook seemed to make it easy. Its preface states: ‘Literalism can be a hindrance to a deeper understanding of our lives and our place in the cosmos.’ The author expresses disinterest in whether the remains of Saint James are genuinely deposited in the town of Santiago or even if indeed Jesus traveled to Finisterre to meet Druidic masters as he states elsewhere in the booklet. I assumed he might have had an anthropological view and would have been more interested in how people behave and what they practice. But nothing is less true; his subject actually addresses the issue of whether pilgrims are able to ‘absorb and live out the truth of their [=Jesus/Druids] teaching of unconditional love and forgiveness’ (Brierley 2009: 4). His concern proves thus to be more missionary in nature and shows no relation to any analytical approach about what motivates people to continue wandering along the ‘Camino’ tracks from Santiago to Finisterre and Muxía. However, the author does unintentionally display an indication of the religious ambiguities expressed in relation to the Finisterre footpath. Brierley brings up the presence of Celticism, Christianity, or Esotericism and New Age which is seen expressed with more or less religious, spiritual, or secular intentions by pilgrims, spiritual strollers, or those who see that route as just a secular quest. The mythologizing approach of authors like Brierley and their specific discursive appropriation of the history of the cultus of Saint James are key issues I will address here.

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The necessary contextualization of the present research project on the contemporary heritagization processes along the Camino Finisterre, urges for us to understand how these stories, histories, mythologies and legends about the relationship between Santiago de Compostela and the Galician Atlantic coast strip, and specifically the town of Finisterre, relate to one another and how they have contributed to creation of the sacred site and the new route towards it. Various discourses have played a role in mobilizing people to move beyond Santiago and head for Padrón, Finisterre, or Muxía. The recent boom in ‘follow-up’ or ‘continuance pilgrims’ is directly influenced by and connected with a dynamic skein of old and modern narratives about what is by many regarded to be the actual ending of the Camino de Santiago, namely the once physical ending of the earth, or world, at Finisterre, now on Spain’s Atlantic coast. In order to understand the ‘Finisterre boom’ better and to contextualize and explain the motives¹ walkers and pilgrims have for continuing to the coast, it is necessary to unravel, analyze, and interpret this narrative tangle.

2.1 The James Myth

The European-wide network of pilgrim ways all leading to the Spanish pilgrimage site Santiago de Compostela came into being in the Middle Ages on the presumption that the apostle James the Great was buried in there.² Due to this myth and to the miraculous powers ascribed to him and available at his presumed grave, Santiago had already become a famed pilgrimage center in the eleventh century (Fletcher 1984: 53).

The story that James’ body was shipped from Jerusalem to Galician Padrón and buried in Santiago after being decapitated by king Herod in AD 44 cannot be underpinned by any contemporary historical data. Moreover, the view that his sepulture at one of the edges of Christian Europe in the northwest corner of Spain was an act of honor to James or in memory of him due to his former missionary work in that region in the first century, is also to be regarded as an invented legend (Elliott van Liere 2006). The promotion of Santiago de Compostela since the ninth century as the burial and pilgrimage place of James the Great can to a large degree be interpreted as a construction in the context of the contemporary religious politics of the time. The most plausible theory for the invention of the legends of origin connected to James and his burial in Northwestern Spain relate to the usurpative strategies of the Roman Church in that period (Van Herwaarden 1980; Fletcher 1984: 68–77). That strategy was twofold: as part of a generic missionary endeavor to deepen Christian faith in Europe, and as a more specific geopolitical induced mission or ‘crusade’ to (re-)conquer territories under Islamic

¹See for my research into the motives of walkers and pilgrims my contribution at the end of this volume.

²Márquez Villanueva calls this the eschatological myth of St. James, next to his military (Reconquista) and protonationalist (Spanish crown’s patron) myths (Márquez Villanueva 2004).

‘occupation.’ The Santiago myth and the figure of St. James as *Matamoros*, or Moor-slayer—figuring in the establishment of a western stronghold and realizing a maximalist Christian realm—thus emanate directly from the Christian *Reconquista* of Spain in the eighth century (cf Gallardo 2005; Elliott van Liere 2006).³

From its beginning, the Roman Church has used cults and shrines to support its missionary goals and to create structure and cohesion in European Christendom. Non-Christian religions and indigenous beliefs have, therefore, often been embattled by saint cults and their miracle working. Holy missionaries in particular, not to mention a major apostle, were perfect saintly symbols. It was during the Carolingian empire that the deployment of the sacred power of saints and their relics became a major instrument of the Church (Herrmann-Mascard 1975; Geary 1978: 16–50). In the ninth century, the French abbot Radbertus stated that never before had so many ‘great things’ been realized through relics, and that ‘miracles of saints long asleep in Christ have recently begun to flash forth’ (Geary 1978: 20–21). Saints were recruited to strengthen the threatened geo-political system, especially for the delicate imbalance in the southwestern part of the Christian world where Islam was exerting pressure. At the same time, in the Galician region situated ‘in ultimis finibus,’⁴ the assumed remains of the apostle James were recovered at a small cemetery, from which Santiago derived its epithet ‘Compostela.’⁵ Immediately afterwards this invention of the grave, an important cult dedicated to James took off (Fletcher 1984: 56–57). The *Reconquista* as a movement for re-establishing the unity of Christianity began in the Asturia-Galicia kingdom, stimulated by a new holy place that received a level of sacredness close to that of Rome.

The ‘retrieval’ of James’ grave in what is now Santiago was described as a ‘re-finding’ in order to stress that this was not an invention *ex nihilo*, but that James had indeed been buried there in the first century. This new narrative was in fact a claim against the Muslim occupiers proving that Spain had already been Christian territory where earlier James had done missionary work himself. Subsequently, passion and translation stories on James were invented to endorse the burial discourse. The earliest texts were collected in the famous 12th century *Liber Sancti Jacobi* or *Codex Calixtinus*. With these mythical narratives, most relevant ingredients were available to ensure the growth of this eccentric situated town, turning it into the third largest sanctuary in the Christian World at the time, after Jerusalem and Rome. The Middle Ages constituted the heyday of the Santiago sanctuary.

³Cf. the theories of Barreiro Rivas (1999: 179–194), who brings up intriguing ideas in this regard, but undermines his views through ex post speculative constructions, lacking supportive data.

⁴This early geographical ultimate designation of the region seems to be a precursory depiction of what later was used as and applied to the coastal place Finisterre (‘finis terrae’).

⁵From ‘compostum’ (burial) and the suffix ‘illa’ (little) (Fletcher 1984: 59). The word ‘Compostela’ was later also incorrectly explained as being a derivation of ‘Campus Stellae’ (=field of stars), in order to align Santiago’s name with its Milky Way myth, the idea of the Camino as a mirror of the (movement of the) stars of the galaxy.

Santiago—and the roads to it—appealed so much to the imagination of the Christian world that ‘Santiago’ became the representation of the archetypal representation of pilgrimage. Its iconographic program—from scallop shell to pilgrim’s staff—became a generic symbol embodying ‘pilgrimage’ and ‘pilgrim.’ It was Dante Alighieri who in 1295 universalized the Santiago pilgrimage by writing: ‘No one is a pilgrim unless they go to or from the shrine of Saint James’ (Dante 2012). Dante explained that the word ‘pilgrim’ was used in his lifetime particularly for those who went to Santiago because, as was said, no apostle shrine was further away from home, as it seemed to be situated at the end of the world. Such views on Santiago have created a leading universal concept on pilgrimage which is still at work today for pilgrimage, in general, and for the Santiago wayfarer in particular.

2.2 Revitalizing St. James and His Camino

Despite or maybe because of Santiago’s sacrosanct status, the Reformation affected Santiago strongly and initiated a sharp decline in the glory and pre-eminence of this state-of-the-art pilgrimage site in the following centuries. Because of the steady drop of pilgrims from northern, reformed countries, Santiago lost its leading international position. Moreover, Santiago’s dominant saintly position in Spain itself was threatened by the rise of the devotion for Teresa of Avila (Rowe 2011). Ultimately, in the 19th century, the emergence of a strongly centralized Spanish nation-state pushed Santiago even further back to an eccentric, regional position. In 1879 the Archbishop of Santiago claimed that the bones of St. James were found anew, this time right under his cathedral. It was the beginning of a revaluation of the position of St. James within the Spanish nation (Pack 2010). Santiago’s fame and attraction value as a major international place of pilgrimage, however, would not recover before the second half of the 20th century.

