

THE PILGRIMAGE TO SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA AND ROME AND URBANISATION

Elements for reflection on a European inventory and permanent features of pilgrimage projects.

1- Preamble

The study of pilgrimage still lacks a project which enables the unification of the inventory of knowledge and research. The Centro Studi Romani has attempted it, through the creation of a bibliographical database, at the beginning of the 1990s, under the name of **Bibliography of the Via Francigena**¹. This has been rapidly extended to numerous other pilgrimage routes and is therefore not limited to Western Europe.

But such an initiative is little known, we have not yet found a sponsor to put our work online and update the database itself².

This procedure is, in any case, obligatory to a certain point, both in bibliographical terms and in terms of the comparison of themes and research methods that, from one moment to the next, the European or national authorities must think of a purely virtual space, for a core of operations and for a pilot scheme which will follow this inventory activity to reference it and make it available, at any moment, to both researchers and the general public.

2. Comparable Themes

In 22 years of activity at the Centro Studi Romani, other researchers have also proposed, although in a discrete manner, I would add with great humility, other possible inventory themes.

Following the publication of Thomas Szabó's essay in our review, which served as an example, worthy of being used as a model, the work on the **inventory of historical routes**, the IVS Swiss public office (Inventory of historical communication routes of Switzerland) took onboard the development of this project. It has now completed its task and, consequently, undergone profound transformations, as far as I know³.

The architect Giuseppina Carla Romby has also highlighted, always using our review, the base criteria upon which those who wish to create a '**route museum**' should rely⁴.

Today, on the other hand, with little modesty, I would like to make reference to the great potential of comparison, and therefore inventory work, which leads to the study of urbanisation linked to the presence, and often as a consequence of important historical routes such as that of Santiago or the Via Francigena.

3- Isolated Hospitals

¹ Cf. «Bibliografia della via Francigena»: 1st ed. 31st August 1995 / translated by Luciano Bassini and Fabrizio Vanni ; presented by Renato Stopani. – Poggibonsi : Centro di Studi Romani, 1995. (III, De strata francigena).

² The database is currently on an old computer equipped with Windows '98, which also supports the programme of bibliographical classifications of Tinlib della Ifnet S.r.l. di Firenze, still based on DOS.

³ Cf. "Un patrimonio da scoprire. Le strade e cosa ne fanno gli altri / Thomas Szabó. – In: «De strata Francigena» 1994/2. The protection of historical communication routes is now entrusted to the DATEC, the Federal Department for the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications, whose actions follow an inventory project carried out and guided by the IVS. Cf. www.astra.admin.ch

⁴ Cf. "Viabilità storica e itinerari culturali : verso un 'museo della strada'" / Giuseppina Carla Romby. – In: «De strata Francigena» 1996 IV/1. A survey of the museums of the historical network must be part of the entities dedicated to their tourist evaluation.

A route such as that of Santiago or the Via Francigena, and with even more reason the routes that were once celebrated and have now been abandoned, such as the via Egnatia or the via Diagonalis, in the Balkans, stretch over long routes which could now be covered in tarmac, but which once crossed woods and mountains, that which people called *desertum* in the Middle Ages to emphasise the sense of solitude, abandon and even danger, that these long and worrying journeys represented.

The isolated hospitals or their ruins still survive today, thanks to the minimum attention that the local populations have paid to traditions and culture, on the chance that made the creation of several works of art, the isolation which allowed neither man nor the passing of time to change the memory.

However, the origins of the pilgrimage bring us a precise testimony of these little isolated hospitals: medieval pilgrimage attached great importance to the presence of the hospitals on the summits of the mountains (the Alps, the Pyrenees and the cordillera of Galicia). In effect, they represent the welcome and tranquillity of the night time rest, even though, evidently, these refuges had nothing more to offer than a light meal or help.

The inventory of these little isolated hospitals of the historical European pathways and the high level recognition of their existence would be just and qualified, even though it would have to be limited to written works which, for each homogeneous region, have been produced by local researchers. I am thinking of Parmense (the province of Parma), Lunigiana (region situated on Liguria, Tuscany and Emilie) and Garfagnana (a region in the province of Lucques, which is found between the Apuanes Alps and the Tuscan-Emilien Apennins), with regards to the roman road network, I am also thinking of works created for various aims, like the *Montaillou*⁵ by Le Roy Ladurie, for the road network of the Eastern Pyrenees.

