POLISH PILGRIMAGES TO SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA. WAYS OF ST. JAMES IN POLAND

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Abstract: In October of 2009, the total length of the modern Polish Ways of St. James added up to 2,016 km (13 different sections). The main objective of this paper is to assess the pilgrimage turnout of Poles from a historical perspective as well as to show the current state of the phenomenon of recreating pilgrimage routes within the framework of the old Christian tradition of walking from one's home to the grave of St. James the Apostle in Spanish Santiago de Compostela.

Key words: Camino Polaco, Religious Tourism, Way of St. James, Pilgrimage, Santiago de Compostela

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INTRODUCTION

The Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, with the grave of St. James the Apostle, has been attracting pilgrims from across Europe for centuries. From the moment of the discovery of the grave of St. James the Apostle in the 9th century, the Shrine developed rapidly in the 11th and 12th centuries. At this time, aside from Rome, the Shrine of St. James became a key pilgrimage center in Europe. According to 12th century Canon Law, pilgrimages to Christ's grave in Jerusalem, graves of the apostles Peter and Paul in Rome, and the grave of St. James the Apostle, came to be called *peregrinationes maiores* or "major pilgrimages" (Manikowska, 2008). By designating such pilgrimages as "major pilgrimage," the pilgrimage destinations were assigned the highest possible rank in the hierarchy of pilgrimage destinations at the time.

In modern times, the "Santiago phenomenon" continues to stir the interest of many historians and individuals who deal with pilgrimage issues. The Shrine, positioned on the periphery of Europe of the Middle Ages and difficult to access via footpaths in the Pyrenees Mountains, came into prominence as one of the most important cultural destinations in the Christian world, while lowering the rank of many pilgrimage destinations that had been important earlier. The best known and most frequented routes included: 1) the German Route, 2) the French Route, 3) the Portuguese Route, and 4) the English Maritime Route. It is estimated that by the end of the Middle Ages, approximately one half million European pilgrims would arrive per year at the Shrine in Compostela. Among those heading to the Shrine of St. James were Poles, although it would be difficult to speak of mass Polish pilgrimages.

Today, a strong revival of pilgrimage-making to Santiago is observed. In addition to the religious dimension, such trips frequently take on an additionally or even exclusively tourist or cultural dimension. In existence for more than one thousand years, the Way of St. James is one of the most important Christian pilgrimage routes, aside from pilgrimages routes to Rome and Jerusalem. Virtually forgotten following the Reformation, the Way of St. James was reopened near the end of the 20th century (Manikowska, 2008). In 1987, the Council of Europe declared the Way of St. James to be the first "European Cultural Route". In 1998, the Way of St. James was added to the List of UNESCO World Heritage Sites (Manikowska, 2008). Today, 5 to 6 million visitors per year are noted in Santiago de Compostela – of which over 100,000 arrive on foot. In Poland, new sections of the Way of St. James are created every year and increasingly more individuals are becoming interested in walking to Santiago.

The main objective of this paper is to assess the pilgrimage turnout of Poles from a historical perspective as well as to show the current state of this phenomenon. In 2009, there were already thirteen different sections of "the Camino" in existence in Poland, with two new sections in the planning stages (Hodorowicz, Mróz, 2009). For the past few years, many new plans have been developed in order to create pilgrimage routes within the framework of the old Christian tradition of walking from one's home to the grave of St. James the Apostle.

GOING ON A PILGRIMAGE FROM POLAND TO SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA FROM A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

It is very difficult to estimate the exact scope of Polish pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela in the Middle Ages on the basis of preserved historical sources. The presence of pilgrims from Poland was mentioned in the Pilgrim Records of the Middle Ages found in the archive of the Kingdom of Aragon in Barcelona (modern Spain), which was published in 1936 by Jeanie Vielliard (Wilska, 1995). The records contain the names of individuals trying to get the proper "credentials" or a "pilgrim's passport" from the King of Aragon, which would guarantee them safety for the duration of their travel. Based on these records, there are a few Poles known by their names who were issued such credentials between 1379 and 1405. Most of those issued credentials/permits were knights; however, such credentials also covered individuals who accompanied those to whom the credentials had been issued. For example, a permit issued to a person named Mszczuj mentions eight companions (Polaczkówna, 1937).