Eventually, in the 1970s, the Santiago pilgrimage slowly began to transform again.⁶ Initially stimulated by a growing interest in the medieval art and architecture found along the route and through new publications about the history and the related myths of the Saint James cult, the buried collective memory of a once great European pilgrimage to the grave of the famed apostle was unearthed, revitalized, and reshaped in the way we know it today.

The primary roots for the recent revival of the pilgrimage, however, can even be traced back decades earlier. The fascination for the figure of Saint James and his former cult ignited when a Galician born politician, Francisco Franco,⁷ was in need of an effective ally during the Spanish civil war (1936–1939) against the government of the second Spanish Republic. Within Catholic Spain the person of

⁶How slowly this went comes to the fore in the booklet of religion scholar Iso Baumer who wrote in 1978 an overview on contemporary forms of pilgrimage in which Santiago is emphatically missing (Baumer 1978).

⁷Born in the city of Ferrol, not far from Santiago.

saintly warrior James was still present in the shared memory of the nation and inextricably connected to the early medieval 'liberation' war against the Moors. The initial catalyst for the reanimation of the Camino was thus a mundane one, as Franco appropriated the St. James cult in a political way and stimulated its historiography.⁸ He wanted to identify himself to the nation through the valiant national saintly knight who could connect him personally to a glorious past by mobilizing James again to help unify the population and 'save' Spain (cf. Rowe 2011). In remembrance of his subsequent victory in the civil war, Franco later gave himself—during the Santiago Jubilee of 1954—a central role in the celebration. The cult was 'National-Catholicized,' legitimizing the political regime (de Busser 2008: 43–46). In his speech during a solemn pontifical mass in Santiago's cathedral in the presence of many national, civil, and religious authorities, Franco again praised Spain's crusading spirit, inspired by St. James on behalf of the Church, especially during the civil war. Therefore, Franco rendered St. James a national money offering following the tradition presented on the altar in a gold cup (Starkie 1957: 316–319). As a successful warrior, James was praised, paid, and subsequently raped by national politics.

This political focus on St. James as a national patron and saviour, generated new interest in the history of Santiago and Galicia. New research and publications on the St. James cult were the result. In the 1960s, the Camino as a historic and artistic ensemble of landscape and buildings had already been brought to the state's attention. It was the first official acknowledgment of the physical remains of the cult as regional and national heritage. Parallel to that development, across the northern border, France's own Santiago-connected medieval heritage was found to be at least equally rich, and it became valorized by (art-) historians, who strongly stimulated interest in the four historical French routes of the Camino.⁹

But still, while long-distance walking pilgrimages to Santiago had practically disappeared within and outside Spain, the English traveler-writer Henry Morton passed Roncesvalles (once the major Camino crossing of the Pyrenees) in the same year as Franco's appropriation of St. James. Morton observed that the border crossing village 'never has been more desolate than it is today. The last armies were Napoleon's; the last pilgrims were infinitely more remote' (Morton 1955: 281–282). Morton had a good eye for ritual and religion; he didn't notice any

⁸See on the awarded '*Premio Caudillo*' the contribution of Manuel Vilar (this volume).

⁹The Société des Amis de Saint Jacques de Compostelle, already founded in 1950, started to organize pilgrimages on foot or horseback (Pack 2010: 364). Although Romain Roussel published his *Les pèlerinages à travers les siècles* in the jubilee year 1954, it was Raymond Oursel who provoked a broader interest in the cultural heritage of Santiago in France with his book *Les pèlerins du moyen âge* (1963) in the series titles '*Resurrection du Passé*,' a naming that would prove to be truly providential.

trekking pilgrims along the Camino Francés.¹⁰ Morton's perception of remoteness and emptiness was, however, going to be altered. The double jubilee of 1954—for Mary as well as for St. James—also brought the Irish scholar, Catholic, and 'Celt', Walter Starkie, to Santiago.¹¹ Unlike Morton, it was not his first time in Santiago, which allowed him to make comparisons with his earlier visits. He noticed that three decades earlier the feast of St. James had still been confined to Galician or North-Spanish visitors, but that he hardly recognized Santiago this time. Starkie describes how the politically incited 1954 celebration displayed a triumphal character that reminded him of a reenactment of the pilgrimage and the *pompa* of medieval Santiago (Fig. 2.1).

This extraordinary, politically instrumentalized pilgrimage jubilee indeed attracted many more pilgrims, partly on foot, although those who came from outside Santiago nearly all arrived by air, train, car or bus, a way of traveling that had become a mainstream pilgrimage practice in modern Europe (Starkie 1957: 315–316). In his pensive prose, Starkie expressed his dislike of this progress of modernity in transportation which to his mind had torn the idea of pilgrimage away from its medieval roots. He deplored that and perceived it now as a:

modern enterprise, by facilitating rapid mass travel and eliminating dangers, discomforts and delays on the way to the shrines of the saints, has created the cult of 'pilgrimages without tears' for the million, which is in complete antithesis to the original idea of pilgrimage (Starkie 1957: 323).

Starkie displayed a romantically inspired criticism of the modern pilgrim as 'robotlike,' 'pampered,' and 'too sociable,' for whom travels are supervised by confraternities and tourist organizations to avoid any unforeseen adventure, pejorative comments which are still common today. It made him contemplate and put his hopes on a revitalization of the 'real' (Medieval) pilgrimage, on the lonely waifs and strays who forsake fast-moving, supervised pilgrimages to go suffering instead as wandering and reflective souls on the long, toilsome journey on the Way of St. James (1957: 323–324). Against all odds, given the advance of modernity, Starkie longed for a world where individualized spiritual wandering characterized by silence, meditation, contemplation, and healing solitude would regain relevance (1957: 81–85). The rest is history.

Starkie proved to be not the only one disappointed by the loss of 'traditional' pilgrimaging, although he may have been the first who clearly articulated the potentiality of the religious cultural heritage symbolically represented by Santiago and its historical Camino routes. Before he died in 1976, Starkie could experience

¹⁰This observation is not valid for very important dates, like the jubilee and Marian year 1954. Regular foot pilgrimages did exist in those days, but only during the week of Saint James' feast day (25 July) when pilgrims arrived on foot from the surrounding Galician region. This observation does not imply that in the first half of the 20th century there were never any (foreign) individuals who made the whole journey on foot or by car, as there always have been; various accounts do verify this, but these are the exceptions, like e.g. Starkie 1957: 315, who went there in 1954 and three times before 1930.

¹¹See on Starkie: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Starkie.

