

## Caminoization at Sea: The Fjord Pilgrim Route in Norway

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### Abstract

Based on official/public documents and texts related to The Fjord Pilgrim route we will discuss how the process of caminoization is being expressed in Norway and in what ways this new invention relates both to the medieval pilgrimage culture of the country, and further how it inspires the development in the so-called pilgrimage renaissance in modern, Protestant Norway. As we see it, the Fjord route is a rare example of caminoization, that demonstrates the Camino's influence on contemporary pilgrimage in Europe. Focusing on the role of history and heritage in the Fjord Pilgrim route, the relation between caminoization, traditionalization and heritagization will be particularly emphasized.

**Key words:** St Olav Ways routes, the Fjord Pilgrim route, pilgrim culture, tourism, caminoization, traditionalization, heritagization

### Innovative caminoization

The latest contribution to what has been described as a pilgrim renaissance in Norway is *The Fjord Pilgrim route*, or in Norwegian “Kystpilegrimsleia.” Encompassing a 1080 kilometers long coastline and based on cultural heritage and coastal culture, the Fjord route “sets the stage for a modern fairytale.”<sup>1</sup> It follows the Norwegian west coast from the town Egersund in the south to the city of Trondheim further north. The route is a result of co-operation between dioceses and county councils along the coast and the Directorate for Cultural Heritage.<sup>2</sup> In 2018 the route was included in the official pilgrim route network called St Olav Ways, which has Trondheim as its final destination, the most important pilgrimage destination in medieval Scandinavia. The route is still under preparation, however. For instance, in 2019–2020 it was settled what localities will have the attractive status of regional pilgrim centre, i. e. the historic site Avaldsnes, the “holy island” Selja with the village Selje on the mainland, the historic site Smøla, and the city of Bergen. The combination of seaway journeys and

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<sup>1</sup> Fjord Norway. “The Fjord Pilgrim route”. <https://www.fjordnorway.com/planning-your-trip/tour-suggestions/the-fjord-pilgrim-route-from-stavanger-to-bergen-p4792293>

<sup>2</sup> The Pilgrim's Route/St. Olav Ways. “Pilegrimsleden – en reise som berører. Veien fram mot 2037. Langtidsplan 2019-2037 [https://www.pilegrimsfellesskapet.no/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Langtidsplan\\_Pilegrimsleden\\_05\\_03\\_19-red.pdf](https://www.pilegrimsfellesskapet.no/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Langtidsplan_Pilegrimsleden_05_03_19-red.pdf)

marked walking distances on land makes the Fjord Pilgrim route an anomaly in the St Olav Ways network. The description “a unique pilgrim-project in a world-scale”<sup>3</sup> is probably adequate.

The route simultaneously displays a range of features typical of recent pilgrimage development in Europe inspired by the Camino pilgrimage, not least in countries historically dominated by Protestantism, like Norway (Giuriati 1996; Frey 1998; Swatos and Tomasi 2002; Bowman 2007; Kraft 2007; Margry 2008; Bradley 2010; Østergaard and Christensen 2010; Olsen 2011; Selberg 2011; Reader 2014; Mikaelsson 2017b). Key elements, such as the emphasis on a variety of local heritage sites within a given geographical frame, constitute a characteristic model whose prototype is the enormously popular Santiago-pilgrimage in Northern Spain (Selberg 2011; Cusack 2015; Mikaelsson 2017a). Other key elements in this model are an emphasis on the journey as an end in itself and the value of movement (Mourinis 1992; Frey 1998; Amundsen 2002; Tomasi 2002; Margry 2008; Reader 2014). The “camino” pilgrim experiences both physically and mentally the beneficial effects of moving along, whether on foot or by other means.

The Fjord route follows the old coastal route used by commercial and private sea traffic. To convert this common fairway into a pilgrim itinerary it must be provided with new meanings and significances. This study investigates ideas and values about pilgrimage expressed in its construction. Thus, we do not analyze pilgrims’ expectations or experiences, we discuss the understandings, aims, and strategies that guide the preparation of the route. The overall question is what this meaning attribution can tell about contemporary pilgrim culture within the larger field of Norwegian, Nordic and international pilgrim cultures. Both material, notional and organizational aspects of this culture will be elucidated in this article. Our discussion will be guided by the concepts caminoization, heritagization, and traditionalization. It is our idea that the processes referred to by these concepts on the one hand are intermingled and on the other hand have been crucial for turning the common seaway into a pilgrimage route. Thus heritagization and traditionalization must be understood as vital elements in the caminoization that have created the Fjord pilgrim route.

