The Spiritual Road

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The Spiritual Road

*European Networks and Pilgrim Travels from
Northern France and the Low Countries to Rome,
Venice, and Santiago (Late Fifteenth–Early
Sixteenth Century)*

For Elies Hagedoorn:

BFF and courageous globetrotter.

From as early as the ninth and tenth centuries, the areas we now call northern France and Belgian Flanders were emerging as important production centres of high-quality woollen cloth, which was exported throughout Europe and even across the Mediterranean to North Africa and the Middle East.[1] Inversely, Flemish and French merchants imported spices, pigments, precious gemstones, gold, silver, and silk from *Outremer*, on the eastern shores of the Mediterranean, often with Italian and Jewish merchants acting as intermediaries and investors. As a consequence, the north-western part of Europe became an important hub of the international — and even

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1 Munro, 'Medieval Woollens', pp. 181–227; Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, pp. 41–46, 674–804; Bautier, 'Les foires de Champagne'.

Margriet Hoogvliet earned her PhD *cum laude* in 1999 with the thesis *Pictura et Scriptura* (Brepols, 2007): a study of text–image relations in maps of the world from the twelfth to the early seventeenth century. Since 2009 she has been working as a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Groningen, alternating with positions at other Dutch universities, Leeds University, and the Université de Tours. Margriet Hoogvliet is a specialist in the field of biblical and religious reading cultures of lay people living and working in the towns of late medieval France. Her research is concerned with social, material, and spatial aspects of the dissemination and reception of religious texts in French.

intercontinental — travel and transportation networks in the late Middle Ages.

In spite of oft-repeated historical commonplaces about the decline of Roman long-distance travel routes during the Middle Ages,[2] until roughly the end of the sixteenth century, people were most likely much more mobile than they would be in later centuries.[3] Centuries-old pathways, Roman roads, and newly created medieval trade routes were intensively used for the transportation of merchandise, merchants, funds, and workers: over land and along rivers, as well as over sea, and in volumes that according to some estimations were only surpassed after the construction of railways in the nineteenth century.[4] Great overland travel routes to and from the Low Countries included the *Via francigena* (coming from the north, crossing the Alps via cities such as Basel, Besançon, or Lyon, and then continuing on to Rome)[5] and *le train de Flandres* (via Troyes southwards along the Seine, through the Rhône valley to the Mediterranean ports of Marseille, Arles, and Montpellier/Lattes).[6] Traditionally, navigation on the waters of the Mediterranean, the Atlantic Ocean, and the North Sea took place mainly along the coastlines. After improved rigging and navigation techniques (such as the astrolabe, the magnetic compass, marine charts, and mathematical tables for triangulation [*toletas de marteloio*]) were introduced, starting in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, direct crossings over open sea — including travels outside the Mediterranean basin such as explorations along the Atlantic coast as far south

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2 Guillerme, 'Chemins, routes, autoroutes', p. 120.

3 Scott, 'Travel and Communications', pp. 165–86, esp. pp. 170–72.

4 For long-distance travel routes from Late Antiquity and the early medieval period, see: Nelles and Salzberg, eds, *Connected Mobilities*; Sutner, ed., *Landhandelsrouten*; McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy*, pp. 501–22, 548–64, 670–95; Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*, pp. 123–72. For a positive evaluation of the medieval road system and transportation equipment, see: Baumgärtner, Ben-Aryeh, and Kogman-Appel, eds, *Maps and Travel in the Middle Ages*; Corbiau, Van den Abeele, and Yante, eds, *La route au Moyen Âge*; Szabó, ed., *Die Welt der europäischen Strassen*; Hubert, 'Les routes du Moyen Âge'; Derville, 'La première révolution'; Bautier, *Sur l'histoire économique de la France médiévale*; Livet, *Histoire des routes et des transports en Europe*; Chiesi, Paolozzi, and Ciresi, eds, *Il Medioevo in viaggio*; Legassie, *The Medieval Invention of Travel*. However, Berings, 'Transport and Communication in the Middle Ages', suggests that long-distance travel was for most medieval people a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Mainly based on sixteenth- to eighteenth-century sources and with a critique of the commonplace that traditional societies would have been largely immobile: Roche, *Humeurs vagabondes*, pp. 187–357.