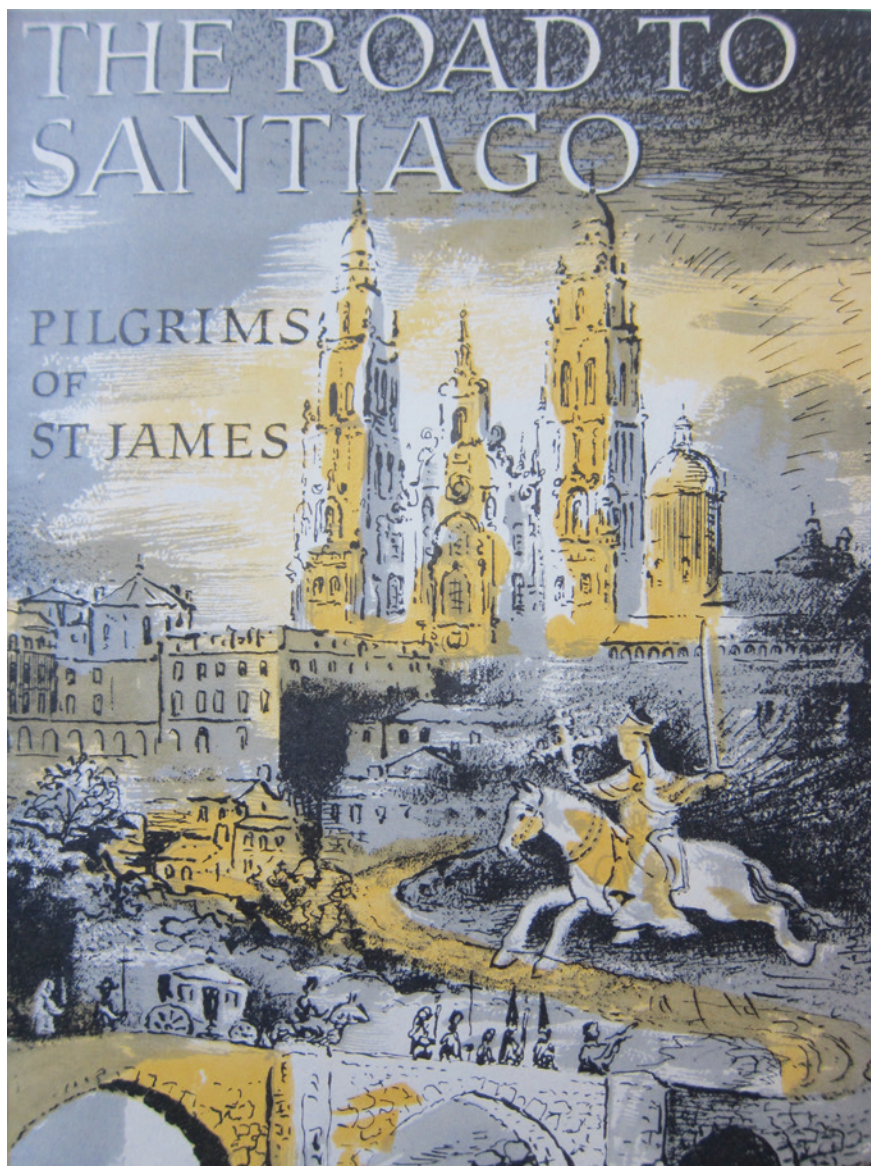


Fig. 2.1 Cover of the book of Walter Starkie on Santiago and the Camino, published in 1957

in hindsight how the seventies proved to be the pivotal point when the popularity of individual walks and long distance foot pilgrimages to Santiago started to revive again. Newly organized groups of ‘friends of the Camino’ started to organize walks, often dressed in imitative medieval outfit, although most still went by car. The walking revival picked up speed after the massive success of a historically

contextualized account by two French journalists who walked to Santiago in 1977. For the first time, a broad-based, modern audience was now drawn into the fascinating narrative of medieval pilgrimage and, more importantly, into the possibilities to re-enact such an endeavor personally in the present day. Nancy Frey's terming of a 'reanimation'—bringing in 'anima' or soul—to the Camino is then well chosen for this era of renewed life for the 'medieval' Camino, which had lost its old spirit or better its ancient appearance during the 19th and first half of the 20th century (Frey 1998: 237).¹² A comparable process related to what became called the Camino Finisterre was about to develop two decades later. While the popular animation of the Finisterre track would take off in the 1990s, the spiritual and mythical aspects of its destination had already been explicated in various publications of a mythic or esoteric genre.

2.3 Roots of Religious and Spiritual Pluralism

The revival of de Camino de Santiago and, subsequently, the continuation to Finisterre have to be explained in context of the changes in the cultural and religious-spiritual paradigms of modern Western Europe. Since the 1970s Santiago and its international Camino network had been increasingly connected to spiritually, esoterically, and ideologically inspired communities and life worlds in Europe. Those appropriated in part the pilgrimage and its tracks in order to connect them with new meanings. While the Camino at that point could be described as a 'proper' Christian pilgrims' way, new competing spiritualities became increasingly related to the pilgrimage. In those years, the Catholic Church—with its Vatican II 'revolution' having just been completed—was still wondering how to deal with popular religion as expressed in saint cults and pilgrimages. The Church again started to recognize the value of collectivity and evangelization in relation to pilgrimage, although without referring to Santiago (cf Bourdeau et al. 1976; Antier 1979). At the same time, the Camino was then partially appropriated on a more individual level by those interested in history, heritage, spirituality, and tourism. The book, *Priez pour nous à Compostelle* (published in 1978), was the major trigger for creating 'Christian' awareness on the route and mobilizing a 'secularized' French public; it stood on older Santiago publications meant for a more limited audience positioning the pilgrimage in a wider historical and spiritual context. Such publications paved the way for the pluralist spiritual appropriation of the Camino and *a fortiori* for the success of the recent continuation towards the Galician Atlantic shore.

However, the English book that for the first time connected the cult of Santiago and its Camino to a comparative religious-spiritual spectrum in a more modern

¹²Frey applies the term 'reanimation' for the period from the 19th century on, but to me the actual (re-)animation started in the 1970s. The words reanimation or revitalisation are less appropriate for the Finisterre route as this track is, in the Jacobean sense, actually a new one.

scientific manner is much older. This classic study, *The Way of Saint James* (1920) by Georgiana King, art history professor at Bryn Mawr University, pays ample attention to chthonic and Celtic cultural elements along the route, in addition to the more traditional and dominant Christian perspective. King not only described these elements, she also related them to the cult of St. James in the chapter 'The constant worship.' This part of her book is in a programmatic way adorned with the quotation 'religions change, but the cult remains the same,' words taken from the Belgian religious scholar and freemason Goblet d'Alviella.¹³ King extensively constructs assumed relationships with a variety of chthonic and Celtic cults, Roman and Oriental religions, and Mithraic and Manichean and other alternative religious movements (King 1920: Vol. 3, 285–369). King can be considered as one of the major sources for the popular genre of pagan, esoteric, and new age books in relation to the Camino. How strongly this echoes in the present comes to the fore, for example, in her mention of the prefiguration of St. James in the person of Priscillian and his heretic Gnostic-Christian sect. Later, this presumption was elaborated upon and popularized by the eminent British historian Henry Chadwick, who concluded, not uncontroversially, that the remains in the Santiago grave belong to Priscillian and not to James (Chadwick 1976). This idea was recently picked up in a popular 2007 fictitious book by Tracy Saunders, called *Pilgrimage to Heresy*. Her view endorses the idea of a basic Gnostic principle of a superior, hidden knowledge, independent of faith, in which the origins of the Camino are assumed to be found.¹⁴ In the 1970s and 1980s such ideas were increasingly written into a new, popular mythology and various alternative discourses around 'Santiago.' In that manner the Camino network was adjusted to meet an increasing demand for individualized spiritual quests, sacred sites and alternative religious world views (Attix 2002). It is also a reflection of the beginning of what the English sociologists Heelas and Woodhead called the process of subjectivisation: a thesis to explain the spiritualization of Western culture with its new religious movements and individuals' claim to their own moral authority (Heelas and Woodhead 2005). Moreover, the magnetism of the 'spiritual' at holy places has been described as an overall quality that seems to constitute pilgrimage in most religions: 'the power of a pilgrimage shrine to attract devotees' (Preston 1992: 33). This aspect can even be discerned at a variety of seemingly secular shrines (Margry 2008) and is certainly applicable to the (re-)constructed Santiago network of the recent past. The universal attraction value of the spiritual is a major factor in the explanation of the regained popularity of Santiago and its Caminos, and especially the new Camino to *Cabo* Finisterre, among a wide variety of walkers within or outside the R.C. Church, believers or not.

In the century between King and Saunders, a wide range of books and guides were written and published by authors who elaborated on the assumptions

¹³On the alleged relationship between freemasons and Santiago, see Young, *Sacred sites of the Knights Templar* (2003).

¹⁴King (1920: Vol. 3, 316); cf. on the Priscillian 'link,' Van Herwaarden (2003: 352–353); Henry Chadwick (1976); Saunders (2007).

expressed by King and others. They started to relate the Camino to all kinds of legends and myths, or they came up with new ideas and speculations themselves. That development is the second major source for the popularity of the esoteric (or ‘New Age’) genre in relation to the Santiago-Finisterre pilgrimage. The genre started to blossom parallel to the revival of the Camino in the 1970s. In that regard, Paulo Coelho’s autobiographical book *The Pilgrimage*, on finding one’s own path and on self-discovery, also exercised with its global success influence as a parallel quest for ‘ancient wisdom’ emanating from the Camino (Coelho 1995).

In the formation of alternative ‘Camino’ interpretations, ‘mystery’ author Louis Charpentier exercised a strong influence.¹⁵ In 1971 he wrote the first Camino-related esoteric bestseller: *Les Jacques et le mystère de Compostelle*. In this book he depicts the Catholic Camino as the heir of a former (pre-)Christian worksite route. He interpreted the Camino as an extended prehistoric worksite, as a way-like ‘university’ for the ‘master builders’ of the megalithic works who developed the knowledge necessary to create the petroglyphs, dolmen, and, during the Middle Ages, the cathedrals which are to be found in supposedly akin forms along the route.¹⁶ He presents the Camino as a universal initiation-trail into knowledge. The book enjoyed great popularity and was translated into Spanish (1973) and German (1979). These editions made a Europe-wide audience familiar with various esoteric theories and speculations brought into relation with the Camino.¹⁷ The emphasis on the megalithic and Celtic culture in such international publications brought Galicia’s Celtic past, especially along the route to Finisterre, into focus (Fig. 2.2).