4. The villages along the route

Various elements characterise a village, if we take into account all of the reports from the travellers of the past: welcome, cleanliness, paved internal roads and for the positive points; lack of places to stay, bad quality of food, dirtiness and bad smells for the negative points.

Sometimes, one can grab hold of the local specificities relative to clothing or craftsmanship. However, in general, the pilgrim's attention is concentrated on the presence of fresh water or the ability to buy food in the shops, rather than guest houses.

An anonymous person from Florence travelling to Santiago in 1477 made the following description: "...*Sangian di Moriam* [St. Jean de Maurienne], *une grande e bella villa, piena di artefici e molte hosterie buone, e diviziosa di panne e di vino ; e di qui a Orella son parecchi villuzze.*" "*Larbem* [L'Arbenc], *una bella villa, assai hosterie ; equi si fa e pettini, e zufoli et molte chose di legniam.*"⁶

On the other hand, when he finds himself uncomfortable or is completely disappointed by the welcome, he does not hesitate to immortalise his memory, as negatively as this: "*Lamotta* [La Motte Saint Didier], *un chastello piccholo e bello, assai pieno di chase ed osterie; e qui è dove si va a sancto Antonio; ècci il braccio suo nella chiesa di Sancto Antonio, belle église, dans laquelle se trouvent de nombreuses reliques, et inanzi un miglio al detto // chastello è mal paese e molto pauroso ed è piggioro paese che ssia di qui a Firenze e salvatico.*"⁷

Villages have absolute urban precisions, following the fact that they are situated along a unique pathway or on a crossroads. We have already met with this idea in the Tabula Peutingeriana which could be a point of reflection for a schematisation, possibly in graphic form, of these kinds of

⁵ Cf. «Montaillou, Occitan village from 1294 to 1324» / Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie. – Paris, 1975.

⁶ Cf. «Il "camino" italiano per Santiago de Compostela. Le fonti itinerarie di età medievale» / Renato Stopani. – Florence : Le Lettere, 2001. – Scil. p. 95.

⁷ Anonymous person from Florence in 1477 in «Il "camino" italiano per Santiago...», pp. 95-96.

agglomerations. Incidentally, a census, perhaps even visible, of the **cross-shaped pillars** along the route which have persisted over time, would represent a protection and valuing of these important pilgrimage symbols⁸.

5. Villages with a bridge

Throughout the Middle Ages, and even after this period, the construction of a bridge, especially outside of a town, represented a significant exception when we take into account the numerous ways of crossing water (boat, ford, etc.), and it was above all a considerable economic and social effort⁹.

For the majority of the time, the traveller, including the pilgrim, had to pass through a toll before being able to access the bridge, which enabled differentiation between people travelling on foot, by horse and the transport of goods. The reason for this goes without saying. The building of a bridge is expensive and often requires an appropriate group or business or even a hospital order dedicated to engineering, such as the hospital order of Altopascio¹⁰.

The bridges are generally made of wood with stone walls and supports. The majority of bridges, made entirely from stone, are found inside towns, where the economic contributions can be more easily shared out and controlled.

At the side of the bridge are often defensive structures that are sometimes also found in the middle of the bridge, as well as little churches and hospitals, which are the proof of the assistance and controlling function of the work.

Near to villages equipped with a bridge, one can find a château which stretches over two tributaries of the river and protects the inhabitants and the bridge itself.

Amongst the villages with a bridge along the Via Francigena one can name **Pont Saint-Martin**, situated between the Valley of Aosta and Piémont, and **Pontremoli**, in the Lunigiana; the latter has a quality that cannot be found elsewhere. At the time, the interest in the route gave rise to various policies. Thus, on one side is its construction in the town, otherwise known as walls, whilst we laud the spatial partition in the zones of influence, in which Guelphs and Ghibellines managed to live side by side almost in peace, all thanks to a subdivision of spaces and zones of influence¹¹

⁸ We notice, for example, the work of Paola Novara on cross-shaped pillars in Romagna in volume n. VII/1 (1999) in the review «De strata Francigena».