While performing a review of pilgrim records, one can see that the majority of Polish pilgrims had come from the Mazowsze region in central Poland and from the southern Polish region of Małopolska.¹ The social status of pilgrims interested in Santiago de Compostela can be traced to knighthood in most cases. They were usually individuals who knew appropriate customs and who served in the diplomatic service of Polish princes. While staying at many different courts, they most likely heard about the famous Galician shrine, and following the example of others, decided to go there themselves. The popularity of Santiago de Compostela among the knights of the Middle Ages was rather widespread. Following victory in the battle with the Moors at Clavijo in 844, St. James was acknowledged as the patron saint of knights. It is also known that the Court of the Mazowsze Principality had maintained contacts with the Teutonic Order and with Lithuania. Knights from many European countries used to meet in Malbork, where Poles

¹ Mazowsze is a historical region in central Poland. In the 13th century, the Mazowsze Principality was created outside of the Kingdom of Poland. In 1526, the region officially returned to the Kingdom of Poland. Małopolska, with its capital in Kraków, continued to remain as the core region of the Kingdom of Poland.

most likely would have found information on expeditions to the Shrine in Compostela. The archive of the Kingdom of Aragon confirms the presence of pilgrims from Poland in 1379, 1380, 1404, 1405, and 1414. In 1379, "credentials" were issued to four knights from Małopolska on April 15, 1379. This group of pilgrim included Klemens from Mokrska, Franciszek from Szubina², Stanisław Wederkere from Wrocimowice, and Jakub Cztan. It is not known where Jakub Cztan had come from; however, certain sources indicate that he was most likely either from Rogów or from Strzelec. One year later, three knights from Mazowsze are mentioned: Jan Pilik, Paweł from Radzanów, and Paszka. There exists a hypothesis that the Mazowsze group joined up with a much larger group, possibly knights from Malbork. In 1404, four knights from Poland went on a pilgrimage to Compostela including two from the Kingdom of Poland (Gniewosz from the Kingdom and Jakub from Falsztyna) and two from Mazowsze (Andrzej from Ostrołęka and Paweł Pilik). In later vears, only individual Polish pilgrims are on record, all of whom belonged to the social elite of the day. In 1405, a "credential" was issued to Scibor from Sciborzyce, the supreme governor of Transvlvania. In 1414, the pilgrims on record included: Mszczuj from Skrzynno, the Secretary of the King Władysław Jagiełło, as well as the Prince of Silesia, Ludwik II (Wyrwa, 2009). By the end of the Middle Ages, wealthy citizens accounted for the majority of Polish pilgrims headed to Santiago. Based on available written sources, the total number of pilgrims from Poland can be estimated to have been 120 to 180 individuals. Taking into consideration the size of the population of Poland at the time as well as the overall size of the pilgrimage movement to the grave of St. James, it is necessary to acknowledge that Polish pilgrims constituted only a small fraction of European pilgrims. This also shows that pilgrimages to Santiago de Compostela were never a mass movement in Poland. One exception here would apply to the inhabitants of cities near the Baltic Sea - cities associated with the seafaring Hanseatic League (Samsonowicz, 2002).

The low Polish turnout was certainly linked to the significant distance from Poland to the Shrine and the large costs associated with organizing pilgrimages. The only individuals who could afford to go on a pilgrimage were the elite – affluent knights and the nobility – and later also affluent members of the bourgeoisie. Going on pilgrimages to Santiago must have meant fame and prestige, since in the second half of the 15th century in Poland, a new honorary title appeared: *miles hispanicus* or "Spanish Knight." It is known that the title was carried by Jakub from Drzewice (Małopolska), his brother Piotr, as well as Filip Jacimierski, an affluent Pole from the Ruś Czerwona region of Poland (Wyrwa, 2008). Poles on the way to Santiago usually used land routes such as the "German Route" and the "French Route". The French Route runs along the shores of the Mediterranean Sea to the town of Perpignan and then towards Barcelona, Tarragona, Castille, and finally to Galicia. It was rather uncommon for Polish pilgrims to travel via the sea route from Gdańsk. In general, however, both groups of pilgrims and individual pilgrims are on record as having made the journey to Santiago. Credentials that prove group participation in a pilgrimage were credentials issued to several pilgrims with the same date in 1379, 1380, and 1404. It is also important to consider the motives of those who set out. The most important reason for going on a pilgrimage was most likely a religious reason; namely, to make a pilgrimage to the grave of St. James the Apostle, the patron saint of knights as well as pilgrims in general. Sometimes, the Shrine was visited during a "state" visit originally intended for political purposes.