2.4 The Making of a Camino Finisterre

What is currently called *Camiño Fisterra*¹⁸ in Galician or Camino Finisterre in Spanish is a walking path of approximately 90 km originating in the town of Santiago on the west side. At a bifurcation after the village of Olveiroa leading to either Finisterre or to Muxía, two old villages situated on the Atlantic coast, with Finisterre being by far the most popular destination for contemporary walkers, pilgrims and tourists.

¹⁵For an example of that influence in practice see Aviva (2001: xi–xii).

¹⁶Apart from 1920, he seems to have been influenced by Peake (1919).

¹⁷These ideas crept into novels, guides and websites. The most popular spin-off is Henri Vincenot’s fiction, *The Prophet of Compostela. A Novel of Apprenticeship and Initiation* (1995); on related conspiracy discourses see the following quote: ‘Today, El Camino Santiago is a Christian pilgrimage, but Christianity didn’t invent the route. In fact, like many of Christianity’s holidays and rituals, the Church usurped and repackaged ancient pagan traditions and called them Christian. It’s El Camino’s dirty little secret’, at: <http://francistapon.com/Travels/Spain-Trails/10-Reasons-Why-El-Camino-Santiago-Sucks>, accessed 31 October 2012.

¹⁸As in this context the Finisterre destination is usually considered ‘the real end of the journey,’ physically and religiously and historically (cf. Raju 2009: iv), I will usually abbreviate as ‘Camino Finisterre,’ although also a second track leads towards Muxía. I follow the most often used spelling in English: ‘Finisterre—Muxía’.



Fig. 2.2 Cover of the German translation of Louis Charpentier's book of 1971, one of the sources for pre-Christian Camino system mythologies. *Source* Peter Jan Margry

Although all branches of the international Camino system are named after their region of departure, this is remarkably *not* the case for the Camino Finisterre, which leads, as it is usually perceived at present, in an opposite direction, away from Santiago. Because of this contrary direction and contrary movement of the

walkers, and its non-Christian connotations, the track is not acknowledged by the Catholic Church. Therefore, in its western direction it does not form a part of the official Saint James pilgrim-ways network.¹⁹ The archdiocese of Santiago, the highest authority on the Jacobean pilgrimage, states apodictically and without any further comment on its website: 'The pilgrimage to Santiago ends at the Tomb of Saint James in the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela.'²⁰ Within Catholic theology this is logical, as the shrine of St. James is the sacred destination par excellence in Santiago where a (Catholic) pilgrim has traveled to for so long. Consequently, the Church will not stimulate a pilgrimage continuation after Santiago, based on a non-Christian narrative. It also will not provide a successful walker with an additional recognition of accomplishment (the *Compostela*) as the Church does for those arriving in Santiago.²¹ Moreover, because of continuous public discussion concerning the status of this track, the normative stance has also recently implicitly been expressed in the annual statistics of the *Oficina de peregrinos*.²² In 2011 the office changed the statistical format by also registering the number of pilgrims arriving via the various sub-Caminos leading towards Santiago; therefore, a Camino Finisterre is now explicitly mentioned, but only with the mention of not having more than 202 pilgrims.²³ To interpret this very low figure correctly, one must take into account that this represents the number of those walking only in a real 'camino,' that is, in the direction *towards* Santiago. It implies that up till now the Church does endorse the existence of an official Camino Finisterre, but *only* in the West-East direction and not in the more popular East-West direction where over 20,000 travelers continue to the 'real' ending after their arrival in Santiago.²⁴

Some guides make the position of the church immediately clear in the first line: the ending of the Jacobean pilgrimage is in Santiago. However, Brierley's

¹⁹The other way around, from Finisterre to Santiago it does, as this was and still is one of the old routes towards Santiago. But East-West is different as the Camino ends in Santiago and a continuation to Finisterre was never formally regarded as an extension of the Camino (Francés). As already mentioned when speaking of the Camino, Finisterre-Muxía is the eighth route of pilgrimage to Compostela. Although not recognized by the Office of the Pilgrim, by not considering religious, is the second most important way after the French as to the volume of pilgrims is concerned. Almost 30 % since reaching Compostela, continue their journey towards Finisterre and/or Muxía.

²⁰<http://peregrinosantiago.es/eng/faqs/>, accessed 1 August 2012.

²¹Bars and hotels along the route created an alternative stamp system and brevet: the Finisterrana.

²²I have tried to get also an answer from the Church authorities by asking them how, as a pilgrim has to understand the position of the Camino Finisterre. On August 1, 2012 I send emails to the Archdiocese, the Pilgrims office and the Acogida Cristiana for the Camino, but did not get any answer.

²³See: www.peregrinosantiago.es/esp/wp-content/uploads/informes/peregrinaciones2011.pdf, accessed 1 August 2012. In 2012, 144 started in Finisterre and 273 in Muxía, see: <http://www.peregrinosantiago.es/esp/wp-content/uploads/informes/peregrinaciones2012.pdf>.

²⁴Parga-Dans (2012: 4), Fig. 20 based on issued *Fisterranas*, which will be lower to the amount of people who actually went along the trail; let alone all those who arrive (also by other means or by other motifs) in Finisterre.

guidebook states apodictically that in earlier times pilgrims continued to the coast, a route 'rich in pagan rites and rituals.' The guide then recycles the presumed related traditions and reinforces existing ideas that this route has become a Camino in itself by sanctification through all people passing on it towards Finisterre and Muxía. It is obvious that the construction of this Camino has been strongly stimulated by new discourses presented in the walking guides, created to underpin the authenticity of the trail and destination. Most current texts hypothesize that the most frequent continuation in the past was the one to Finisterre.²⁵ This is, however, not the historical truth, as this was true only for Padrón.

The idea of a Camino leading to Finisterre is created in various ways. Three major lines of narrative are important: partly dealing with nature, partly historical (related to the religious practices of Spanish and foreign pilgrims in the Middle Ages), and partly dealing with myths and legends connected or attributed to the region, especially to Finisterre.

The attraction of Finisterre from a natural and historical perspective can be ascertained at different levels. Its stunning natural position at the ocean represents a universal value, an elevated place at the edge of the continent—the *Cabo*—where one can watch the sun 'die' in the sea. In any case, the cliff is the second most visited site of Galicia, just after the Santiago cathedral itself (and, in this perspective, it also competes with the Church). The naming of the town, an 'end-of-the-world'-site, has always been intriguing and attractive to people. The cliff is thus not only visited by walkers and pilgrims; it also attracts all kinds of tourists, including many inhabitants from Galicia itself. Recent guidebooks regularly refer to this by bringing up the ideas of the 'Atlántico misterioso' and the 'dark sea', whether or not in relation to the Celtic legend of the 'sea of the dead' (Vazquez de Parga et al. 1992: Vol. 2, 408). In many texts the lure of the sea is depicted as this point's major attraction.

The current historical narrative deals with the two local sanctuaries that came into being in medieval Finisterre: a combined one where both Santa María das Areas and the Santo Cristo de Finisterre were venerated in the church of Santa María das Areas, and the former hermitage of San Guillermo towards the cape, which was considered as sacred and curative.²⁶ The popularity of the two shrines made a local guesthouse necessary, constructed in 1469, for those who came to visit. A rather precise account from the French lord Nopar de Caumont of his journey to Santiago in 1417 elucidates the differentiation between the two sacred Galician sites—Santiago and Finisterre—in a historical perspective. *Notre Dame de Finibus Terre* is categorized as an independent pilgrimage destination, but increasingly regarded as important enough for Jacobean pilgrims for an additional side visit after having fulfilled their vows in the Cathedral of Santiago. Within the judicial practice of the Low Countries, Finisterre was regarded as an independent pilgrimage destination where (apart from Santiago and many other destinations) convicted citizens were sentenced to perform an imposed pilgrimage (Van

²⁵Fox example in the oldest Finisterre guide, Raju (2009: iii).

