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*The landscape of a pilgrim way of cultural interest:
the Triana Christian Brotherhood's route
to the Shrine of Our Lady of El Rocio*

Pilgrim ways are strongly symbolic itineraries that enable the environment and landscape to be enjoyed. The present article focuses on the study of the landscape of one of the five main ways along which pilgrims travel to the hamlet of El Rocio, specifically, that followed by the Triana Christian Brotherhood from Seville to El Rocio.

This article seeks to contribute to knowledge, dating, description and interpretation from a geographical perspective by digging deeper into the knowledge of the landscape along a linear route which is divided into sections and passes through a variety of homogeneous geographical sub-areas. Intense prior fieldwork was carried out by walking the way to complement the developed geographical methodology. Valuable information has also been collected about the perceptions of some of the main actors who, as prominent pilgrims, have undertaken and experienced the pilgrimage along these ways on numerous occasions. The main goal is to offer a sequential vision of the landscape as it develops along an itinerary with cultural, social and environmental values and a clearly identified route that is traversed at all times of the year by trekkers, cyclists and people on horseback for reasons of leisure, and crowds, mainly of pilgrims, during the days preceding the religious festival of Pentecost. From the mid-19th century to the present day, during this period, when the Festival of Our Lady of El Rocio takes place, the itinerary studied has been continuously travelled by a range of social actors in keeping with a recognised institutional organisation and with a specific aim.

The following methodological schema is used as the basis for determining the main features and values of the itinerary:

- I Initial proposal and contextualisation of the way under consideration.
- II Landscape analysis and characterisation.
- III Landscape diagnosis.
- IV Determination of criteria for landscape evaluation.

I With regard to the initial proposal and in relation to its contextualisation and characterisation, it should be noted that the route of the studied itinerary begins in the Triana neighbourhood of the city of Seville and the final destination is the hamlet of El Rocio, which comes under the municipality of Almonte, in Huelva province. The itinerary has a length of approx. seventy kilometres and runs in a south-westerly direction through the provinces of Seville and Huelva. Some sections of the way follow ancient cattle trails linked to country roads and tracks to form the complete route.

In relation to the nature of the landscape, the way can be divided into four sections, each of which has its own particular defining characteristics in landscape terms: the first section is the road out of the city of Seville across the Triana flood-meadow, the second is the passage through the area called El Aljarafe, the third section passes through the area referred to as Huelva county, the Condado de Huelva, as far as the Guadalquivir marshes and the fourth, and last, crosses the marshes to the hamlet

of El Rocio. A variety of causes have created the landscapes through which the way passes and they have been shaped over centuries with basic and widely-differentiated historical functionalities by their inhabitants, who have moulded their own unique characters.

II With respect to these landscapes' foundations and natural components, the following is a synthesis of their main natural features according to the above-indicated division into sections.

The morphology of the Guadalquivir River's flood plain is shaped by a series of terraces creating flood plateaux lithologically formed of silt, aggregates, pebbles and sandstone, alluvial materials which, deep underground, interleave with lenses of sand and gravel, and, at the surface, compact loams. Modellings of old river courses and meanders of the Guadalquivir stand out in its flat morphology. The distance that the pilgrimage caravan covers is slightly over two kilometres along the A-49 dual carriageway from Seville to Huelva and Portugal. Many sections of the road are constructed on pillars and pontoons due to the lack of stability inherent in the alluvial soil and the recurrent rise in the waters of the Guadalquivir River that flood part of the route in the La Vega flood plain. The fact that the route is raised and linear enables expansive views enhanced by the absence of any arboreal vegetation and the flatness of La Vega, where the ochre background typical of clay soils dominates.

El Aljarafe is a cupriferous sandstone platform on the right bank of the Guadalquivir, between the said river and the Guadiamar River. Basically tabular in shape and tilted slightly to the south-west, it is a reminder of the old land surface of sea silt deposits dating from the end of the Miocene Pliocene period. The limestone and ferrous soils give an orange-coloured background to the landscape along the over twenty kilometres that the caravan covers, while in other areas it turns yellow where sandy soils predominate. The way to El Rocio crosses the first part of El Aljarafe nearest the city, following the old Sevilla - Huelva road and later joining the Castilleja de la Cuesta - Villamanrique de la Condesa road and heading towards old cattle trails that lead to the Guadalquivir islands.

On maps of Andalusia's water system, the Guadiamar is shown as the last tributary that flows into the right bank of the Guadalquivir before the latter reaches the Atlantic and the western limit of El Aljarafe. The Condado district that the river borders on its eastern side tilts from the northeast to the southeast and is one of the reasons why the river course closely follows the Aljarafe escarpment

and why no river terraces exist on this side of its bank. In other words, it underlies the very plastic, unstable and easily eroded loamy soils. However, this is not the case in another place through which the caravan passes, known as the Vado del Quema. Here various flood soil terraces fan out and are scaled thanks to ramps and slopes and low-lying hills covered in pastures or traditionally well-cared-for crops.