In addition to written sources, there are also archeological sources that substantiate pilgrimages to Santiago, including scallop shells of the species *Pecten maximus L.*,

² The first name was most likely misread from the archives and probably sounded more like Świętosław than Franciszek. From: H. Polaczkówna, 1937, Travelers in the Middle Ages – from Poland and to Poland, Monthly Herald, No. 5, p. 68.

commonly called the shell of St. James. For centuries, the scallop shell was the most easily identifiable and characteristic attribute of a pilgrim taking part in a pilgrimage to Santiago. In Poland, only five such shells have been found to date. The earliest find came in 1941 in the town of Cieszyn during archeological studies of a Roman rotunda of St. Nicolas and St. Wacław. More scallop shells have been found in Kołobrzeg (1988), Racibórz (1997), Elblag (1999), and Poznań (2000).

Moreover, the shells found in Lublin, Ostrów Lednicki near Gniezno, and Wrocław were very similar to *Pecten maximus L*, also called *Pecten jacobaeus*, the name of the shells often used to decorate the attire of pilgrims. Contemporary research has shown that the shells originate from the 13th and the 14th centuries, while the shell from Poznań dates back to the 15th century. The places where the shells were found are located in various regions across Poland. Already in the Middle Ages, most of these regions possessed important cultural and economic institutions (Wyrwa, 2008). It is also important to mention pilgrimage routes in the context of Polish pilgrimages to Santiago in the Middle Ages. The pilgrimage phenomenon was pervasive in Western Europe and characterized by the creation of a dense network of ways, which included churches, hospices, convents, and other sites serving pilgrims, all of which did not exist in Central and Eastern Europe. In this part of the continent, pilgrimage Ways were, however, marked across German territory.

Poles also went on pilgrimages to Compostela in other centuries. It is known that Jerzy and Stanisław Radziwił went on a pilgrimage in 1579. After traveling for months through the Pyrenees Mountains, followed by the cities of Barcelona, Sargasso, Madrid, and Valladolid, at the beginning of March, they stood at the grave of St. James the Apostle. A document was preserved that proves that these individuals received the Sacrament of Penance and Holy Communion at the Shrine. Another pilgrim – an anonymous pilgrim – followed a similar route in 1595 and wrote down his reflections about the trip. According to some sources, that pilgrim might have been Fryderyk Szembek, a Jesuit priest (Jackowski, Soljan, 2008). Another famous pilgrim at Santiago was Jakub Sobieski, the father of future Polish King Jan Sobieski III. As a religious person and one who paid a great deal of attention to the devotion to the Saints. Jakub Sobieski began a pilgrimage across Europe in 1607. He finally arrived in Compostela in 1611. The Shrine must have made an impression on him, as he wrote: "City famous for the grave of St. James. The church is large and beautiful [...] St. James is laid under the Altar [...] Numerous priests from many nations listen to the confessions of pilgrims in the winter and in the summer."

Near the end of the 17th century, the overall number of pilgrims going to Compostela declined markedly. This was linked to the general political situation across the European continent and the increasing popularity of pilgrimages to Rome as well as the Holy Land. Poles began to once again go on pilgrimages to the grave of St. James in the 1970s after the return of the Bourbon Monarchy in Spain. The Fourth World Youth Day, held in Compostela in 1989, with the blessing of Pope John Paul II, played an important role in the increasing popularity of the Shrine of St. James in modern times.