⁹ Cf. «Ponti, navalestri e guadi. La via Francigena e il problema dell'attraversamento dei corsi d'acqua nel medioevo»: Acts of the International Congress in Piacenza le 18 octobre 1997 / translated by Renato Stopani and Fabrizio Vanni. Florence: Centreo di Studi Romani, 1998. (VI/2, De strata Francigena).

¹⁰ Cf. «Gli 'Altopascini' costruttori di ponti / Renato Stopani. – In: «L'ospitalità in Altopascio. Storia e funzioni di un grande centro ospitaliero. Il cibo, la medicina e il controllo della strada»: catalogue of the exhibition in Altopascio, 21 settembre 1996 – 6 janvier 1997 / traduit par Alessandra Cenci. – Altopascio: Comune *et al*, 1996. – Scil. pp. 32-37.

¹¹ Cf. «Gente di Pontremoli. Identità, continuità, mutamenti in un centro della Lunigiana» / Paolo Pirillo. – Florence : Regione Toscana, 1997. Pontremoli is one of the rare places in which the history of the Via Francigena had a coherent presence even in the present day. This book, although it only has perceptions of the Via Francigena is useful for finding the traces of such a continuity.

Amongst the villages with bridges worthy of being studied on the route of Santiago are: **Aiguebelle**,¹² **Goncelin**,¹³ **Roman sur Isère**,¹⁴ **Pont-Saint-Esprit**,¹⁵ **Carcassonne**,¹⁶ in France, **Orthez**,¹⁷ **Sauterre de Béarn**,¹⁸ **Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port**,¹⁹ **Puente La Reina**,²⁰ **Estella**,²¹ **Puente Orbigo**,²² **Puertomarín**,²³ in Spain.

6. The towns along the route

The structure and forms of aggregation of the towns that the pilgrims found generally tend to leave the path out of consideration.

It is often difficult to locate a ‘canonical’ route on a town plan, through which one could attempt to guide the pilgrims.

Although the town of Sienne on the Via Francigena is relatively easy to restore due to its north-south structural importance, the town of **Lucques**²⁴ is more problematic.

As for the path of Santiago in Spain, even though the millennium old continuity of the pilgrimage must guarantee it greater success, and a more specific structural adaptation for the pilgrims, one finds difficulties in towns such as **Burgos**²⁵, although there are hospitals indicated, to locate a unique route.

¹² The anonymous person from Florence in 1477 wrote: “*Chabel [Aiguebelle], una villa grande, e à in mezzo della villa un ponte di legniamie sopra un fiume [Arc]; ed è buona villa e osterie.*” Ne: «Il “camino” italiano...», p. 95.

¹³ *Ibidem*: “*Chonsolem [Goncelin], una bella villa, assai hosterie. E di fuori della villa è un gran fiume [Isère]; passasi su per un ponte di legniamie; paghasi per uno a piè denari 8, a chavallo soldi 1 denari 4.*”

¹⁴ *Ibidem*: “*Roman [Roman sur Isère], un bel chastello, assai hosterie e buone; e qui è una bella chiesa di Sancto Bernardo ed evvi il suo chorpo e undici chorpi sancti e molte reliquie di sancti e uno altare d’ariento bello e, allato al chastello, dal lato di là, è un grande fiume [Isère]; passasi su per un ponte di pietra e àne una bella fortezza in sul mezzo.*”

¹⁵ *Ibidem*: “*Sancto Spirito [Pont St. Esprit], un bello chastello pieno d’artefici e tutto lastrichato, e molte hosterie buone; è dovizioso chastello et allato alle mura, di verso la paluta, è un bello ponte di prieta lungho archi 24 e passi 1200 sopra un grande fiume chiamasi Roso [Rodano]; e allato al detto ponte è una bella chiesa di Sancto Spirito, molto bella, abitata da frati vestiti di bianco chonventuali.*”

¹⁶ *Ibidem*: “*Charchascione [Carcassonne], una bella e pulita città, e piena molto d’artefici d’ogni arte; e appresso alla città è una bella cittadella molto forte e molte fortezze; e fra lla cittadella e lla città è un ponte di prieta bello che è 14 archi ed è in fortezza; e passa sotto un grande fiume [Aude].*”

¹⁷ *Ibidem*: “*Ortes [Orthez], un chastello pieno d’artigiani e à e borghi da ogni lato begli; e, di verso Sancto Iachopo, è un ponte di prieta sopra un gran fiume [Gave de Pau] che mena [a] Serinoni [Serignan?].*”