5 Stopani, *La Via Francigena*, pp. 83–91.

6 Gascon, *Grand commerce et vie urbaine au XVIᵉ siècle*, pp. 156–59. In the early sixteenth century, the Italian traveller Antonio de Beatis noted the impressive size of the transport carts in northern Europe: 'Infinite numbers of [carriages] come and go all the time, as it is their custom to transport everything in four wheeled carts, some of which are such that they can carry more goods than four of our Lombardy ones; they are drawn by numerous powerful horses', Hale, ed., *The Travel Journal of Antonio de Beatis*, p. 78.

as sub-Saharan Africa, and to the north, circumnavigating the Iberian Peninsula to the Flemish towns near the shores of the North Sea — became more and more frequent.[7]

During the Middle Ages, pilgrims took advantage of these existing travel networks, which were otherwise used for the transportation of merchandise, finance, and merchants. Next to this, as we will see below, there was a specially dedicated infrastructure of hospitals offering free lodging and meals to poor pilgrims. Those pilgrims who were wealthy enough to afford the expenses generally stayed in the same taverns and guesthouses as those frequented by merchants on a business trip.

As mentioned in the introduction to this volume, road networks and travel itineraries can be considered the 'hardware' of social networks, for they are the tangible materialization of connections between people over long distances that facilitated the transport of people, goods, funds, practices, and ideas, including religious knowledge. Roads and routes are a core point of interest of *la médiologie*, a philosophical approach to culture originally developed by the French philosopher Régis Debray. In the words of Céline Perol, *la médiologie* is also practised by those historians 'qui s'intéressent aux méthodes de transmission et de transports et à leur impact sur les mentalités et les comportements de notre société' (interested in the methods of transmission and transportation and in their impact on the mentalities and behaviours of our society).[8] Debray himself underlined in the 1996 special issue of the *Cahiers de médiologie* dedicated to roads and itineraries that:

> La route n'est pas une anecdote, une excursion pittoresque à reléguer dans les bas-côtés du savoir. Elle donne directement, et de plain-pied, sur le bipède humain en pleine action.[9]
>
> > (The road is not anecdotal, a picturesque excursion that should be relegated to the lower levels of human knowledge. It gives a direct and unfiltered access to two-legged humans in full action.)

Building further on Debray's thoughts on roads and transmission, this article will approach roads, routes, itineraries, market squares, and ports from a cultural and philosophical perspective, considering them as networks

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7 There is an abundance of popularizing literature on 'medieval discoveries'; for well-documented scholarly publications about ships and navigation, see: Villain-Gandossi, 'La révolution nautique médiévale'; Unger, 'Ships and Sailing Routes'; Gertwagen, 'Nautical Technology'; Balard, *La Méditerranée médiévale*, pp. 44–60; Ash, 'Navigation Techniques and Practice in the Renaissance'; Pujades i Bataller, *Les cartes portolanes*; and Pryor, *Geography, Technology, and War*, pp. 87–101, 135–64.

8 Perol, 'Cheminement médiéval: l'homme, l'historien et la route', p. 92. See also: Dagognet, ed., *Qu'est-ce qu'une route?*

9 Debray, 'Rhapsodie sur la route', p. 17.

and hubs facilitating connections among people, sometimes over enormous distances, and transporting not only goods, but also religious texts, ideas, practices, and knowledge.

First-hand experiences of medieval travel and routes can be found in pilgrims' accounts.[10] These texts have often been studied to analyse European pilgrims' perceptions of people living in the Middle East, whereas the European parts of their itineraries have received far less attention. These accounts, however, are highly informative about trans-European travel networks and about the instrumentality of these networks in the transport and dissemination of religious knowledge. In this paper I will analyse three late fifteenth- to early sixteenth-century pilgrims' accounts written by pilgrims originating in the southern Low Countries and northern France.

1   Jean de Tournai's pilgrimage from Valenciennes to Jerusalem (1488–1489) as described in the single surviving handwritten copy of his original account.[11] Jean left his hometown Valenciennes (then situated in the Habsburg Low Countries) in 1488 in order to travel to Jerusalem, the Holy Land, and to Santiago de Compostela. In this paper, I will focus on the part of his account that covers his itinerary from Valenciennes to Rome and Venice.

2   Jehan de Zeilbeke's pilgrimage from Comines (Komen) in the Habsburg Low Countries to Santiago de Compostela, as recounted in his autograph manuscript *Le livre des Voeiages de messire Jehan de Zeilbeke à Rome, à Saint-Jacques en Galice, à Jérusalem* (1499–1513).[12] In this

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10 For pilgrims' accounts from France and the Low Countries (including the three texts discussed here), see: Yeager, 'Medieval Pilgrimage as Heterotopia'; Germain-De Franceschi, *D'encre et de poussière*; Chareyron, *Les pèlerins de Jérusalem au Moyen Âge*; Van Herwaarden, 'Late-Medieval Religion and Expression of Faith'; Van Schaïk, '"Wer weite Reisen macht…"'; and Richard, *Les récits de voyages et de pèlerinages*. For pilgrims and pilgrimages in general, see: Webb, *Pilgrims and Pilgrimage in the Medieval West*; Webb, *Medieval European Pilgrimage*; and Yarrow, 'Pilgrimage'. Just before publication of this article, I learned about two other pilgrim accounts in Middle French from this area: an anonymous pilgrim (1419) and Georges Lengherand from Mons (1485-1486); see: Rager, 'Deux récits de pèlerinage'.