According to Marion Bowman and Tina Sepp ”Caminoization”

refers to the process of introducing aspects of Camino pilgrimage to other routes and pilgrimage sites. Among the main features of Caminoization are the ideas that ‘real’ pilgrimage is done on foot and the journey is more important than the destination. In

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<sup>3</sup>Kystpilegrimsleia [The Fjord Pilgrim route] <http://kystpilegrimsleia.no/the-fjord-pilgrim-route/541/>

addition, the material culture of the Camino is spreading, including pilgrim passports and Compostela-like certificates, as are ritual activities such as pilgrim blessings” (Bowman and Sepp 201: 1).

Both heritagization and traditionalization concern the use and significance of the past in contemporary society. Heritage is a new cultural production that has recourse to the past (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1998). Traditionalization refers to how a continuity between then and now is shaped by tying contemporary values to a narrated past (Hymes 1975). Thus heritagization is about using the past for contemporary needs, traditionalization is about shaping continuity. A focus on heritage was also important in the reconstruction of the Camino (cf. Frey 1998; Margry 2008; Reader 2014). For instance, Peter Margry writes: “... the great interest shown by art historians in architecture and art objects along the route have converted the pilgrimage paths to Santiago into a constructed and invented heritage concept which should be widely appropriated in European society” (2008: 25). Similarly, to emphasize heritage attractions and include values and narratives tied to the past is an important part of the shaping of new meanings along the Norwegian coastal route.

The decision to create a coastal route in the south-western part of Norway was taken at a conference in the city of Stavanger in 2011. A project group was established in the same year, and its work resulted in 2013 in a pilot project report. The work was financed through the co-operation between the four dioceses and the five county councils along the coast from Rogaland to Sør-Trøndelag together with the Directorate for Cultural Heritage. The early stages in the development before the pilot project was determined are sketched in the pilot project report. This document, *Kystpilegrimsleia – Rogaland – Nidaros* (96 p)<sup>4</sup>, authored by the project leader, archaeologist Irene Baug, is our main source in the discussions about the Fjord route.

The Fjord route relates to centuries-old history in the West Country and to give some insight in this history a brief description of Norwegian medieval pilgrimage culture is provided in the first sub-chapter. Thereafter follows essential background information about the St Olav Ways network and its institutional structure in order to situate the Fjord route in its contemporary Norwegian framework. The following description of “Camino Norte” brings out the main elements of the coastal route and highlights its hallmarks as a specimen of caminoization. Finally the processes of heritagization and traditionalization are singled out in

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<sup>4</sup> Kystpilegrimsleia – Rogaland–Nidaros. Forprosjekt. [http://kystpilegrimsleia.no/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Kystpilegrimsleia\\_forprosjektrapport.pdf](http://kystpilegrimsleia.no/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Kystpilegrimsleia_forprosjektrapport.pdf)

order to throw light on how the pilgrim renaissance in modern Norway and more particularly the Fjord pilgrim route relates to and is inspired by the Camino culture.

### **Bridging past and present through pilgrimage**

A considerable number of local and minor pilgrim destinations existed in Norway during the Middle Ages. Many of these have been brought to light during the ongoing pilgrim renaissance and function today as locations for a variety of pilgrim events. Especially three destinations known from medieval times have been revitalized to a prominent position in today's pilgrimage: Trondheim with its cathedral and tradition of St Olav, Selja – an island on the West Coast where the Irish saint Sunniva according to legend died a martyr death, and Røldal stave church where a holy crucifix told to be sweating healing drops on Midsummer attracted pilgrims. Because of its remote geographical position in the West Country, pilgrimage to Røldal continued long after the Reformation. The pilgrimage was based on a folk legend and had a more popular character than Trondheim and Selja which were featured by saints, a cathedral, and monasteries (Hodne 2000: 193–198).

Trondheim – in medieval times named Nidaros, which today is the name of the diocese – was by far the most important pilgrim destination; attracting pilgrims from many parts of Europe to the healing relic of St. Olav in the largest and most imposing cathedral in Norway – today recognized as a National shrine (Luthen 1992; Imsen 2003; Andresen 2005; Mikaelsson 2019). The officially directed pilgrim politics in Norway since the early 1990s has been concentrated on the city of Trondheim and the figure of king Olav Haraldsson. A year after his violent death on the battlefield Stiklestad the king was canonized as St Olav in 1031, and thereafter he was hailed as *rex perpetuus Norvegiae*, “Norway's eternal king,” his relic residing in the magnificent Nidaros Cathedral. Speculations that the relic of St Olav might be hidden in an unknown place in it adds a certain touch of mystery to the church today (cf. Langås 2012). The cathedral and St Olav are the central focus points in the national pilgrimage construction called St Olav Ways, which up to this moment has been the official outcome of Norwegian pilgrimage development. A national historic aspect is thus interwoven in this pilgrimage. The focus on medieval Christianity and its role in the nation's history has been promoted, in particular, by Nidaros Diocese in the Church of Norway. The Church is no longer a Lutheran state church but a Lutheran national church, a *folkekirke* according to the Constitution. It has moved away from the Protestant hostility towards pilgrimage and saints's cult and now reclaims the medieval Catholic past as religious heritage. The participation of