MODERN WAYS OF ST. JAMES IN POLAND

There exist thirteen "St. James" pilgrimage ways in Poland today. A few more ways are in the planning stages. All the ways are designed for those who wish to leave their homes and walk to the grave of St. James the Apostle in Santiago de Compostela in Spain.

The first modern Way of St. James in Poland was the Dolnośląska Droga Way of St. James, opened in 2005. In October of 2009, the total length of the Polish Ways of St. James added up to 2,016 km. Local governments are taking part in the reopening of old Ways of St. James in Poland. This is a new initiative but one that has been developing very dynamically over the last few years.

Already in Roman times, a trade route was created that connected Southern Europe with the shores of the Baltic Sea, called the "Amber Route". In the 10th century, other important trade routes included ones that connected the modern-day Czech Republic with the Polish region of Wielkopolska via Silesia and Lusatia. Latin-oriented culture, Christianity, and St. Adalbert, all came to Poland via this route. The contemporary Gniezno-Praga Way of St. James attempts to recreate this old way- a way mentioned by Jörg Gail from Augsburg in 1563, as one of the three pilgrimage ways connecting the Kingdom of Poland with the rest of Europe (www.camino.net.pl). This way runs through Poznań, Leszno, Głogów, Zgorzelec, and Żytawa. The first section of this new way was the Dolnoślaska Droga Way of St. James, opened in 2005. Next, the Wielkopolska Droga Way was linked with the Dolnoślaska Droga Way, while the Żytawska Droga Way of St. James was opened in May of 2008. This particular way began on the so-called Old City Bridge, which connects a city divided between Germany and Poland: Görlitz–Zgorzelec. The way then crosses German territory, heading towards the Czech city of Prague. The Żytawska Droga Wav of St. James was created thanks to the involvement of various organizations from Poland, Germany, and the Czech Republic, Table 1 presents 12 Ways of St. James, which are located completely on Polish territory, as of the end of 2009. Not shown here is the Żytawska Droga Way of St. James, which begins on Polish territory but another 190 km are found in Germany and the Czech Republic.

Opening Date	Name of Way	Route	Province	Length
July 24, 2005	Dolnośląska Droga	Jakubów-Bolesławiec- Lubań-Zgorzelec Dolnośląski		164 km
September15, 2008		Góra św. Anny-Opole- Skorogoszcz-Brzeg	Opolskie	93 km
October 6, 2006	Via Regia	Brzeg-Wrocław-Legnica- Zgorzelec	Opolskie Dolnośląskie	240 km
May–Oct., 2009*		Tuchów-Tarnów-Brzesko- Kraków	Małopolskie	165 km
November 6, 2006	Wielkopolska Droga	Gniezno-Poznań-Leszno- Głogów	Wielkopolskie Dolnośląskie	234 km
April 20,2007	Way of St. James along the Piastowski Trail	Mogilno-Gniezno	Wielkopolskie	30 km
Oct. 2008–May. 2009*		Toruń-Trzemeszno	Kujawsko-pomorskie	103 km
April 28, 2007	Polska Droga	Olsztyn-Iława-Brodnica- Toruń	Warmińsko-mazurskie Kujawsko-pomorskie	240 km
September8, 2007	Lęborska Droga	Sianowo-Lębork-Łeba- Smołdzino	Pomorskie	90 km
July 1, 2008	Lubuska Droga	Murowana Goślina- Międzychód-Sulęcin-Słubice	Wielkopolskie Lubuskie	230 km
September 7, 2008	Jeleniogórska Droga (Via Cervimontana)	Jelenia Góra-Lubań	Dolnośląskie	55 km
July 25, 2009	Małopolska Droga	Sandomierz-Kotuszów-	Świętokrzyskie	192 km
October 25, 2008	Way of St. James	Pałecznica-Kraków	Małopolskie	
July 25, 2009	Ślężańska Droga	Ślęża-Sobótka-Środa Śląska	Dolnośląskie	55 km
August 1, 2009	Miedziana Droga	Ścinawa-Lubin-Chocianów	Dolnośląskie	45 km
June–Aug., 2009*	Nyska Droga	Głuchołazy-Nysa- Skorogoszcz	Opolskie	80 km