11 Valenciennes, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 493. Modern edition: Jean de Tournai, *Le récit des voyages et pèlerinages*. The manuscript text has also been transcribed by Blanchet-Broekaert and can be found online: http://lodel.irevues.inist.fr/saintjacquesinfo/index.php?id=1566. For a translation into modern French, see: Blanchet-Broekaert, ed., *Le voyage de Jean de Tournai*. More information and bibliography on the Digiberichte website: https://digiberichte.de/travel/?ID=34&FID=347&N=F&suchen1=Jean%20de%20Tournay&Vollname=Jean_de_Tournay.

12 One manuscript (autograph): Douai, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 793 (all transcriptions are mine). For a translation of part of Jehan de Zeilbeke's travel accounts into modern French, see: Desmarets, 'Jehan de Zeilbeke (1511)'. More information and bibliography on the Digiberichte website: https://digiberichte.de/travel/?ID=41&FID=429&N=NL&suchen1=Jan%20Taccoen%20van%20Zillebeke&Vollname=Jan_Taccoen_van_Zillebeke.

'home made' book, Jehan reports his pilgrimages, based on his travel notes in Middle Dutch, which he translated himself into French and copied with his own hand. Jehan's home in Comines, west of Lille, was situated in a predominantly Middle Dutch-speaking area. In his manuscript, Jehan wrote that he left his home four times for a pilgrimage: in 1499 (= 1500)[13] (Jerusalem, failed); in 1508 (= 1509) (Jerusalem, failed); 1511 (= 1512) (Santiago de Compostela, successful); and in 1513 (= 1514) (Jerusalem, successful). I will focus here on Jean's 1512 pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela.

3 The pilgrimage account written by Pierre Mesenge, priest and canon in Rouen, who travelled to the Holy Land together with five clerics (three from Rouen and two from Lisieux), five merchants (four from Rouen and one from Caen), two noblemen, and their two servants, starting in April 1508.[14]

Before examining the three pilgrims' accounts in detail, a few words about the cultural and linguistic characteristics of the part of north-western Europe they came from are in order. Flanders (Vlaanderen) now refers to the Standard Dutch (Flemish)-speaking part of Belgium, but in the late Middle Ages it was a diffuse entity, both politically, culturally, and linguistically speaking. In this period, Flanders was formally a fief of the kings of France, but in reality most of it was in the hands of the dukes of Burgundy, and, from 1482, the house of Habsburg. A large part of present-day northern France was part of the Burgundian (later the Habsburg and Spanish) Low Countries. This region was only conquered in the seventeenth century by Louis XIV, with some areas being conquered even later: Aire-sur-la-Lys (Ariën aan de Leie), for instance, became part of France as late as 1713.

Flanders, Artois, Picardy, and the northern part of Normandy (approximately the area between Antwerp-Bruges and Paris-Beauvais-Rouen) also represented a coherent entity unto itself: the highly urbanized part of north-western Europe that was deeply involved in the production, trade, and finance of woollen cloth. The towns were strongly interconnected through commercial exchanges formalized in a Hanse trade network, and

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13 In the later Middle Ages, in France and the Low Countries the year started at Easter (stilus Gallicus; stile de France); hence, for dates between 1 January and the (changeable) date of Easter, the year as found in the sources has to be augmented by one to arrive at the modern year.

14 At least six manuscripts of Pierre Mesenge's text survive. I have used here Amiens, Bibliothèque municipale, MS Lescalopier 99 (all transcriptions are mine). The other manuscripts known to me are: Amiens, Bibliothèque municipale, MS Lescalopier 98; Bryn Mawr, College Library, MS 13; Rouen, Bibliothèque municipale, MSS 1118 and 1119; and Private collection, location unknown. More information and bibliography on the Digiberichte website: https://digiberichte.de/travel/?ID=40&FID=367&N=F&suchen1=Pierre%20Mesenge&Vollname=Pierre_Mesenge.

the inhabitants moved freely throughout the area for trade and production work.[15]