the Church has contributed to underscore local churches, religious monuments and sacred sites as heritage attractions in Norwegian pilgrimage.

Today, Selja holds the ruins of a Benedictine monastery from the 12th century as well as a large cave supposed to be the place where St Sunniva – according to the legend - died a martyr death in the last half of the tenth century. Selja was a bishopric centre during one hundred years from 1068 to 1170, when this status was taken over by the city of Bergen and the shrine containing the relic of Sunniva was moved. The shrine was placed in Bergen's cathedral, the Christ Church. This edifice was demolished right before the Reformation in 1537, and what became of the shrine is a mystery. However, Selja continued as a sanctuary sought by pilgrims after St. Sunniva's *translatio* since the holy relics of Sunniva's followers, *the Seliumen*, and also of St Alban, remained on the island (Luthen 1997; Rindal 1997; Ommundsen 2010; Steinsland 2012).

Both Selja and Trondheim are places connected with the Christianization of Norway and the history of the notable Viking kings Olav Tryggvason (ca 963–1000) and Olav Haraldsson (995–1030). Selja and Trondheim are therefore national memorial places and scenes of official anniversary celebrations. It is hardly a coincidence that the take-off of contemporary pilgrimage in Norway coincided with the official celebrations of the Christianization – a series of grand events which started in 1995 on the island of Moster, continued in 1996 on Selja, and will culminate in Trondheim and at Stiklestad in the county of Trøndelag a few miles north of Trondheim in 2030, a thousand years after king Olav Haraldsson died in the battle.

The Reformation in 1537 made Norway a subordinate partner in the political union with Denmark. The Danish Reformation kings were dedicated Protestants and as a consequence pilgrimage was forbidden in Denmark/Norway (Imsen 2016: 28–34). The old pilgrim culture and the cult of saints in Norway were thereafter gradually wiped out by state politics. After a pause of many hundred years, a national pilgrim culture has again developed inspired by international pilgrimage growth. This situation exemplifies the recent growing importance of pilgrimage on a global level (Margry 2008; Bradley 2009; Reader 2014), and we may see the Norwegian revival as a localization of a global trend.

The national element of official Norwegian pilgrimage was demonstrated in 1997, a landmark year in the country's recent pilgrim history, when Trondheim celebrated its 1000 years anniversary. The city had chosen the pilgrim rather than the Viking as anniversary logo and the reception in the city in 1997 of the first group of pilgrims that had walked the new route between Oslo and Trondheim was a high-point of the celebrations, a media event

marking a new pilgrimage era in the medieval pilgrim capital (Eriksen 1999). As a sort of Norwegian “Camino Francés” the pathway of 640 kilometers between Oslo and Trondheim was formally opened by Crown Prince Haakon as the first official route (Mikaelsson 2017b: 336).

### **St Olav Ways**

A lengthy and complex coastal route would certainly never have been imagined without the existence of the St Olav Ways network. The Fjord Route is the answer to criticism of regional imbalance in the official pilgrim arrangement in Norway, which up till then had been concentrated on the country’s eastern region. The criticism was publicly articulated in the wake of the report *På livets vei. Pilegrimsmotivet – et nasjonalt utviklingsprosjekt* (2008)<sup>5</sup>, written by Per Kvisti Uddu on the authority of the government. It met a critical reception in the West Country, which felt that the western region had been neglected (Mikaelsson 2010). Uddu’s report is nevertheless a key document in the history of modern pilgrimage in Norway, and though modified, it has been decisive for the development in the following years.

The irrefutable allegation that most pilgrims to Trondheim in the Middle Ages did not travel through the great valleys where the pilgrim routes had been established – the majority would come by boat and follow the old sea routes along the coast – gradually gained momentum. The sea was indeed the main traffic artery, essential for foreign relations and local contacts. Through robber raids and trade activities abroad in the Viking era the Norwegian population was acquainted with Christianity and gradually adopted it. Along the coast, memories of important events in the history of Christianization and early Christian history are associated with a range of local places. This is an additional argument for establishing a maritime pilgrim route to Trondheim under the common symbol of St Olav, the main figure in the country’s conversion to Christianity.