²⁶In nearby Muxía, a Marian shrine also came into being, called Our Lady of the Boat, da Barca.

Herwaarden 2003). Nopar described the Finisterre shrine as a major Marian sanctuary situated on the cape at the sea.²⁷ Even the 12th century *Liber Sancti Jacobi* had recommended the collateral benefit of visiting confining sanctuaries while traveling towards Santiago (Vielliard 1963: 79–83). Later accounts, for example one by the Italian Domenico Laffi who voyaged to Galicia in 1670, endorse this view. Laffi wrote in his elaborate diary that he visited Finisterre for its own shrines, but he does not hint about any relationship with the Santiago cult (Laffi 1998:181–184). In another way, however, for English, Irish, or Flemish Santiago pilgrims who arrived by boat in the harbor of Finisterre and continued there on foot towards the grave of Saint James, Finisterre also has functioned as a transit harbor site during the later Middle Ages (Vazquez de Parga et al. 1992: Vol. 2, 37).²⁸

It is anyway evident that the historical sources do not consider Finisterre to be a continuation after Santiago, in connection to St. James. However, they did consider the Saint James shrine in Padrón, about twenty kilometers south of Santiago, to be a complementary and ‘necessary’ destination. Padrón is the town where the legendary arrival of Saint James’ body supposedly took place. The mooring stone to which the funerary boat is said to have been fixed is still an object of veneration in the local parish church (Häbler 1899: 75–76; Vielliard 1963: 138).

This leads to the conclusion that since the existence of the Jacobean shrine in Santiago there has never been a coastal camino or a continuation in the *Jacobean sense* towards Finisterre or Muxía. The (post) medieval attestations of people going from Santiago to the ocean are related to visits for other shrines or because of their longing for the Atlantic sunset.

Although this conclusion might fit the historical past, many older and recent stories, myths, and legends about the Galician geography and Galicia’s religious and spiritual past emphatically suggest such a connection. These narratives make equal contributions to our (modern) history and have created an intricate entanglement with newly generated ‘truths’ about what Santiago and its Camino’s could also stand for. Therefore, it is relevant to take these narratives into account for the Finisterre research project.

A strong boost in the modern linking of Finisterre and Santiago has been realized as a result of the stream of dedicated Camino publications since the 1970s.²⁹ Before 1970 guidebooks did not mention Finisterre as an actual *destination* in relation to the Camino. In 1971, Finisterre pops up in one of the earliest dedicated modern popular Compostela guides, one that was also translated into English. For this guidebook a revival of the Camino as a pilgrimage trail was not yet obvious.

²⁷Vielliard (1963: 133, 138); based on this account, Finisterre is sometimes mistakenly regarded as continuation of the Camino, e.g. in the Europalia catalogue *Santiago de Compostela. 1000 jaar Europese bedevaart*. Gent: Centrum voor kunst en cultuur, 1985, p. 175.

²⁸See, for example, the text of a bulla of Calixtus III of 6 September 1457 in which pilgrims for Santiago passing Muxía may also profit from the indulgences for the local shrine of Our Lady. On boat pilgrims: Viaene (1982: 251–255).

²⁹It was not before the (mid) 1960s that dedicated (art-tourist) guides, route signage and Compostela-certificates came into being, see Pack 2010: 362–363.

It just stated that in those years the common route was becoming an important 'tourist route' and needed a 'modern' guide to make Europe's 'First Tourist trail' known (Arrondo 1971: 4). However, *Route to Santiago* describes the Camino as a tourist trail that has the *capacity* to 'spiritualize modern mankind', something which 'this era of materialism', according to the foreword, especially would need (Arrondo 1971: 4). The foreword reflects the rise of a consumer society in Spain and the spiritual disorientation due to the religious 'revolution' of the long 1960s in the whole of Europe. The practical information part of the guide was thus neither in line with an upcoming walking or pilgrimaging trend as, apart from hotels, it only mentions petrol stations. Author Eusebio Arrondo, member of the association *Los Amigos del Camino de Santiago*, did not exaggerate about the spiritualizing capacities of the Camino. He himself noted that although the traditional Santiago pilgrimage involved a formal Catholic sort of continuation only to Padrón, he already brought up Finisterre as a possibly far more interesting destination, as a place being 'pregnant with mythological mysteries' (Arrondo 1971: 157–159). Arrondo presumed that the location of the former Celtic altar of the sun with its rituals and the enchantment of a daily dying of the sun in the sea was a better offer for the new, upcoming 'spiritual' generations of visitors. Arrondo sounds here like a child of his time; he could have had knowledge (although he does not give any references) of Louis Charpentier's book that was published the same year, in which the idea of a pre-Christian trail leading towards the Atlantic had already been mentioned.³⁰ The use of the 'pregnancy' metaphor is, with hindsight, meaningful because from that period on literature connecting Finisterre with its historical and imagined past to Santiago would start to flourish.

Charpentier not only positioned the Camino within a new esoteric context, he also brought up ancient 'secrets' by 'revealing'—inventing—a thousand-year-old pre-Christian pilgrims' route to the west in Galicia. He assumed that this road formed part of a trans-European network linking two other ancient pilgrim ways through the continent: a Mid-France track leading to another 'end of the world,' namely Bretagne-Finisterre, and a southern English route connecting to the Stonehenge complex. These routes linked a supposedly ancient megalithic civilization and their shrines with the Atlantic. Subsequently, other esoterically inspired books started to expand and recycle the presumed atavistic aspects and qualities of Finisterre: the mysterious 'end of the world' and its 'sea of the dead' in combination with myths related to antiquity, for example about the presence of a sun altar and related rituals (Morín and Cobreros 1976: 378–380). Charpentier's idea of an initiation route also resonates in a book by Morín and Cobreros. The Spanish authors perceive the route as one that has been in use for thousands of years, one that forms an indigenous tool to (re-) discover oneself in a metaphysical manner. The route is presented as a way to transform oneself without the necessity of adopting Eastern spiritualities (like zen or yoga) and becoming freed from

³⁰The idea of an older 'alternative' Camino is inserted as a 'historical fact' in Domínguez García's (2012) biased lemma on St. James in Brill's encyclopedia on pilgrimage.

materialism, consumption, and modern mediatisation by physical spiritual activity (Morín and Cobreros 1976: 383–386). It presages the common wording contemporary walkers use to describe the qualities of the present Camino network. Later on, in an article not without bias, Domínguez García stated that it would have been the Spanish writer and political anarchist Fernando Sánchez Dragó who identified in his book *Historia Mágica* the ‘historical’ esoteric Camino (Domínguez García 2012; Sánchez Dragó 1999). Actually, with his gnosticism based on unwritten Celtic and pagan legends and again the symbols in romanesque art along the route he builds on earlier publications, although as a known person he has put the esoteric issue better on the Spanish map.

The recent establishment of an additional Camino Finisterre is rather well documented. After all the spiritual ‘preparatory work’ expressed in esoteric publications, the market was prepared to go ahead along such lines. It is not coincidental that one of the oldest New Age communities in the world, Lindfarm in Scotland, became the producer of the major guide describing the new spiritual path towards Finisterre (Brierley 2003/9). Although there always were individual walkers, often from Germany, England, or other Northern countries, who traveled to the sea and the sun at Finisterre and who applied some initial markings to the then still un-plotted route,³¹ the rising interest of (foreign) walkers became indirectly clear with the appearance of the first dedicated description directing to Finisterre in 1992. This publication in the series by the pro-active English Saint James Confraternity was initially no more than a flyer with hints for walkers on how to reach Finisterre; it did not suggest that the route was a part of the network of Santiago-related Caminos (Raju 1992). How new the initiative was, is illustrated by comparing it with a Spanish Santiago guide from those years, the *Guía Mágica*, which is dedicated to the final part of the Camino, including a special addition for Finisterre (Aracil 1991: 130–132). This additional chapter, however, still did not make any mention of a prolongation of the path or provide any information on its spiritual potential: it only has a short description of the manifold reiterated myths on the sun cults and the Celts. It was local historian Antón Pombo who already in 1989 brought up the Finisterre route as an ‘essential’ continuation of the Jacobean pilgrimage and pleaded for retrieval and signalization of the paths (Pombo 1989, 1997). For him the traditional connection was interrupted due to the decline of the Santiago pilgrimage after the Reformation.