The linguistic situation was different, too, with a sharp linguistic border demarcating Romance and Germanic languages often being absent. The dominant variety of French in this area was Picard French, and this was used as a mother tongue or as a second language in predominantly Middle Dutch-speaking towns such as Ghent, Bruges, and Antwerp.[16] Middle Dutch was the dominant mother tongue in the northern areas, but Middle Dutch-speaking communities were present in almost all primarily French- or Picard-speaking towns, most notably in Paris and Rouen. Contextual data show that speakers of both vernacular languages were in many cases prepared to learn the other language and, if necessary, they would switch linguistic codes in a pragmatic way (albeit probably more frequently from Middle Dutch to French/Picard than the other way around).[17]

In the following, I will analyse the three pilgrims' accounts presented above for the evidence they give about travel itineraries originating in north-western Europe and going to Rome and Venice (Jean de Tournai), northern Spain (Jehan de Zeilbeke), and Venice (Pierre Mesenge). These accounts give highly relevant and rarely studied information about travel networks and the existence of transnational social and commercial networks. The written accounts and other memorabilia from pilgrimages, as well as the pilgrims themselves, served to disseminate religious knowledge and religious practices among other lay people back home. I will analyse the three pilgrims' accounts according to three main themes: first, the information they provide about medieval travel and travel networks; secondly, the historical eyewitness accounts the texts contain of trans-European social and commercial networks; and, finally, the question of how pilgrimages, pilgrims as authors, and their accounts were instrumental in the dissemination of religious knowledge, as well as the sharing of religious knowledge over long distances.

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15 Carolus-Barré, 'Les XVII villes'; Rubin, *Cities of Strangers*.

16 Lusignan, *Essai d'histoire sociolinguistique*.

17 Hoogvliet, '*Mez puy que je le enten, je suy conten*'; Hoogvliet, 'Middle Dutch Religious Reading Cultures'.

Networks for Travel and Transport

Jean de Tournai

Jean de Tournai left his home in Valenciennes (Valencijn) on Monday, 25 February 1488 (Map 10.1).[18] Valenciennes is now situated in northern France, but at the time of Jean's pilgrimage the town was part of the Habsburg Low Countries. Jean started his pilgrimage on horseback and was accompanied to the nearby town of Mons (Bergen) by his brother Monseigneur Jean de Tournai, who was abbot of St John's Abbey in Valenciennes, and several other local friends and relatives. After Brussels, Jean went to Antwerp, where he stayed for seven days. Apparently, this week was filled with social events in the company of merchants from the towns of Valenciennes, Lille (Rijsel), Antwerp, Cologne, and Aachen. On Wednesday, 5 March, after a festive goodbye lunch at an inn called *Den Engel*,[19] accompanied by good wine (possibly a reference to the Last Supper), Jean left Antwerp accompanied by several merchants from Cologne and Aachen. The group first went northwards towards 's-Hertogenbosch and Ravenstein, passing by Nijmegen on their way to Cleves and Cologne. They probably made this detour to the north in order to follow the river Rhine and to avoid the French kingdom, which was perilous for foreign travellers due to the unstable political situation and the internal wars between opposing rival factions of varying alliances: on his way back from Santiago de Compostela, Jean walked overland through France to Valenciennes, and in order to avoid heavy taxing, imprisonment, or even worse punishment, was urged to remove the red pilgrim's cross from his clothes, because this might lead people to believe that he was English. Originating from the Habsburg Low Countries, Jean had to pretend to be a poor pilgrim from Tournai, a town near Valenciennes that was a French exclave until 1521.[20]

From Cologne to Mainz Jean travelled aboard a river barge, 'because of the war', taking his horse with him. Since Mainz is upstream from Cologne, against the current of the river Rhine, the boat was towed by horses:

> [L]esdict batteaux allant dudict Couloigne jusques a Mayence vont tousjours contremont la riviere du Rhyn laquelle est très fort rade et convient que a force de chevaulx lesdictz batteaux soient tirés amont et par tout aussy long que ladicte riviere dure. […] Et lesdictz chevaulx

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18 Jean wrote 1487 in his account, but since the year started at Easter in that period, this is 1488 according to the modern calculation.

19 Den Engel is still in business on the Grote Markt in Antwerp.

20 Jean de Tournai, *Le récit des voyages et pèlerinages*, p. 332.

quy tirent les batteaux sont fort beaux et valent bien la plupart de XXX a XL florins d'or.[21]

> (Going from Cologne to Mainz, the said barges are always going upstream over the river Rhine, which has a very strong current, and by the force of the horses said barges are towed upstream all the way along the river. [...] And said horses towing the barges are very beautiful and most of them are worth thirty to forty gold florins.)

Jean's description suggests that there must have been a well-organized, regular travel and transport connection by riverboat between Cologne and Mainz.