The history of modern pilgrim development in Norway reaches back to the 1980s. Since the 1990s pilgrimage has been an institutionalized affair, worked out through various cooperative projects by a number of state, county and municipal authorities, as well as local associations and resource persons. The Church of Norway has been an active participant from the start, especially the ecclesiastical milieu in Trondheim, in the centre of Nidaros Diocese. Processes and project plans have resulted in the six St Olav Ways routes on land, and, as

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<sup>5</sup> The title may be given the following (clumsy) translation: On the road of life. The pilgrim motif – a national development project.

mentioned above, since 2018 the Fjord Pilgrim route has been a seventh addition to this network (Mikaelsson 2017b: 333–340). The St Olav Ways is a very good example of the spread of camino-like pilgrimages outside Spain.

Walking is the chief manner of moving along the six St Olav Ways routes on land. Inspired by Camino shell-marking, the routes are marked with a special symbol, a combination of the cross of St Olav and the walknut (a road sign signaling touristic sights). The marking gives the way an added value. In one way unusual – in another recognizable – it is a production of global recognizability in the local production of pilgrimage. When the common paths are signposted, they are aestheticized and re-born both as pilgrims' roads and religious heritage (Selberg 2011). The signposts function as an external conceptual frame that in addition to showing the way continually reminds the individual that his or her journey is something special. After reaching Trondheim, pilgrims may have a diploma, the Norwegian “Compostela,” *Olavsbrevet*, after showing their pilgrim passports at the pilgrim office in Nidaros Pilgrim Centre. The passport documents that the person has either walked the last 100 kilometers or bicycled 200 kilometers to Trondheim, which are the conditions for having this diploma. Thus only physical exertion is necessary. The conditions are the same for having the diploma in Santiago the Compostela, only that here pilgrims may choose between the Compostela if they claim to have a spiritual or religious motivation for their journey, or a non-religious Certificate of Welcome.

A National pilgrim office, *Nasjonalt pilegrimssenter*, in Trondheim has since 2011 been assigned the overall responsibility for the routes and further pilgrim development. A common strategy for pilgrimage was decided in 2012 by relevant state departments. Here it is stated that further development of pilgrim traditions shall take into account cultural monuments, nature, economic conditions, the Church and the Olav heritage. Further it is specified that the “the pilgrim implementation shall have its main focus on the approved routes that have Nidaros as their destination and be rooted in the St Olav heritage”.<sup>6</sup> Thus pilgrimage growth in Norway has to a considerable extent been politically steered and reflects the interests of county and municipal authorities, especially in Trøndelag and Trondheim, and also Nidaros Diocese since the 1980s (Mikaelsson 2017b: 340). During the 1980s pilgrims started to show up in the city and the cathedral clergy was challenged as to how the pilgrims

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<sup>6</sup> Fornyings-, administrasjons- og kirke departementet et al. 2012. *Strategi for pilegrimssatsing*. <http://pilegrimsleden.no>. Translation by the authors. In Norwegian: “Pilegrimssatsingen skal ha hovedfokus på de godkjente pilegrimsledene som har Nidaros som mål og være forankret i Olavsarven.”

should be received (Andresen 2005: 112–114; 121; 129). In a similar manner the Fjord route would not have been created without local engagement in the West Country.

The comparison to the Camino is often present in various descriptions of Norwegian pilgrimage and The St Olav's ways is also described like this: "The St Olav Ways - the pilgrim paths to Trondheim is the name of the old pilgrim trails leading to Nidaros, Trondheim. The historic trails have been used by pilgrims and other travelers since the year 1032."<sup>7</sup> That the Camino in Spain has functioned as a model, is evident in the emphasis on creating coherent routes, which is also an important principle in the construction of the Fjord route.

In cooperation with pilgrim actors in Sweden and Denmark the Scandinavian network of St Olav Ways was established in 2010 and attained European Cultural Routes status in the same year. Trondheim, positioned as a replica of Santiago de Compostela in Northern Spain, is the final destination for all the routes. Its status is legitimized by the city's history as the main pilgrim destination in Northern Europe during the Middle Ages, and thus establishes an imagined continuity characteristic of traditionalization processes.