Table 1. Ways of St. James in Poland in 2009
(Source: own study mainly based on E. Mendyk (2008), E. Mendyk, F. Mróz (2009))

*Surveying and marking period of the given Way of St. James

Following the first inauguration of the Way of St. James in Poland in 2005, two new ways were created during the following year. In 2007, three more ways were created, while in 2008, four more Ways were created. In 2009, a second section of the Małopolska Droga Way of St. James was opened to the public, as were the Ślężańska Droga Way of St. James and the Miedziana Droga Way of St. James. The following three sections of way were in the process of being surveyed and marked in 2009: 1) a third section of the Via Regia Way of St. James, 2) a second section of the Polska Droga Way of St. James, and 3) the Nyska Droga Way of St. James.

Virtually all of the above listed Ways of St. James run west, which is the general direction of Santiago de Compostela in Spain. The Piastowski Way section of the Way of St. James, the Miedziana Droga Way of St. James, and the Lubuska Droga Way of St. James are unique in that they run virtually directly west. The southwestern direction is characteristic of the Polska Droga Way, connecting with some sections of the Gniezno-Praga Way. Also running southwest is the Małopolska Droga Way of St. James, which connects with the Via Regia Way of St. James in Kraków. Next, the Lęborska Droga Way of St. James, all run in the northwestern direction. Two new short ways have been created in 2009 – the Ślężańska Droga Way of St. James and the Nyska Droga Way of St. James. Both ways run north and were created as connecting ways to the "main" Via Regia Way, which runs from the Polish border with the Ukraine to the Polish border with Germany in the town of Zgorzelec.

Short ways – less than 100 km long – include connecting ways that link up with the Via Regia Way. This includes the Jeleniogórska Droga Way, the Ślężańska Droga Way, and the Nyska Droga Way. The list of short routes also includes connecting ways that link up with the Polska Droga Way. This includes the Miedziana Droga Way, one section of the Polska Droga Way running along the Piastowski Way, a section of the Via Regia Way near Góra Św. Anny/Brzeg, as well as the northernmost way, called the Lęborska Droga Way. This last way is part of a planned Northern Way that would connect Gdańsk with Germany via Ustka, Kołobrzeg, and Świnoujście. There also exists a planned Śląsko-Morawska Droga Way of St. James, running near the border with the Czech Republic. The marking and opening of all of the southern sections of the Via Regia Way are also planned. The same is true of connecting sections such as the Wągrowiec-Gniezno section and the Lublin-Sandomierz section.

Long ways (more than 190 km) are those Ways of St. James that pass through two provinces: the Wielkopolska Droga Way, the Małopolska Droga Way, the Lubuska Droga Way, the Polska Droga Way, and the Via Regia Way (table 1). As many as six different Ways of St. James pass through Dolnośląskie Province, which is where the first section of way was opened in 2005. In October of 2009, the total length of the Way of St. James in Poland was already 2,016 km, of which 348 km (3 ways) have yet to be opened, but are already being surveyed and marked.

It is also important to identify the different phases of the process of creating Ways of St. James in Poland. The first phase is the surveying phase designed to see how a way runs (or should run) across physical terrain. This phase is supported by careful historical studies and environmental analyses designed to identify the best routes that include local sanctuaries and churches dedicated to St. James. Although not all Ways of St. James in Poland begin in places with churches dedicated to St. James the Apostle – such as is the case with the Polska Droga Way and the Małopolska Droga Way – all the designated ways have at least one such site. While surveying potential sections of way, it is important to include as many sanctuaries, environmental sites, and exceptional tourist attractions as possible along the proposed route. For example, the Leborska Droga Way begins in Sianowo, a well-known sanctuary in Pomorze Province. A local parish church dedicated to the Birth of the Most Holy Virgin Mary is a pilgrimage site already known in the 14th century because of a specific object; namely, the figurine of Mary, the Mother of God with the Jesus Child in Her arms. The present-day parish church originates from the year 1816. More than 10,000 pilgrims gather at the "Indulgence Festival" dedicated to the Mother of God of Sianowo and the Queen of the Kaszuby Region. The Festival is also associated with the Celebration of the Scapular Mother of God (first Sunday after July 16th). About 5,000 216

pilgrims normally gather at the Celebration of the Birth of the Most Holy Virgin Mary (first Sunday after September 8th) (Belgrau, 2001).