Travel in the Empire was not without danger either, and in his account Jean advised his readers and potential pilgrims to buy safe-conducts:

Pour la doubte desdictz gens de guerre ou aultres rustres, on prent en plusieurs lieux saulfconduit, c'est ascavoir en aulcuns lieux un signe, lequel est signé tant sur cyre comme sur papier, et le plupart se vous estes a cheval, vous aurés un homme a cheval, et se vous estes a pied ung a pied, et portant comme ung messagier une boitte à son chappeau; et ira ou chevaulcera tousjours devant vous; et parmy tout vous y yrez tousjours seurement et trouverés tousjours les chevaulx tous sellés et les hommes tous pretz esdictes maisons soit a pied ou a cheval pour en aller avec vous ou l'on vous donra ledict saulfconduyt.[22]

> (Because of the danger of said soldiers and other bandits, one takes a safe-conduct at several places, which is a document signed on paper and in wax in that particular location. And if you are on horseback you will generally have a man on horseback and if you are walking, one on foot, wearing a small box on his hat like a messenger, and he will always go before you wherever you ride with your horse. You will always travel safely and in said houses where people sell safe-conducts you will always find saddled horses and the men ready to go with you, either on foot or on horseback.)

Jean's account shows that there must have been a well-functioning interregional transport system that allowed for fast and safe travel. Despite these provisions, in Worms Jean discovered that he was being followed by two robbers. He deceived the two men by telling them that he intended to travel via Basel, while instead travelling eastwards to Landeck at the foot of the Alps. From there, Jean probably followed the Roman *Via Claudia Augusta* over the Alps to the Po valley. Still on horseback, Jean travelled via Verona and Bologna to Florence, where he sold his horse because it

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21 Jean de Tournai, *Le récit des voyages et pèlerinages*, p. 25.
22 Jean de Tournai, *Le récit des voyages et pèlerinages*, p. 27.
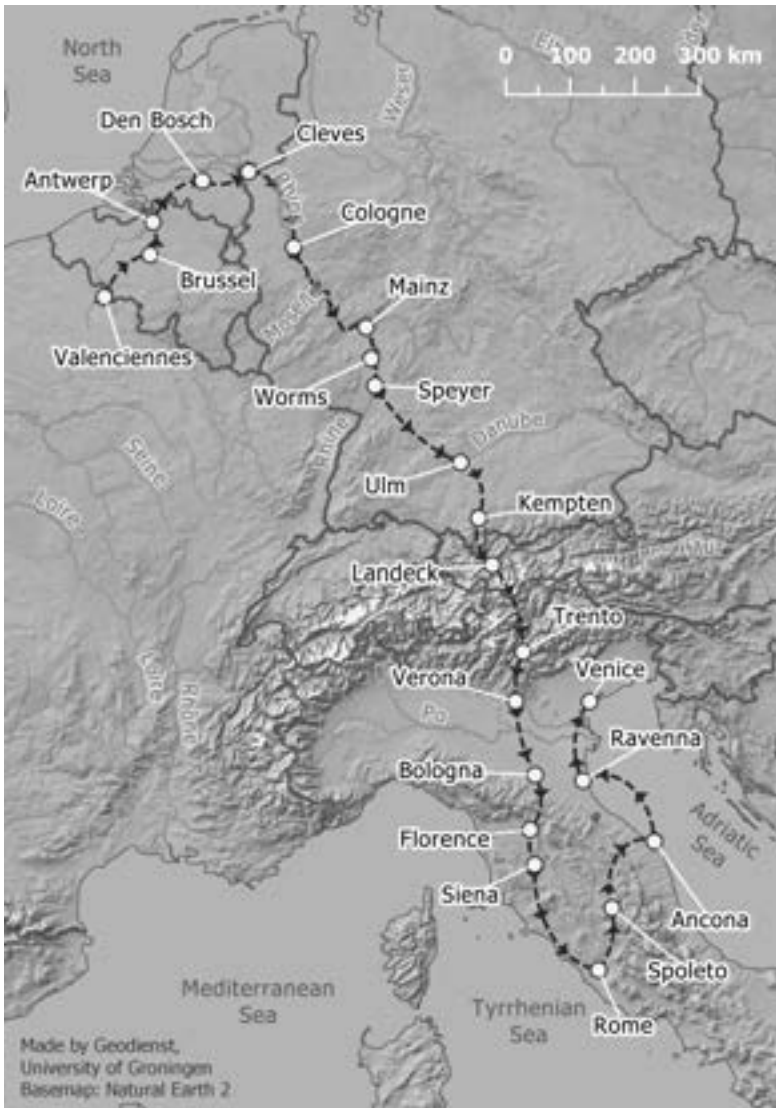
Map 10.1. Jean de Tournai's itinerary from Valenciennes to Venice (1488–1489): Valenciennes — Brussels — Antwerp — 's-Hertogenbosch — Cleves — Cologne — on board a river barge up the river Rhine to Mainz — Worms — Speyer — Ulm — Kempten — Landeck [probably taking the old Roman *Via Claudia Augusta*] — Trento — Verona — Bologna — Florence — Siena — Rome — Spoleto — Ancona — over sea to Cesenatico — Ravenna — Venice. Credit: Geodienst, University of Groningen.