Touristic aspects inherent in the St Olav Ways are pointed out by Ian Reader in his book *Pilgrimage in the Market Place* (2014), where he characterizes this network as an example of the "emphasis on (or reinvention of) pilgrimages as hiking tourist trails" (2014: 190). He refers to the promotion of the trail in *Visit Norway*, the official travel information agency "whose website promotes it as a means of discovering 'Norway's rich religious and cultural heritage as well as the spectacular landscape'" (2014: 191). The touristic intentions involved in Norwegian pilgrim politics are equally present in the Fjord route. As it is, an officially organized pilgrim route in secularized Norway is rather unthinkable without an eye for the possible touristic gains of the investments.

### **"Camino norte": The Fjord Pilgrim route**

More than any other routes in Norway, the coastal route symbolizes the proud history of the seafaring nation: The very name of the country means "the northern way," the way to the north along the coast. Thus the national historic aspect of St Olav Ways is here given a new addition, cf. the phrasing in the pilot project report:<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> <https://pilegrimsleden.no/en/about/om-pilegrimsleden>

<sup>8</sup> Kystpilegrimsleia [The Fjord Pilgrim route]. <http://kystpilegrimsleia.no/the-fjord-pilgrim-route/541>) Kystpilegrimsleia – Rogaland–Nidaros. Forprosjekt.

Norway, stemming from the old “*Nor-wegen*” meaning “the way going north” have always been the home of a seafaring nation. Travelling the world in their long-ships the Vikings picked up more than just tangible valuables along the way.

The water-roads of the Vikings soon became the paths of merchants trading goods, and pilgrims from northern Europe coming to the shrines of St Sunniva at Selja monastery and St Olav at the Nidaros cathedral in Trondheim. Today you can experience the north way in the old way.

In the same document it is claimed that the Fjord route represents the most common pilgrim route to Trondheim since the eleventh century with a reference to a document from 1075, *Bremens Gesta Hamburgensis ecclesia pontificum*, written by the bishop Adam of Bremen. The coastal route is here compared with a land-based route from Scania in Sweden and claims that the coastal route was generally preferred by foreign as well as Norwegian pilgrims at this early period.<sup>9</sup>

In the pilot project report the intention is said to encourage the coastal dimension in the national pilgrimage commitment and to highlight the pilgrims’ itinerary along the coast together with cultural monuments and heritage. By that it is alleged that the local pilgrim destinations on the way to Nidaros will be strengthened. Moreover, the use of this fairway will strengthen knowledge about history and cultural heritage, better understanding of environmental issues, physical activities and facilitation for use and preservation of cultural heritage.<sup>10</sup> The journey along the Fjord Route is described like this:

The route starts in Rogaland county (58° N) and leads the way to Trondheim (63°N) and follows in the footsteps and paddle strokes the old pilgrims going to the shrines of St. Sunniva in Selje and St. Olav in Trondheim. The Fjord Pilgrim route takes you along the most varied and dramatic landscapes of Norway. From the flat and wind-ravaged south you get to experience how the landscape change with rising steep cliffs, deep fjords, rich archipelagos and spectacular, breathtaking colour play. Taking you by the passage to all of the Norwegian fjords, and the people that have made their homes for centuries, in the most unparalleled landscapes in the world, the Fjord Pilgrim route is an experience of a lifetime.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Kystpilegrimsleia – Rogaland–Nidaros. Forprosjekt.

[http://kystpilegrimsleia.no/wp:content/uploads/2014/06/Kystpilegrimsleia\\_forprosjektrapport](http://kystpilegrimsleia.no/wp:content/uploads/2014/06/Kystpilegrimsleia_forprosjektrapport) pdf p.9–10.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p.4–5.

<sup>11</sup> Translated by the authors. Fornyings-, administrasjons- og kirke departementet et al. 2012. *Strategi for pilegrimssatsing*. <http://pilegrimsleden.no>.

The head-line of this description is “Gateway to the Fjords” a well-known slogan for tourism in the western part of Norway. Ordinary tourists as well as pilgrims in the West Country are thus offered the same attractions: breathtaking scenery, interesting locations, and heritage of various sorts. It is demonstrated by the comprehensive tourist guide *Opptur kysten* (Djupedal et al. 2014): on the front page the contents are specified as relevant for “wandering, cycling, car, boat, culture, pilgrim,” and descriptions of 663 experiences are announced.<sup>12</sup> According to the pilot project report The Fjord Pilgrim route represents a kind of tourism that will contribute to a deeper understanding of coastal history, pilgrims’ traditions and Christianity together with the cultural historical aspects.<sup>13</sup> Whether it is called tourism or pilgrimage, the product on offer is the same. The description of the route states

the Fjord Pilgrim route aims to show forth a signposted and complete route adapted to the ways of slow-tourism by the middle of 2017. Rooted in local traditions, focusing on local food and cultural heritage you will experience a vast variety of types of accommodation and transport and find experiences suited for all types of modern pilgrims. Parts of the path will be adapted to cyclists and walkers and parts are better suited for small boats and kayaks.<sup>14</sup>