The last part of the route that the caravan covers is a distance of over twenty kilometres through part of the Guadalquivir marshlands. This is an area of lakes created over centuries by the competing actions of the river and the Atlantic tides. The area is basically flat, extensive, homogeneous, closed, unhealthy, inhospitable, slightly uneven but with drops of no more than half a metre, and with silty, sandy ground that is also one of the natural features that define it.

III The previously-mentioned subdivision into sections is also followed with respect to visibility, the scenic aspects, the main perceptions and territorial aspects.

The first scenes that meet the pilgrims' eyes when they leave the city of Seville through the Triana district on their way to El Rocio are basically views of the compact historic city and the shapes of an old suburb, albeit very changed and heterogeneous, the course of the Guadalquivir River proper, and the more or less urbanised metropolitan sectors in the La Vega plain.

The Guadalquivir River is an almost omnipresent and oft-perceived landscape feature in the city of Seville. It flows through the sector of Triana like a huge artery that showcases the city's monuments and the neighbourhood's bridge as the gateway between the two sectors of the city. It enables landscapes to be seen with deep, open perspectives both in the direction of the city centre and towards the Triana neighbourhood and the El Aljarafe escarpment, which looms in formal contrast, as a backdrop and the boundary of urban space due to its height and surface area.

To climb the El Aljarafe along the old Sevilla - Huelva road one has to ascend the short but steep ramps of the Cuesta del Caracol to the top of the Carambolo Ridge, leaving the Pañoleta crossroads behind. These ramps are steep slopes with unstable marly clay at their foothills. Their bends zig-zag back and forth, cracked by the heat and humidity, and they are climbed to the measured beat marked by the draught animals (oxen) and in the customary silence of the caravan of ox-carts. They provide the perfect conditions for the views to the rear of the image of Seville as a single entity, with its slender primal tower,

the sinuous, silver Guadalquivir River with its green pastures, and the fuzzy vision of the blue facade of Los Alcores and the first dark step of the Sierra Morena mountains, which remain fixed in the traveller's eyes.

Then, having passed through the urban centre of Castilleja de la Cuesta along the town's main thoroughfare, the Calle Real, and leaving aside the more urbanised areas of the nearby towns of Bormujos and Gines, the caravan enters fully into the realm of El Aljarafe. Due to its fresh, sandy soils, the landscape of the county of El Aljarafe originally consisted of a more varied agricultural patchwork than the flood plain, but it has gradually evolved towards a situation of monoculture; in physiognomic terms and from a certain distance, the cultivated olive groves take on the appearance of woods with very closely- and harmoniously-arranged trees. It is an image that changes hue with the passing of the seasons and in the course of the day.

Coming out the other side of the county of El Aljarafe, the caravan passes through small patches of pine trees and holm oaks that presage the proximity of the Guadalquivir marshes. It forges ahead through these pastures and wastelands, which the pilgrims remember as significant landscapes as far as the Guadiamar River; the indisputable western boundary of El Aljarafe and a very significant element in the landscape of the El Rocio Way. Forging the river in the place known as El Quema is one of the most-recounted and oft-related milestones due to the symbolism attributed to it, as it is considered a place of 'baptism' for pilgrims.

Another landmark section of this Pilgrim Way, located some ten kilometres from the Guadiamar River, is the Raya Real Trail. It is over ten kilometres long, virtually in a straight line, and some twenty metres across. Not a main transport route but a cattle trail, this track has had major territorial importance for centuries and has shaped a very unique landscape mainly composed of horizontal planes, immense sandbanks and a pine forest. Pine trees are a key defining element in this long visual sequence. Their apparent simplicity and their succession in repeated consecutive horizontal planes produce a stunningly unique shape that induces a perception of great immensity.

The description of the recent processes and dynamics of the territorial and landscape aspects of this El Rocio Way also follow the sequence by section.

In relation to the territorial and landscape aspects, it was during the first third of the 20th century that the first section of the urban landscape of Seville was redefined. This was mainly due to the city partially solving its water

issues, and the construction of new bridges over the river and new urban roads. One of the consequences was a modification to the road out of Seville to Huelva and Portugal, turning the initial section of the studied El Rocio Way into one of the Triana neighbourhood's structural arterial roads.

Many years later, and as a result of the urban changes related to the 1992 World Expo, a major communications hub for the western sector of Seville was constructed on the Triana flood plain to solve problems with traffic congestion, especially on the road out to Huelva, Extremadura and part of the metropolitan area. The Sevilla - Huelva dual carriageway (A-49) plays a decisive role in the current dynamics between the city and El Aljarafe area, revamping the role of the city's periphery and redrafting this sector's urban form, while at the same time it is one of the reasons why the caravan of ox-carts currently passes through a suburban area. These large roadways offer wide views as they are built on viaducts and embankments, although they are also closed in on many occasions, which often causes travellers to lose their view of the landscape that they are passing through.