was tired and 'pource que audict païs les despens des chevaulx y sont fort grandz' (because in this country the expenses for horses are very high).[23] This change of means of transport also entailed a change of Jean's identity into a real pilgrim, as testified by the pilgrim's bag and stick that he would be carrying from then on.

After his visit to Rome, having obtained permission for his pilgrimage to the Holy Land from the Pope in person, Jean continued his travels on foot and in the company of several men who were like him heading to Venice: *sire* Guillaume and a man called Hoteyn, both from the region of Tournai and also on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. In this group were also a certain Hugues, goldsmith from Amiens; *maître* Martin, a German lute player; and a hatter from Tournai, all of whom lived in Venice.[24] The group intended to take a boat from Ancona to Venice, but due to the stormy weather they had to find shelter in the harbour of Cesenatico. From there Jean walked via Ravenna to Chioggia to take the ferry to Venice in the lagoon on 5 May 1488, after approximately ten weeks of travel, socializing, and sightseeing.

Jehan de Zeilbeke

Jehan de Zeilbeke made use mostly of the oversea shipping network in order to travel from Flanders to the Iberian Peninsula (Map 10.2). In his account, we find that in the nearby Flemish harbour town of Nieuwpoort on the shores of the North Sea 'il y auoit vng bateu de lx tonneulx prest pour aller audit st Jaque atout de pellerins. Je fis mon comparch auec le patron nomme Simon Jughebrant' (there was a ship of 60 tonnes full of pilgrims ready to sail to said Santiago. I made a deal with the ship's master named Simon Jughebrant).[25]

This was probably not a medieval cargo ship of the cog type, which could have been between 200 and 1000 tonnes, or an even larger carrack (up to 1800 tonnes), but must have instead been a much smaller and faster type of boat.[26] Jehan's remarks suggest that this ship was at least partially equipped to accommodate pilgrims, because he was able to rent one of the small huts ('une chambrette'). Likewise, in the account of his 1514 pilgrimage to Jerusalem, he recounts that he went to Vlissingen in

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23 Jean de Tournai, *Le récit des voyages et pèlerinages*, p. 37.
24 Jean de Tournai, *Le récit des voyages et pèlerinages*, pp. 79–80.
25 Douai, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 793, fol. 31ᵛ; Desmarets, 'Jehan de Zeilbeke (1511)', p. 199.
26 Villain-Gandossi, 'La révolution nautique médiévale'; Flatman, *Ships and Shipping in Medieval Manuscripts*, pp. 91–95; Hutchinson, *Medieval Ships and Shipping*; Gardiner and Unger, ed., *Cogs, Caravels and Galleons*; Lane, *Venetian Ships and Shipbuilders*, pp. 1–53; Unger, *The Ship in the Medieval Economy 600–1600*, pp. 119–200.

Map 10.2. The itinerary of Jehan de Zeilbeke's 1512 pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela: Comines (Komen) — Nieuwpoort — Portsmouth — Dartsmouth — Ribadeo (*Rimerres*) — Santiago de Compostela — A Coruña — Nieuwpoort — Comines. Credit: Geodienst, University of Groningen.

Zeeland in order to wait for the pilgrims' boat from Antwerp ('le nauire dez pellerins qui deuoit partir de Anuers').[27] The traffic of pilgrims' ships from the Low Countries to the Iberian Peninsula and the Holy Land must have been quite frequent, because on the way between Vlissingen and Lisbon he saw a shipwreck that was identified by the mariners as a pilgrims' ship: 'Nous veymez vng debout dun mast droit amont atout le nauire et les marins nous dient que cestoit vne navire de peilgrins qui cuidoient aller a saint jaques et tout estoit noyet' (We saw the top of a mast straight ahead of our ship and the mariners told us that it was a ship of pilgrims who thought they were going to Santiago; they all drowned).[28] However, the ship with which Jehan travelled was not easily recognizable as a pilgrim's ship, because on the way back from A Coruña to Nieuwpoort, it was stopped by two Spanish war vessels, on the lookout for French ships:

> En retournant sur le mer il vient sur nous deulx bataulx de guerre en la mer despaeinge et quant ilz nous oient encloz ilz demandrent quj nous estions quant ils oyerent que estions de flandres et estionz peilrins de saint jaques ilz nous dirent bien vegnant et dieu vous conduise nous somes vous amis mais ilz demandreont apres des bataulx de franche.[29]
>
> > (During our return trip, two war ships came to us in the Spanish sea and when they had closed us in, they asked who we were and when they heard that we were from Flanders and that we were pilgrims returning from Santiago, they welcomed us and said: 'May God guide you, we are your friends'. They were searching for French ships.)