As indicated in the above citation, interests serving the tourist industry as well as pilgrims’ needs are very present in the Fjord route invention. It exemplifies the difficulty in making a clear-cut division between tourism and pilgrimage, a much-debated issue in many pilgrim studies in the recent decades (Aukland 2016; Norman 2011; Norman and Cusack 2015; Reader 2014). The approach exemplifies Michael Stausberg’s argument about the ‘blurred boundaries’ and ‘conflation’ between pilgrimage and tourism today (Stausberg 2011: 64–68). The Fjord route, as well as the other St Olav Ways routes, demonstrates the appropriateness of Marion Bowman and Tiina Sepp’s view of the situation as a “continuum from tourism to pilgrimage along which people might slide and recalibrate according to circumstances” (Bowman and Sepp 2019: 7). Their definition of caminoization mainly emphasizing external, physical and material features (p. 3) is more to the point in a Norwegian context than Peter Margry’s understanding of caminoization as a proliferation of sacred or spiritual footpaths

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<sup>12</sup> In Norwegian: *Vandring. Sykling. Bil. Båt. Kultur. Pilegrim.*

<sup>13</sup> Kystpilegrimsleia – Rogaland–Nidaros. Forprosjekt.

[http://kystpilegrimsleia.no/wp:content/uploads/2014/06/Kystpilegrimsleia\\_forprosjektrapport](http://kystpilegrimsleia.no/wp:content/uploads/2014/06/Kystpilegrimsleia_forprosjektrapport) pg4

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

“which stimulates people all over the world to depart on foot for a spiritual journey or a reflective quest for the meaning of life” (Margry 2015:162). Neither the St Olav Ways network or its latest addition the Fjord Pilgrim route are designed primarily for people on a spiritual quest as we can see in the above-mentioned description of the Fjord route as a product to suit “all types of modern pilgrims,” implicitly denying an essentialist conception of a pilgrim.

Since times immemorial there has been an outer and an inner coastal route. The Fjord Pilgrim route follows the inner route with its many harbours and localities offering lodgings, shops and cafés. 26 places are singled out as key places, where the pilgrim passport can be stamped. A minimum of six stamps in the passport is required for getting the pilgrim diploma in Trondheim. Thus, the requirement of walking the last 100 kilometers to Trondheim has been dropped. The signposts are the same as the others used in the St Olav Ways routes.

Among the monuments described in the pilot project report are a number of medieval churches, ruins of monasteries, and stone crosses. Descriptions of locations with religious heritage dominate the planned route. The main way of activating churches as heritage for pilgrims is to arrange prayer services, minor pilgrimages and guided tours. Some of the medieval churches along the coast are open to the pilgrims and a couple of services of special interest for them are specified. Bowman and Sepp mention that visiting cathedrals in order to be connected to the world view of former generations is also an expression of caminoization (Bowman and Sepp 2019: 4). The same could be asserted of other old churches, in Norway and elsewhere, which through this kind of heritagization of religion enable people to feel in touch with the past. Without renouncing its relevance for Christian believers, heritagization in such cases means that religion is adjusted to the interests of both atheists, nones, and spiritual seekers.

As said above, movement is one of the defining characteristics of the pilgrimage culture inspired by the Camino. In Norwegian and Protestant contexts moving by human power has become a main characteristic of being a pilgrim. Movement is a many-sided concept in a pilgrim context, however. Simon Coleman and John Eade distinguishes between four understandings of movement in pilgrimage research: movement as performative action, as embodied action, as part of a semantic field, and as metaphor (Coleman and Eade 2004: 16–17). These are all relevant dimensions for the kind of pilgrim journeys being institutionalized through the St Olav Ways routes. Like in Spain, the performative action takes place through prescribed travel on established routes, and movement as semantic and metaphorical expressions resides for instance in the route descriptions of the mental,

experiential and historical journeys that may be enjoyed during the travel. In order to experience the Fjord route journey as a pilgrimage, to move slowly is strongly recommended in the pilot project report. Sailing and paddling – in addition to walking – are ideal means of movement along the Fjord route:

Sailing, paddling or motorboat travel are recommended as means of locomotion, but the speed should be slow, thus allowing reflection and experiences of the wonderful nature. A spiritual journey needs time and calm, and old vessels are just suitable for this purpose.<sup>15</sup>