One manner of trying to retrieve a presumed old track was for those authors the search for reminiscences of Saint James. As patron saint of Galicia (and Spain), it is not difficult to find James represented everywhere; therefore, it is easy to create a lineage through the countryside that is totally ‘Jacobean’—a practice that is also known in areas outside of Spain to invent or construct regional Caminos.³²

³¹For them, the English Saint James Confraternity published already made a flyer in 1992 written by Alison Raju titled: *Some hints for walkers*. Cf. Alonso Romero (1993a: 123–124) which mentions foreign pilgrims who marked the presumed track around Hospital with yellow paint in 1992.

³²See for example Grabow (2010) and Margry (1994).

The Galician author Fernando Alonso Romero endorses the view that the general interest shift towards walking to Finisterre took place during the first half of the 1990s, and he claims his personal agency in that process within the region: 'Before the publication of my book on the Finisterre Way neither the regional government nor the tourist institutions of Galicia were very interested in that Way.'³³ After June 1993, when Alonso Romero published his book *Camino de Fisterra*, including a reconstructive description of the possible route, things quickly started to change with the involvement of regional institutional actors (Alonso Romero 1993a: 116–128). At that time, Alonso Romero was already a professor of English philology at the University of Santiago, having a special personal interest in the (Celtic) history and traditions of Galicia and their relationship with Irish culture.³⁴ On his Galician project he writes: 'My incentive to research the Finisterre Way was to study the pagan origins of the Way of St James (...) on the ancient stimulus that [was] Christianized in Mediaeval times.'³⁵ He was not the first Galician writing about pagan and Celtic questions, as that had already been done by 'nationalistic 19th century authors from the region (Herrero 2009: 165–167). However, it was Alonso Romero's popular publication relating it to the Camino network, combined with increasing foreign interest in this area, which helped to accelerate the process. This development urged the Church to publish a 'caveat' brochure in the same year in which the presumed Jacobean ending in Finisterre was described as 'mistaken, irrational, and un-Christian' (Aviva 2001: xiv).

By bringing Alonso Romero's book to the market as a trilingual production, the publisher did not only intend to reach a regional market, but he also aimed for an international audience. Moreover, by titling the book *Camino de Fisterra*, Alonso Romero more or less coined the path in the Jacobean tradition, although with the presumption of an older pagan pilgrimage tradition. Within the context of the success of the European Jacobean Camino network, the publication triggered the imagination of local and regional parties on how to commodify Galicia's past and stimulate its natural, spiritual, tourist, and recreational potential (Herrero 2008; Santos 2002; Tilson 2005).

Alonso Romero wanted to underpin the pagan origins of the Christian Camino in an academic and cultural way. He was, however, not the first to postulate continuity with a pre-Christian road or an 'ancestral' pilgrim way, as the aforementioned Charpentier had already postulated such ideas already in the 1970s. Alonso Romero summarized his viewpoint:

Let me say that in ancient times the Cape of Finisterre was the remotest and most westerly point of the known world. Man from early times, conceived of it as a close link with the

³³Email exchange between Alonso Romero and Margry, 30–31 July 2012.

³⁴Like a second Thor Heyerdahl, Alonso Romero tried in 1977, unsuccessfully, to [re]create the 'Atlantic relationship' between Galicia and Britain/Ireland by crossing the sea in the Iron-Age boat 'Breogan', named after a Celtic chief, made of wicker and hides, see Stone (1978: 218–222).

³⁵Email exchange between Alonso Romero and Margry, 30–31 July 2012.

Great Beyond, a link with the Celtic Other World which the people living on the Atlantic coast imagined as existing on some island to the west which they called the Land of Eternal Youth because time, illness and death were unknown to its inhabitants and happiness was eternal. The origin of the so called Island of the Eternal Youth, or Paradise, lies in the beliefs of our ancestors, the Indo-Europeans; beliefs which were related to the daily movement of the sun across the sky and its descent every evening towards the west and disappearance below the horizon of the sea at nightfall. So it is understood that even from early times man had an overwhelming desire to see where the known world ended, because the threshold of the Great Beyond was found there, in that place far out to sea where the sun hid itself and where, it was supposed, lay Paradise. Hence the attraction which Land's End on all the Atlantic coasts has always held for man, and especially the Finisterre of Galicia to where that multitude of stars forming the Milky Way leads us. This is a celestial reflection of the earthly path taken by medieval pilgrims which later became the Way of St James, but which had already appeared in the beliefs of the Pythagoreans when they said that souls had to follow this celestial path in order to enter into the Other World or Kingdom of Pluto...³⁶

Alonso Romero perceived the presence of Bronze Age rock carvings along the track as the most important artifacts for the discovery of the route's origin. That origin was his main goal next to establishing the pagan origins and the 'other world', the island of paradise beyond the seas, where the sun goes every day. The roads were required to lead to paradise, and the invention of Santiago was necessary to bring the different pilgrims roads together and lead them towards Finisterre.³⁷ Others have elaborated on the Celtic discourse of the Camino.³⁸ The dissemination of such stories also converted scholarly authors seeking a truth that 'reveals a deeper kind of meaning' (Aviva 2001: xix).

Moreover, the construction of this Camino could also build on connections of what has become known as 'New Age' spiritualities. Inspired by the long pilgrim-age tradition and archeological findings from a Celtic past, books started to appear in which the pre- and non-Christian aspects of Galicia and the Camino are brought up in order to find new explanations for the seemingly 'mysterious' presence of a Camino. This Camino is equated to an earthly Milky Way, which has endured for such a long period, attracting people from all over the world and, therefore, seemingly having universal qualities and importance. Frey had already discovered that the few persons she interviewed traveling to the coast in the mid 1990s (then still by bus) were strongly motivated by the Celtic past of Finisterre (Frey 1998: 175–176).

The Celtic question on the presence and culture of the Celts in Galicia is a long-standing and much debated issue (López Cuevillas 1953). In a historical perspective some mention of Celts is found in classical sources and mostly traced back to old place names and archeological findings. The available classical sources refer to the region

³⁶Email exchange between Alonso Romero and Margry, 30–31 July 2012.

³⁷Interview of Fernando Alonso Romero in Santiago, October 8, 2012. For him the Galician Atlantic sanctuary of San Andrés de Teixido or 'Andrés do cabo do mondo' also played an important role in the ancient spiritual world of the Celts in Galicia. See also Alonso Romero (1993b, 2002, 2005).

³⁸For example, Antón Bouzas Sierra, Aportaciones para una reinterpretación astronómica de Santiago de Compostela, in: *Anuario Brigantino* 2009, no 32: 47–92, see: <http://anuariobrigantino.betanzos.net/Ab2009PDF/2009%20INDICE.htm>.

only in a minimal way. The promontory (cape) of Finisterre was cited by Pliny as *Artabrum*, *Nerium*, or in this context in a self-explanatory way, as *Celticum* (Pliny 77; MacBean 1773). The actual cape where the supposed ‘Celtic’ sun altar is often situated was, however, according to Ptolemaeus, located on the Mongia promontory, next to the present Muxía (Ferrarius 1677: 57; Medico 1611: 494) (Fig. 2.3).



Fig. 2.3 Italian graffiti on one of the road signs, stating ‘towards the end of the world’. *Source* Peter Jan Margry

Many modern authors have postulated the idea that the entire world at that time regarded Finisterre as ‘the extreme tip of the world’, the most remote part of Europe. This is something that could not be established for many centuries, and ultimately it did not even prove to be true. This idea reflects an *ex post* local insiders’ perspective. However, it is obvious that the proper naming of the place—Finisterre—inspired many to speculate about its meaning and past. The name alone generated a vast repertoire of myths projecting its history far into prehistoric times. The use of a wide variety of folkloristic material ‘helps us to understand all the better the mysterious attraction the headland of Finisterre had in ancient times,’ Alonso Romero explained (1993a: 109). But even the name Finisterre is not old, and we don’t know anything about its attraction on people at the time. The name Finisterre is relatively new and is not mentioned in any source before 1199, and, in that year, only in a less precise, plural conjugation: ‘[iglesia de] Finibus Terre’, ‘[the church of/at] the borders of the land.’ The most probable explanation is that the name came into use in relation to the rising fame of Santiago, which attracted pilgrims and travelers who experienced, after a long journey, western Galicia to be a distant, remote region, thereby turning the broader geographical depiction into a proper place name.³⁹

2.5 The Governance Factor

Important actors in the ‘revival’ or construction of the Finisterre trail are the governmental and political institutions: the ‘autonomous community’ Galicia, the province A Coruña, and, at the basic level, the local administrators of the trail-related municipalities. These bodies were and are eager to revalorize and promote the various qualities of Galicia reflected in its landscapes and cultural heritage from a ‘nationalistic’ perspective, especially that which is connected to spirituality, ritual and festivals (Roseman et al. 2008: 79). Their principal goal was the construction and diffusion of a Galician identity on a regional, national, and international level, mainly built on the heritagization of Galicia’s nature and culture (cf. Sánchez-Carretero 2012; vide infra).