The ease with which Jehan travelled is striking — oversea, but also overland — which suggests, again, that long-distance travel must have been well organized. He indicates that he walked from the coastal town Ribadeo to Santiago in three days. The distance is 165 kilometres and although his claim appears somewhat exaggerated, Jehan does not indicate that he had any trouble finding his way and, consequently, there must have been a functioning road network. For the return trip from Santiago to the ship that was waiting in A Coruña for the pilgrims, a distance of sixty-five kilometres, Jehan took a horse that apparently could be rented and returned in another place ('Il y a de saint jaques a la coulongne une

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27 Douai, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 793, fol. 35ʳ; Desmarets, 'Jehan de Zeilbeke (1511)', p. 214.

28 Douai, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 793, fol. 35ʳ; Desmarets, 'Jehan de Zeilbeke (1511)', p. 214.

29 Douai, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 793, fol. 34ᵛ; Desmarets, 'Jehan de Zeilbeke (1511)', p. 213.

jornee de cheval'),[30] another indication of a well-equipped road and travel network.

Lodging at an inn or guesthouse in Santiago de Compostela was apparently easily obtained by Jehan de Zeilbeke, who was fortunate enough to be able to cover the expenses. Since it was a jubilee year and there was a great influx of pilgrims, less wealthy pilgrims had to stay in people's homes, and the poor pilgrims were offered a bed in the hospital:

> Et fumez logis as trois coulons deuant lhomme sauage et y fumez bien traitiet car lostesse [...] estoit de flandres [...] mais pour ce quil estoit la lan de grace il y auoit tant de pellerins quon ne pouoit aucun logir il faloit loger sur les borgois et gens de mestier et pourez gens alloynt logier a lospitael.[31]

> > (And we were lodged in The Three Doves in front of The Wild Man and we were well treated there because the hostess was from Flanders. [...] But because it was then the Holy Year and there were so many pilgrims who could not find lodging, they had to sleep in the houses of bourgeois and artisans, while poor people were lodged in the hospital.)

The hospital was the Real Hospital, financed by the royal couple Ferdinand and Isabella.[32] Jehan admired it greatly, and his account contains a lengthy description of its facilities: 'Et quel ospitael est vne merueileuse chose [...] car je croy quil nia point de pareil de biaulte de grandeur et de ricesse' (And the hospital was an extraordinary place [...] because I think that there is none equal in beauty, grandeur, and riches).[33]

Pierre Mesenge

Pierre Mesenge and his company, composed of merchants, clerics, and aristocrats, travelled on horseback from Rouen via Orléans to Lyons in eleven days, over almost 600 kilometres (Map 10.3). The most obvious itinerary would have been to follow the river Loire from Orléans upstream to Moulins and to cross the hills and valleys of the Massif Central near

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30 Douai, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 793, fol. 34ʳ; Desmarets, 'Jehan de Zeilbeke (1511)', p. 213.

31 Douai, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 793, fol. 32ʳ; Desmarets, 'Jehan de Zeilbeke (1511)', p. 202. See also: Portela Silva, *Historia de la ciudad de Santiago de Compostela*, p. 183.

32 Portela Silva, *Historia de la ciudad de Santiago de Compostela*, pp. 104–08.

33 Douai, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 793, fol. 32ʳ; Desmarets, 'Jehan de Zeilbeke (1511)', p. 202.

Map 10.3. Canon Pierre Mesenge and his party's itinerary to Venice (1508): Rouen — Évreux — Orléans — probably using a part of the *Via Agrippa* to Lyon — the *Via francigena* to Val di Susa — Turin or Genoa — Pavia — aboard a river barge over the river Po to Venice. Credit: Geodienst, University of Groningen.