Unlike their forefathers modern pilgrims don't *have* to walk or row – moving in such ways represents an option. Self-imposed physical exertion is a pre-eminent defining marker of the 'new' pilgrim on a journey that is an end in itself. Yet the complex infrastructure and many sights of the Fjord route invite other forms of pilgrim travels. An example is the 'pilgrim voyage' arranged in 2011 by the diocesan council of Stavanger in cooperation with the training ship Gann. About 160 pilgrims participated in the voyage on Gann from Stavanger to reach the celebration of St Olav's Day in Trondheim 29 July. On the way the travelers visited key places in the Fjord route, such as Avaldsnes, Moster, Bergen, Gulen, Kinn, Selja, Veøy and Grip. Many of them are places that have a part in the history of nationalization and Christianization. This particular journey was meant to function as a step forward in the development of the coastal route (Olsen 2013:6). However, it can also be regarded as a model for similar "pilgrim voyages," perhaps even "pilgrim cruises," along the coast.

A significant result of the caminoization in Norway is that a number of different places with their own stories and characteristics are subsumed under a common umbrella allowing one place and its history a superior position and extra attention. In the Fjord route, this is most noteworthy in the case of Selja, which has been a modern pilgrim destination for decades. The island sanctuary is primarily connected with the female saint Sunniva (Selberg 2005; Mikaelsson 2005). As a part of the Fjord pilgrim route Selja is now also emphasized as a station on the seaway pilgrim journey to Trondheim, the medieval centre in the cult of St Olav. Without the officially directed caminoization Norwegian pilgrim development would probably not have become equally centralized and focused on Trondheim.

### **Invoking the presence of the past**

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<sup>15</sup> <http://kystpilegrimsleia.no/the-fjord-pilgrim-route/541>

In the remaining part of the article characteristics of the Fjord route as part of caminoisation will be elucidated through the concepts of traditionalization and heritagization. Both concepts refer to how ideas of time contribute to construct relations between different aspects in the process of converting the seaway to a pilgrimage way. Traditionalization is basically about shaping *continuity* between past and present (Hymes 1975), heritagization is basically about creating *values* through relating the past to present objects and ideas (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998; Eriksen 2020). Heritagization may refer to a more “official” aspect – for instance are both local and national authorities involved in such processes. Traditionalization may be shaped in various informal narratives connected to pilgrimage. The processes are often intermingled and interdependent, and this is the case with discourse about St Olav Ways.

In her book *Pilgrim stories* (1998) by Nancy Frey, traditionalization as a process within modern pilgrimage is exemplified when she refers to how the pilgrimage to Santiago is said to be based on a tradition reaching back to the foundation of Christianity (1998: 8). The idea of such a long tradition as an aspect of the Camino demonstrates that ideas of tradition as a value is part of caminoization. A characteristic of the modern Santiago pilgrims is that they “often want to travel the same routes as the medieval pilgrims who first ventured to Santiago to experience them in the same way” (1998: 7).

Naming the pilgrim roads *St Olav Ways* calls forth the presence of the past in this pilgrimage. However, the Fjord Pilgrim route presents itself as “the most exiting tourism development project in Norway in recent years”<sup>16</sup> - thus indicating that this pilgrimage route represents something *new*. At the same time, it is also stated that a distinctive characteristic of the Fjord route is that it represents the *oldest*, and with that the most original pilgrim route in a Norwegian context. Establishing – or rather claiming to re-establish – the Fjord route is said to blow new life into a practice many hundred years old, indicating that modern pilgrims along the coast follow “in the paddle strokes” of the old pilgrims. Referring to the Fjord route as a *new* invention but at the same time as the *oldest* route, continuity between the new and the medieval past is created and with that relations to people from earlier times, once travelling along this route. This is a symbolic construction of connections between activities in the present and interpretations of activities in the past (Hymes 1975). What is new is thus given the symbolic value *traditional* (Handler & Linnikin 1984).

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.fjordnorway.com/planning-your-trip/tour-suggestions/the-fjord-pilgrim-route-from-stavanger-to-bergen-p4792293>

References in the St Olav Ways to forefathers, to medieval times, to tradition etc. are frequent. In one document - *Pilegrimsleden – en reise som berører. Veien frem mot 2037. Langtidplan 2019-2037*<sup>17</sup> we find this description about modern pilgrimage: “To walk on historical ways to old sacred destinations is the hallmark of pilgrimage, both historically and today (3)” thus indicating that also the pilgrims in the past wanted to connect to older times. In another document we can read: “In Norway we have a long and strong pilgrim tradition” (5).<sup>18</sup> Pilgrimage in the modern Norwegian context must be considered a new phenomenon, yet it is talked about as if it has continuity far back in times. This may sound like a paradox. However, to Norwegian organizers it seems as if its legitimation lies in the idea that pilgrimage is a very old tradition. As it is, continuity between past and present in this particular field is shaped as a value in itself. In the present pilgrim culture, this value is accompanied by significant social benefits: To dress new ideas and creations in the clothes of tradition and continuity is to give them legitimacy and authority.