As the Camino Francés and its parallel, alternative routes through Spain are usually perceived as one integral pilgrimage system, the shorter part running through Galicia towards Santiago is a track which is less distinctive compared to other parts, because at that point the pilgrimage becomes focused on arriving in Santiago. However, the new Camino Finisterre is distinctive as it is a complete route in itself, running through Galicia’s heartland and ending at one of Galicia’s natural wonders—the *Cabo Fisterra*.⁴⁰ Moreover, because of the presumed Celtic

³⁹In other parts of Europe, remote places—not necessarily the most western situated!—are also named Fin-de-Terres, such as the priory north of Soulac at the Gironde (France).

⁴⁰See www.turgalicia.es/camino-a-fisterra-muxia-camino-de-santiago. The Xunta de Galicia published in 2008 also introduced guides on the basic rights of pilgrims, so ‘that they know their rights and the most effective way to exercise them.’



Fig. 2.4 Symbolic ('Celtic' or 'new agey') construction made of earthly materials fixed to the rocks at the end of the world: branches, feathers, shell and mast apple, kept together with rope and an elastic hair string. *Source* Peter Jan Margry

past of the region it runs through, the path has also acquired spiritual and mythical connotations (Fig. 2.4).

On the one hand, the governmental board and tourist organizations connect this route to the Christian Camino, while on the other they try to position it as an independent feature of Galicia and of human universality—a view that is a reminder of the cosmology with which Finisterre is supposed to be intertwined, for example as expressed in the writings of the above mentioned politician Barreiro Rivas (1997, 1999).

In June 1993 when Alonso Romero's book *Camino de Fisterra* appeared, Valentín Castreje, a representative of the conservative party *Partido Popular* in Finisterre and future mayor, immediately visited the author at the university to discuss possibilities for using its content. For the two successive mayors of Finisterre, Ernesto Insua (1995–1999) and the earlier mentioned Castreje (1999–2002), the book offered ample opportunities to promote their town. The same year, Alonso Romero presented his ideas to an anthropological congress in Santiago where he depicted the new trail as a Jacobean pilgrimage to Finisterre (Alonso Romero 1993a). Both mayors proved to be instrumental in broadly disseminating the idea of a 'new' Camino and in promoting Finisterre as a new, final destination for the modern Camino network at large. The Finisterre municipal website now firmly claims: 'Fin de la Tierra, fin del Camino.' In 1991, with the Xacobeo of 1993—the Santiago jubilee year—in mind, the municipality of Finisterre had already decided to invest money for propaganda

about 'Fin de la Ruta Jacobea, 'to restore the old pilgrims' track within the town limits, and to publish some texts about the Camino Finisterre (Trillo 1991).

Based on the ideas and route description that Alonso Romero worked out in his publications,⁴¹ Insua became convinced of 'the potential values of this route for the whole region, and he started to promote the track.'⁴² With the help of the *Asociación Galega de Amigos do Camiño*, a collective pilgrimage of about sixty persons was mobilized in 1997. The next year the party had grown to 130 walkers, including mayors, historians, and tourism experts. The group started after a mass with blessing in Santiago's cathedral; an ironic act perhaps, as the Church actually rejects this pilgrims' way. By walking this route from 1997 to 2000, Insua and Alonso Romero's group constituted the route and created a 'tradition.' They also started to include Muxía, as a legend had come to light that mentioned another stone boat arrival of James at that location. This story was brought up as a possible argument towards the Church to atone the new pagan track with the existing Christian Camino network. For the Church, this new sacred geography created a complicated situation. In order to reconcile the new reality—Jacobean pilgrims continuing towards the coastal towns—with the teachings of the Church, it was claimed that these were locations where James had preached as well.

The authorities involved did not make a secret about their intentions and professed openly that it was their goal to propagate a prolongation of the Camino (Trillo 1998). It proved to be a turning point in the attitudes and interests of new groups of people. It also mobilized the Galician Xunta and the Neria, the cultural and tourist Association on the Galician Costa da Morte, to help with money, volunteers and publicity to present the region as 'magical land', and to guide and map the Celtic pilgrimage (Herrero 2009: 169–171).⁴³ Moreover, in 1999 the municipality financed the re-publication of a trilingual book by Benjamin Trillo Trillo in which Finisterre and Santiago were cross-linked by showing the 'footprints of Santiago in the [pre-Christian] culture of Finisterre' (Trillo Trillo 1999). And in this way, in their aim to stimulate international esoteric walking tourism, the secular authorities openly contested the claims of the Church on defining and authorizing pilgrimage in Galicia.

Illustrative of the government's practice is that the authorities supported signage of the track by means of concrete bollards in 1996. They only indicated the 'pagan' East-West direction.⁴⁴ The municipalities also took the initiative to

⁴¹As no specific route or a route description existed before 1993, Alonso Romero based his work mainly on the remaining elements in the landscape as described in Vazques de Parga et al. (1992), see Alonso Romero (1993a: 113–114).

⁴²Alonso Romero, in his email exchange with Margry, 30–31 July 2012; cf. Insua Oliveira and Castiñeira Castro 2001.

⁴³Cf. for the combined promotional campaign of Church and government for the *Xacobeo 99*, in order to attract pilgrims and tourists on an international scale, Tilson (2005, 2006).

⁴⁴On the 'poorly marked' routes in the direction of Santiago, cf. L. Vaughan, Step by Step: Marking the Way, at: http://w.icaci.org/files/documents/ICC_proceedings/ICC2011/Oral%20Presentations%20PDF/B4-Graphical%20semiology,%20mental%20map/CO-169.pdf, accessed 31 October 2012.

provide the highly appreciated ‘pilgrimage passports’ that every walker wants to have fully stamped as proof of his or her enterprise, a supplement to the formal *Compostela* of the R.C. Church. The *Fisterra* equivalent has been issued by the municipality of Finisterre since 1997, while the Muxiana, for those who finish in Muxía, is supplied by the local tourist office.

Meanwhile, the public company Xacobeo Galicia, funded by the Xunta de Galicia, had become a key institution in the promotion and institutionalization of the Camino Finisterre. Created in 1991 Xacobeo was intended for promoting cultural tourism and services in relation to the Camino and Santiago. Later it embraced and stimulated the new route to Finisterre. It takes care for route related publications, supply pilgrimage services, manage the network of public hostels and by giving funding to the various municipalities it tries to ‘keep’ their Camino heritage alive.

By supplying information, marking trails, and making walking maps, etc., a demand was created, stimulating the creation of a tourism economy. The interconnection of grassroots and governmental organizations has not worked out very well and, increasingly, tensions have arisen between both: on the one hand, those conveying their identity, heritage, and economic policies and the ‘logic of the market’ and, on the other, associations like the friends of the Camino (AGACS) who oppose the large-scale commoditization of the route (Sánchez-Carretero 2012). This opposing-to-tourism ‘logic’ has produced all kinds of new initiatives, for example, the annual folk festival organized since the beginning of the 21st century by the local Asociación Cultural e Xuvenil Anchoa. This August festival is meant as a ‘folk’ celebration of Finisterre for being the end of the Camino de Santiago ‘since times immemorial.’