¹⁸ *Ibidem*: “*Salva tem [Sauterre de Béarn], un chastello, assai posate; e qui si paga la ghabella de’ fiorini; paga per ogni fiorino uno ardito e lle bestie cioè le chavalchature paghono arditi tre. E dal lato di fuori è uno grande fiume [Oloron]; passasi su pel ponte ed è del detto chonte.*”

¹⁹ *Ibidem*: “*Sangiam Piè di Porto [Saint Jean-Pied-de-Port], uno chastello assai bello. (...) E à detto chastello un bello borgho di là e di qua; e di verso San Iachopo, tra ’l chastello e ’l borgho, è un gran fiume [Nive]; passasi per un ponte di ligniamie.*”

²⁰ Curiously the anonymous person from Florence in 1477 makes no reference to the celebrated bridge which gave its name to the village: “*Ponte alla Reina [Puente la Reina], una bella villa tutta lastrichata, doviziosa e buone posate. E di qui alla Stella cierte beute.*”

²¹ *Ibidem*: “*La Stella [Estella], uno chastello bello e molto forte; e àne un fiume [Ega] in mezzo ed evvi suso un ponte di prieta molto bello.*”

²² *Ibidem*: *Ponte di Rovicho [Puente Orbigo], una bella villa; et in mezzo della villa è un ponte di prieta; passa sotto un grande fiume [Orbigo]. E chominchia il paese della Ghalizia.*”

²³ *Ibidem*: *Porto marino [Puertomarín], una bella villa; et per mezzo passa un fiume grande che sse passa su per un ponte di prieta bello. Chiamasi detto fiume Mignio [Minio]; e lla detta villa àne una bella fortezza.*”

²⁴ Cf. “Itinerari dei pellegrini nella città di Lucca : testimonianze architettoniche e segni di devozione / Giuseppina Carla Romby. – In: “...Passent la terre, Toscane et Montbardon... I percorsi della via Francigena in Toscana”: Acts of the international congress from the studies undertaken at Montalcino, 23rd-24th May 1997 / translated by Renato Stopani and Fabrizio Vanni. - (VI/1, De strata Francigena).

²⁵ The historical map of Burgos, with the series of hospitals, is taken from the work “Santiago de Compostela. 1000 ans de Pèlerinage Européen», catalogue for the exhibition of Europolia 85 España edited in 1985 by the Centrum voor Kunst en Cultuur of the Abbaye Saint-Pierre de Gand with the participation of Crédit Communal.

This results from the fact that the demands of a town, especially if it has man made fortifications, do not necessarily coincide with the univocal need of a longitudinal crossing which is provided by the typology of the pilgrimage. I will once again use the words of Giacomo Antonio Naja: the town of **Perpignan** is “*grande, et assai forte di mura, di baloardi, e cannoni, e gran numero di soldati. Le strade però della Città per il più sono strette, e puzzolenti; e vi è gran popolo*”.²⁶ The contrast between the grand and powerful aspect and the little streets giving of bad smells is the proof of urbanisation that was accelerated or perhaps even forced by the problems of borders and frequent wars.

Other fortified towns along the route of Santiago are also worthy of attentive study to celebrate their continuity and pin down what makes them special: **Avignon**,²⁷ where a pilgrim was astonished at the sheer length of the bridge²⁸, **Grenoble**²⁹, **Toulouse**³⁰, and **Gerona**, which also have bridges, and the towns of **Pamplona**³¹ and **León**³², which do not.

7. Provisional conclusions

An inventory of the specificities and singularities of the towns along the path of Santiago or Rome is rather useless. Everyone knows that **Santo Domingo della Calzada** is famous amongst pilgrims for his miracle of the rooster and the hen. The specificities are easily found, both in sources and the bibliography of commentaries, as well as on site.

If we are going to propose an inventory, it must be focused on **constants**: the villages on the route, the villages with a bridge, cross-shaped pillars, in particular would create awareness in the local communities so that they could take part in a vast project, in which all aspects would be examined. Furthermore, it would stimulate them to collaborate in documentation and the work undertaken by local researchers, who surely have a more precise knowledge of the historical topography and the emergences that persisted, and which have perhaps been forgotten in the canonical route, today recovered.