Way planners do attempt to identify manmade attractions as well as environmental attractions when designing a way. An example of this type of approach is the Ślężańska Droga Way of St. James, which is a "religious trail" that helps individuals discover picturesque Wrocław County along with Ślężański Landscape Park, which includes the Ślęża Massif, the Sulistrowicki Stream Valley, the Kielczyńskie Hills, as well as Jańska Góra Mountain. The Bystrzyca Valley Landscape Park is yet another environmental protection area in Wrocław County. Its main attraction is the Bystrzyca River, which distinguishes itself with its regular riverbanks, marshy paleomeanders, as well as surrounding grasslands and pastures.

The next phase in the creation of a Way of St. James in Poland consists of promoting the newly-opened section of way. For example, invitations to "Polish Camino" concerts were inserted into newly published brochures (A4 folders) on the Way of St. James (Gniezno-Zgorzelec-Praga section). The A4 promotional folders are geared mainly towards individuals who are not familiar with "the Camino" and contain general information about the way running from the Polish region of Wielkopolska to the Czech Republic. Similar folders are available about the following Ways of St. James: 1) the Via Regia Way, specifically on the provinces of Śląskie, Opolskie, Dolnośląskie, and Małopolskie, and 2) the Via Cervimontana Way (www.camino.net). The Lęborska Droga Way is promoted using a colorful guidebook published in three languages (Lęborska Droga Way of St. James, 2007). Other promotional methods include the minting of commemorative "Jacobi" coins as well as the distribution of commemorative postcards and stamps at the St. James Fair in July in the town of Lębork.

The most important of all the organizational procedures is the Grand Opening of a Way, sometimes taking place in conjunction with an organized pilgrimage. This was the case with the Małopolska Droga Way of St. James on October 25, 2008. Pilgrims from Kraków as well as more distant corners of Małopolska Province, and Poland in general, participated in the inauguration of the Way. Pilgrims walked along a 10 km stretch from Polanowice to the Church of St. James the Greater in Więcławice Stare, where a Mass was celebrated. After the Mass, Bishop Józef Guzek blessed the road sign, which directs pilgrims to Santiago de Compostela. The road sign had been blessed earlier by Pope Benedict XVI during his visit to Kraków on May 28, 2006. The Governor of Małopolska Province, Marek Nawara, and Professor Antoni Jackowski of the Jagiellonian University Institute of Geography and Spatial Management officially unveiled the new road sign. (Mendyk, Mróz, 2009).

A wide array of organizations take part in the creation of the various sections of "the Camino" in Poland. Polish institutions engaged in the process of reopening Ways of St. James include local authorities such as City Hall, Township Authorities, Provincial Authorities, Societies of St. James, tourist organizations, convents, and parishes. Private individuals also participate in the process. Undoubtedly, the leader of the "St. James" project in Poland is the Franciscan Rural Foundation from Janice, near Jelenia Góra. The Foundation is engaged in many different projects associated with the Way of St. James in Poland. It also needs to be emphasized that the reopening of the Way of St. James in Poland is a recent initiative that has been developing very dynamically over the last few years, virtually "right before our eyes".

Given the impressive number of Ways of St. James already in existence in Poland, the following question comes to mind: How many people actually use them? No formal research has been done on this relatively new subject. According to 2007 estimates, about 200 people walked the Polish Ways of St. James (Mendyk, 2008). It appears that even after five years of existence and a good deal of promotional activity as well as new sections of way being added from time to time, this is still a niche form of religious tourism and

tourism in general in Poland. Time will show whether individuals will want to return to the European and Christian tradition of pilgrimage making or whether this is merely a niche idea of the early 21st century.

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