An idiosyncratic historical-centralist perspective on the function of ‘Jacobean’ Galicia has been raised by the Galician politician Barreiro Rivas. In a politically biased manner, this former vice-president of the Xunta de Galicia and secretary-general of the *Coalición Galega* tried to reconfigure the overall early religious geography of Europe in a book in which Galicia is given a central position. In 1990, after being sentenced for corruption, Barreiro Rivas was banned from politics and started to work on these ideas regarding the position of Galicia within medieval cosmology (El País 1990). In his view, pilgrimage was an extraordinary sociological phenomenon that had been instrumentalized to replace the existing classical and sacred topography with a Christian one. He equated Santiago and Finisterre as one part of a project of the Catholic Church designed to extend the Christian medieval cosmology to the extremes of the known world at that time, thereby giving Rome primacy over Byzantium. Barreiro Rivas thus claims that Santiago and its pilgrim ways network had been created as part of the idea of expanding Christianity to all the ‘finis terrae’ of medieval civilization (1999: 179–181; 1997: 253–304). Again, an instrumentalisation of the ‘mythologitive’ naming of the End. The author has been criticized for his interpretations and ‘political’ (Galician) stance; his ideas endorse however the present discourse on the connection of Finisterre with the Camino network. After his retreat from politics, Barreiro Rivas accepted a position

at the University of Santiago where he presently teaches 'The structures of Galician politics.'⁴⁵

Parallel to the regionalist-centralist thesis of Barreiro Rivas, a new transnational interest in the region's past has been raised within the European realm. This interest was initially constructed by authorities on and institutions involved with the medieval history of the Camino. It resulted in what is now called an 'authorized heritage discourse' with effects on a worldwide scale. For Laurajane Smith, this concept 'takes its cue from the grand narratives of Western national and elite class experiences, and reinforces the idea of innate cultural value tied to time depth, monumentality, expert knowledge and aesthetics' (Smith 2006: 299). This discourse created a new top down cultural concept on what pilgrimage is about. The heritage discourse was initially materially represented in the more than 1500 monuments of high historical value along the various Camino routes and, later, even more by the symbolic performative representation of stepping in the old footsteps of those who have been participating in the constituting of 'the greatest medieval pilgrimage in Europe.' Santiago again became a (Western) template of pilgrimage, of 'being pilgrim,' and of the spiritual and esoteric dimensions of walking on historic or newly created foot paths. Within this heritage discourse, the medieval visualization of St. James and the Santiago pilgrims resulted in an iconographic program with fixed attributes like stick, bag, cape, calabash, and shell. The imitative way in which many contemporary Santiago pilgrims also behave—dressing and outfitting themselves in line with the iconic medieval representation of a pilgrim—is the modern individual expression of that program (Fig. 2.5).

Also, the academic world has discovered the theme of pilgrimage, in particular the fascinating worlds of Compostela: historians, archeologists, social scientists, and political and leisure scholars form a part of it, all contributing in their own way to this discourse. This element in the discourse is becoming even stronger due to a 'caminonization' of foot ways worldwide.

The heritage discourse on Santiago has become more and more important through Europe's supranational politics.⁴⁶ An important step in this process was the proclamation in 1987 by the Council of Europe the Camino the Camino to Santiago de Compostela as the first European Cultural Itinerary (Fig. 2.6).⁴⁷

In the conclusion of the founding declaration of the 'Programme of Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe', the political endeavor behind it becomes clear: 'May the faith which has inspired pilgrims throughout history, uniting them in a common aspiration and transcending national differences and interests, inspire us today, and young people in particular, to travel along these routes

⁴⁵See on him: http://gl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xosé_Lu%C3%ADs_Barreiro_Rivas, accessed 28 October 2012.

⁴⁶In addition to Spain's national heritage discourse that formally started in 1940 when the city of Santiago received the status as historical-artistic monument and in 1962 when the route became a national patronate, see Pack 2010: 357, 362.

⁴⁷See on the Council's route program: <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=289691&Site=COE>, accessed, 9 November 2012.

Fig. 2.5 Performing heritage? Doing the Camino dressed in 'medieval' pilgrim outfit. Young French pilgrim with stick watches the sunset, 2010. *Source* Peter Jan Margry



Fig. 2.6 Remembrance stone on the Plaza del Obradoiro commemorating the designation by the Council of Europe of the Camino de Santiago as (first) European Cultural Itinerary in 1987. *Source* Peter Jan Margry



in order to build a society founded on tolerance, respect for others, freedom and solidarity.' The special status of the Camino was further enhanced and culturally and legally embedded through its inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage list

in 1993 (cf Schrire 2006; Grötsch 2009; Grabow 2010).⁴⁸ The continuation or better the cape reserve in Finisterre profits also from its placing on the European Heritage list in 2007. The cape was acknowledged as a 'legendary site' and considered to be the end of the world, a site that has 'played a crucial role in Europe's shared history.' Spanish authorities explain hence apodictically: 'the symbolic nature of this spot in Galicia made it the last stage in the Way of St. James for many pilgrims coming from Europe. The indisputable fact is that it is a landscape that renders visitors speechless with its impressive views of the sea and the coast.'⁴⁹

Institutional but not governmental are the various active national and regional Camino associations and sodalities.⁵⁰ Nowadays they can be considered as the strongest agents in the creation and change in relation to Camino representations and practices. They have the best means of mobilization by informing their members, and they are able and eager to communicate all information and news available. The Finisterre track has been increasingly presented by them as the continuation ('El Camino de Santiago hasn't finished yet'⁵¹), an epilogue, to complete the Santiago journey. Such finalizing of the Camino is also expressed by describing the 'tradition' of the rites of passage practiced in Finisterre to prepare oneself better to enter one's post-journey life again. For many, doing the Finisterre Way is a rite of passage in itself as it gives the traveler the possibility to accommodate after having arrived in Santiago. With the short, intermediate Finisterre track they can reflect again in an evaluative way on the Camino to Santiago de Compostela and their upcoming return and reintegration in the daily patterns of society. Part of that ritual is the experience of the *nec plus ultra*, the impossibility to go any further: naturally forced to stop there and 'dissolve' in the flow of the water. The daily renewal cycle of the sun and the purgatory aspect of the cleansing sea, have stimulated the introduction of individual rituals of an often esoteric kind that help the walker to change from a long distance walker and pilgrim into, again, a participant of daily life. This is an ending where earth, water, and air come together and where the fourth element of fire is added to execute the purification ritual. The symbolic of purification, renovation, and rebirth are thought to be most appropriate there.

⁴⁸See on the inscription and related documents: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/3357>, accessed, 9 November 2012.

⁴⁹See: <http://marcaespana.es/en/educacion-cultura-sociedad/patrimonio/articulos/251/the-european-heritage-of-spain>, accessed, 9 November 2012.

⁵⁰Under various names, national and local James associations represent tens of thousands of pilgrims. For example the Dutch and Flemish associations have approximately 12,000 and 7,000 members, who receive magazines and can make use of elaborated websites and databases.

⁵¹<http://www.caminosantiagodecompostela.com/camino-de-santiago-finisterre-muxia/>, accessed 30 July 2012.

2.6 Institutionalized?

Not just new folk festivals, but especially the sheer number of walkers point to a successful institutionalization process of the Camino Finisterre. Alison Raju, author of the first Finisterre guide, noticed around 2003 that the number of pilgrims who continued their journey to the coast had started to rise ‘very considerably’ (Raju 2009: 3). The past decade has shown an increasing normalization of the route, which is, among various expressions, also symbolically materialized in the full-color booklets the Xunta de Galicia started to bring out in 2009, as well as the building of new websites (Fernández-Poyatos et al. 2011). These brochures endorse the suggestion that the path has become a ‘mainstream’ part of the Jacobean network. Walkers, associations, boards, and the tourist industry perceive it in this way, in contrast to the Church’s view. Its success is actually contrary to the motivations of the ‘pioneers’ of this track who cherished the unbeaten track and a solitary ‘real’ ending of their personal transformative journey at sunset.

As the Camino Finisterre is created, described, performed, and institutionalized it does not imply that it is immutable. The route is subject to change and interventions by the authorities, due to path and road maintenance, renewals, improvement, paving, or diversion. Despite complaints about the negative influence on the ‘authenticity’ of the trails leading towards the coast, the processes of heritagization and commodification continue to exercise their influence and will attract more people.

The creation of a Camino Finisterre is a relatively recent process. The development was triggered on the one hand by the distribution of a Galician discourse on its pre-Christian past and the rise of new esoteric authors who connected the Christian pilgrims’ way to Santiago with a presumed pre-Christian substrate, and on the other, by the ‘counterproductive’ too big success of the Camino itself. The very idea of an end of the world and a ‘real’ ending of one’s journey, fit the need for the increasing number of walkers on the Camino who do not want to finish their journey within the Churchly context of Compostela, wanting instead a spiritually neutral continuation that as a rite of passage prepares them for an end and a return to daily life at home.⁵²

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⁵²The pilgrim practices on the Camino Finisterre are dealt with in my last chapter of this volume.

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