The inventory is also the basis for protection and awareness.

It is enough to have the courage to propose a well structured database to the European authorities when there are few valid urbanisation typologies linked to the pilgrimage network. A managing organisation must be established along with a selected and specialised work group which

²⁶ Cf. Il pellegrinaggio a Santiago de Compostela di Fra Giacomo Antonio Naja. ..., p. 107.

²⁷ The anonymous person from Florence wrote: “*Vignione [Avignone], una città grande e bella, di molti artigiani, e molto merchantile, e assai hosterie. E lla detta città è del papa; e allato alla città, di verso Saligniach, ène un bello ponte di prieta e in sul primo arco a ssalire del ponte è una fortezza che è del re di Francia. (...) E ‘l detto ponte è lungho archi 19 e sotto passa un grande fiume chiamasi Rodano; e per infino al fiume è del re di Francia e lla ciptà è del papa.*”

²⁸ *Ibidem*: “*Granopoli [Grenoble], un bello chastello grande e pieno di molti artefici d’ongni arte, e tutto lastrichato e à in mezzo uno bel ponte di prieta; passavi sotto uno grande fiume, ed è detto chastello molto dovizioso e buone hosterie.*”, p. 95.

²⁹ *Ibidem*: “*Tolosa, una bella e grande città piena d’artefici d’ongni arte, e molto merchantile; e à e borghi da ogni lato grandi ed ècci molte buone hosterie; ed ècci una bella chiesa, chiamata San Saturnino, che v’è il corpo suo; ed èvvi sei chorpi d’apostoli fra’ quali v’è il chorpo di Sancto Iacopo minore, e lla testa è in Ghalizia; el chorpo di san Barnaba, el chorpo di sancto Giorgio e molti altri chorpi sancti; e furono conducte qui da Charlo magnio quando chombatteva per la fede di Christo. E detti chorpi sancti voleva fare portare a Parigi e lla morte no llo lasciò e però rimasono e detti chorpi sancti in Tolosa. E più ci è una bella chiesa dell’ordine di Sancto Domenicho che vv’è il corpo di sancto Tommaxo d’Aquino che è una bella reliquia. E più v’è la chiesa di sancto Stefano che ci è il suo chorpo intero tutto. E all’uscire della città, in verso Sancto Iacopo, è un ponte di legniam choperto da un tetto molto lungho e grande, sopra un grande fiume e grosso [Garonne].*”

³⁰ “*D’Avignone si passa el Rodano ch’è uno fiume smisurato et è largo el ponte MCCCCLX passi e alla fine è una torre...*” The anonymous person from Florence, arriving at Santiago de Compostela at the end of the 15th century reports “*Ilecamino’ italiano...*”, p. 80.

³¹ *Ibidem* : “*Panpalona [Pamplona], una ciptà picchola e bella, tutta lastrichata, in poggio, piena d’artefici e bene popolata.*”

³² *Ibidem* : “*Lione di Spagna [León], una ciptà non troppo bella.*”

has a password from the authority, who also accepts the integration of data as well as the bringing together by researchers and interested parties of information and images on the current state of the works with regards to their respective accessibility (public, private, in good or bad condition, with a bridge or not).

This would be of great importance for the **route of Santiago** and even more so for the **Via Francigena**, which is still having difficulties in raising its status, due to the fact that the majority of its route lacks a serious and solid infrastructure, which needs to offer a minimum level of assistance and support to pilgrims, despite the high spending during the Giubileo of 2000 and despite an increasing wish to participate amongst enthusiasts.

A supranational organisation could perhaps give this image of impartiality and seriousness which would enable all of those interested to breath easy and obtain a long duration.

I would like to remind you that the Centro di Studi Romei is available for collaboration on an inventory project, even on several aspects and levels, which would generate a common engagement and which would work towards the rediscovery and putting into use of the Via Francigena, and maybe even the Balkan walking routes³³ (the Via Egnatia and Via Diagonalis) which would be worthy of becoming the third cultural route.

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Incontro Europeo

"I Cammini di Santiago di Compostela e gli Incontri all'Hotel-Dieu"

Puy-en-Velay (Francia), 27-30 Settembre 2007

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On the website www.centrostudiromei.eu, you can find a first enquiry into the Via Diagonalis and the Balkans ground routes, presented in during a Congress which took place in May 2006.