With respect to El Aljarafe, in the middle of the 20th century, a land use change process was begun on farms growing traditional crops in this landscape dominated by agriculture, especially in the areas around the urban centres of the municipalities close to Seville. In other words, with the passing of the years, a traditional model of spatial planning for agrarian land was to be overlaid with a different, mainly metropolitan spatial plan, due, for the most part, to the increase in the amount of housing built on the El Aljarafe ledge. As a result, the country estates that were the backbone of the main agricultural exploitations were turned, in certain cases, into luxury hotels or event venues due to their lack of functionality. Such was the case of the Torrequemada and La Juliana estates on the Pilgrim Way. The part of El Aljarafe county nearest the city of Seville progressively lost its agricultural matrix landscape and became part of a metropolitan ring with more urban functionalities that are still not fully consolidated.

With respect to the recent dynamics of the marshland area closest to the Doñana Nature Reserve through which this Pilgrim Way passes, it can be said that the process begun in the mid 20th century and intended to turn this marginal area into a productive space to attract tourists is well established. Also, the rise in mass coastal and weekend tourism fuelled by property speculation has produced major changes in this part of the Guadalquivir marshes and in the hamlet of El Rocio.

With respect to the hamlet of El Rocio, as a major Andalusian landmark and with its emblematic landscape, it continues to possess a character that is acknowledged and individualised, not only on account of its notable physical presence, but, above all, due to its cultural symbolism. This is the reason why it still retains some of its distinct features, including, among others, its status as a White Village with a chessboard street plan, homogenous one- and two-storey houses with porticoed verandas on their main facades, non-asphalted tree-lined streets and large irregular-shaped open squares. However, the hamlet's recent urban dynamics do not bode well for the conservation of these values.

IV Lastly, in relation to the qualification and heritagisation of this itinerary, it can be highlighted that the El Rocio Pilgrimage has been listed as Intangible Andalusian Heritage by the Andalusian Institute of Historical Heritage. The parameters that have enabled this pilgrimage to be listed are due to the following reasons, among others: this is a cultural event that is passed down from one generation to the next, it is recreated periodically and interacts with nature and the historical processes of the area in which it takes place; it also allows individuals in the considered area to identify with each other and with the community in which they live.

The following main values can be highlighted, among others:

- The pastureland, the pine woods and the marshlands are, perhaps the most conspicuous iconic representations of the El Rocio ways. Specifically, the pine wood, as a hunting ground, a wilderness and a resting place for pilgrims, has been a topic studied by scientists (J.-F. OJEDA RIBERA, 2015), writers (J.-M. CABALLERO BONALD, 1992), poets (J.-R. JIMÉNEZ, 1910) and painters (F. HÖHENLEITER CASTRO, 1936) from the Romantic era to the present day, as well as an expression of popular feeling in this part of western Andalusia. In this sense, some 'sevillanas rocieras' (folk songs devoted to the pilgrimage) deal with intimate experiences of a sexual nature in which the pine wood plays a major role: [...] *The pines in the marshland / witnesses that see but say nothing / witnesses that see but say nothing / the track is sand / where the pure white Lily / has lost all purity ... / ah, if the pines could speak [...]*. The Boarding of the Cattle, composed by Aurelio Verde, José Manuel Moya and Felipe Campuzano
- With regard to the immovable heritage assets situated near the considered route, it should be remembered that this procession of ox-carts undertaken by the Triana Christian Brotherhood, and the Sevillian neighbourhood of Triana, are inseparable; the district has a strong sense of identity compared to other areas of the city and some of its streets, squares and main buildings have major heritage value and are, in many cases, officially recognised. With respect to El Aljarafe and the Guadalquivir marshes, some of the roads that this procession to El Rocio goes down are old cattle trails that have been listed as part of Andalusia's road heritage and, in addition, some estates and hermitages visited by the caravan have been listed as assets of cultural interest.

V Finally, this last section presents some brief conclusions. The itinerary of the El Rocio Way taken by the Triana El Rocio Christian Brotherhood is a land communication route made up of different types of physically-determined and perfectly characterised linear sections of road, all of which have their own dynamics and functionalities. In other words, this is a living landscape that corresponds to a complex reality and is composed of both tangible and intangible natural and cultural components, the combination of which shape the character by which it is identified and is reconstructed every year through the pilgrimage to El Rocio. The itinerary also passes through different landscapes, and it is precisely here where its uniqueness and character lie, in the sequence of the regional capital's urban reality and its metropolitan area, the major agricultural use of the countryside and the olive groves of El Aljarafe in Seville province and of the Condado in Huelva province, and the natural, wild component of the marshes near the estuary of the Guadalquivir river. All these qualities highlight the potentialities of this itinerary and show that it is not only a historic Pilgrim Way that links two emblematic hubs from which a wide range of different heritage elements can be admired, but that it also harbours unique processes of social construction, be they landscapes, immovable assets, or symbolic and identity movable property and values. This logic points to the possibility of studying this Way in depth through a multidisciplinary approach in order to work towards its possible recognition as a cultural itinerary as, generally-speaking, it complies with the arguments presented in the 2008 ICOMOS International Charter on Cultural Routes (CIIC/ICCR).