Attention to the heritage monuments along the coast is significant in transforming this common shipping lane into a pilgrim route, cf. the following presentation:

“With the motif of pilgrimage as strategic priority, the historical roads and holy places along the coast will be in focus. The heritage monuments themselves will be of interest to the travelers: The spiritual and religious dimension is not the single motivation for people to go on pilgrimages. To many; the cultural historical aspect and focus on the coastal history through thousands of years is also of importance. The fjord pilgrim route thus represents a historical journey where unique cultural memorials and landscapes are presented as important to the travelers and give new insights. The journey will produce knowledge about history and cultural monuments along the earlier main thoroughfare - the coast.”<sup>19</sup>

It is not easy to see what is of most importance here: pilgrimage or heritage. It seems that they are two sides of the story, or that they mutually contribute to each other (Di Giovine & Garcia-Fuentes 2016). The heritage monuments may be seen as a gate to former times. Creating the past in the present is significant in re-constructing pilgrimage, or rather constructing it in a modern, and Protestant, context. The attention toward cultural monuments

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<sup>17</sup> The Pilgrim’s Route/St.Olav’s Ways “Pilegrimsleden – en reise som berører Veien fram mot 2037. [https://www.pilegrimsfelleskapet.no/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Langtidplan\\_Pilegrimsleden\\_05\\_03\\_19-red.pdf](https://www.pilegrimsfelleskapet.no/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Langtidplan_Pilegrimsleden_05_03_19-red.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Kystpilegrimsleia – Rogaland–Nidaros. Forprosjekt. [http://kystpilegrimsleia.no/wp:content/uploads/2014/06/Kystpilegrimsleia\\_forprosjektrapport](http://kystpilegrimsleia.no/wp:content/uploads/2014/06/Kystpilegrimsleia_forprosjektrapport)

along the Fjord route is part of the process of heritagisation which implies a reinterpretation of older times based on contemporary issues (Roigé & Frigole 2010: 12). In traditionalization processes narratives are constructed to shape the relation between now and then. Heritage concerns a specific type of relation, Eriksen (2020) states. “It is about bonds produced by people *in* the present connecting them to cultural goods that in some way *are* from or thought to represent the past. [...]. The important point is that its power – the power of heritage – resides not in the past, but in the present.” Within the concept of heritagization lies – as Rodney Harrison (2013) has stated various changes in the public’s relation with former times, among them a widespread commercialization of the past as “experience” (69).

The modern pilgrim culture in Norway contains especially one particular aspect that gives it the qualities of cultural heritage. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998) defines heritage as a new mode of cultural production in the present that has recourse to the past, it produces something new in the present, but it refers to the past. Cultural heritage speaks to the present but does so in terms of the past. In her opinion heritage gives *new* life to dead things (149-151), it is a value-adding process. Through heritagization a forgotten religious practice like pilgrimage, is given a new life, but at the same time claiming a kind of continuity to the past. The common sailing route – used both in old and new times - are by being turned into pilgrimage roads and heritage given an added value. The same is the case with monuments and other elements along the coast.

## **Conclusion**

The overall inspiration for the construction of the contemporary Norwegian pilgrim culture is caminoization. Especially in the emphasis on *journeying* – both on land and at sea - as the most significant characteristic feature of pilgrimage both in former and present times. The unity with the pilgrims of times past are also part of this – expressed in the idea of walking in the footsteps or rowing in the paddle strokes of the former pilgrims. Heritagization and traditionalization are also important processes in the construction of the contemporary pilgrimage culture and are also processes defining the Camino and its attractions. Pilgrimage – even if it in most aspect is a new and tourist focused construction in a Norwegian context does not present itself as new. The materials analyzed here contain references to the thousands of pilgrims who have walked this way in the olden times is a general feeling and reference when the talk is about hiking along the long roads. The shaping of continuity, and the construction of the connections between present and past are prominent both in official and personal accounts about pilgrimage in Norway.

The Norwegian context does not feature many sources on which to construct a pilgrim culture. The cultural monuments along the various pilgrim roads are from the point of view of the planners seen and narrated as witnesses about pilgrimage in former times, and as eyewitnesses to the former pilgrims walking the ways. Thus, the monuments are a connection between then and now, and them and us.

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