Roanne to Lyon, possibly taking the ancient *Via Agrippa*.[34] While this part of the pilgrimage apparently passed quickly and without any major obstacles, rumour had it that the passage through the Alps was much more perilous:

> Et pour ce qui'il estoit bruyt que en Daulphine et en Savoye avoit grant nombre de gens de guerre et adventuriers qui suyvoient larmee du Roy qui alloit a Gennes et destroussoient les marchans et autres gens quilz trouvoient sur le chemin il y en eut aucuns en nostre compaignye qui firent quelque difficulte de passer oultre. Touteffoiz nous confians en dieu deliberasmes tous ensemble de passer quelque danger quil y peust avoir.[35]

>> (And because there was a rumour that in the Dauphiné and Savoie there were a great number of men of arms and adventurers who followed the army of the King [Louis XII, King of France] on his way to Genoa and who robbed merchants and other people they found on the road, some in our party protested against crossing the Alps. Nevertheless, having confidence in God, we decided all together to travel to the other side whatever danger there might be.)

The group of men crossed the Alps taking the *Via francigena* and, apparently, they encountered no particular troubles on the way. Once they arrived in Pavia, some of the pilgrims left their horses there in the care of locals, or they sold them.[36] This seems to have been a well-functioning system, because the agreements were kept and the horses were retrieved in good condition during the return trip later that year:

> Ledit jour de dymenche qui fut xiiijᵉ jour dudit moys de de novembre environ sept heures de soir nous allasmes dormir en une barque qui nous porta toute la nuyt a Padoue ou nous arrivasmes le lundi xvᵉ jour dudit moys a sept heures au matin. Et apres desiuner nous louasmes des chevaulx pour nous porter jusques a Pavye ou nous avions laisse nos chevaulx lesquelz nous allasmes recueillir. Et de la a layde de dieu nous en retournasmes en France chacun en sa maison. Et fusmes de retour en ceste ville de Rouen le vingtieme jour de decembre en lan dessusdit.[37]

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34 This itinerary is described in the *Guide des chemins de France* written by Charles Estiennes and first published in 1553. Quoted in: Imberdis, 'Les routes médiévales', p. 413. See also: Berlioz and Rossiaud, 'La route des merveilles'.

35 Amiens, Bibliothèque municipale, MS Lescalopier 99, fol. 4ʳ.

36 'Et la aucuns de nous vendrent leurs chevaulx et les autres les laisserent en garde jusques au retour' (And there [in Pavia] some of us sold their horses and the others left them guarded there until our return). Amiens, Bibliothèque municipale, MS Lescalopier 99, fol. 4ᵛ.

37 Amiens, Bibliothèque municipale, MS Lescalopier 99, fol. 96ʳ.

(On said Sunday that was the fourteenth day of said month of November, around seven in the evening, we went to sleep on board a river barge that took us during the night to Padua, where we arrived on Monday the fifteenth day of said month at seven in the morning. And after breakfast we rented horses to carry us to Pavia where we had left our horses, and which we went to retrieve. And from there, with the help of God, we returned to France, each one of us to his home. And we were back in this town of Rouen the twentieth day of December in the above-mentioned year [1508].)

Making an educated guess, the return journey from Pavia to Rouen must have taken the pilgrims about thirty days on horseback, covering a distance of a little over 1000 kilometres. The casual way this last stretch of the pilgrimage is evoked, or rather omitted, in Pierre's account, reveals that in the early sixteenth century, long-distance overland travel was well organized: in spite of the ever-present danger of robbers and pillaging soldiers, the roads must have been well marked, as there is no mention at all of going astray, and there appears to have been an orderly infrastructure for renting horses and buying the provisions for their care. This is not necessarily surprising, because these overland infrastructures sustained large-scale and long-distance networks of connected people.

Social and Commercial Networks

Apart from giving details on roads and travel networks, the three pilgrims' accounts are very informative about the nature of the social, commercial, and courtly networks that connected people, even when they were physically separated by vast distances. I will first discuss smaller networks, such as family members, friends, the aristocratic court, and the *natio*. Secondly, I will turn to larger, internationally operating commercial networks connecting merchants.

Jean de Tournai from Valenciennes reported that he had family members living and travelling elsewhere in Europe: his cousin Jean de Rains lived in Antwerp, and another cousin, Jossequin Pouchin, was based in Venice. The latter had been in Antwerp during the previous Lent, and on that occasion Jean had given him two gold *florins* to be returned to him in Venice, possibly as a form of international money transfer.[38] Similarly, Jehan de Zeilbeke mentions almost casually in the account of his 1514 pilgrimage to Jerusalem that one of his sons, Wulfard, was living in Santiago de Compostela at the time.[39] Since Jehan gives no details, it

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38 Jean de Tournai, *Le récit des voyages et pèlerinages*, pp. 20, 86.
39 Desmarets, 'Jehan de Zeilbeke (1511)', p. 214.

cannot be established if Wulfard was living there for business, or if he had entered a religious order.

The pilgrims also made use of their social networks of friends and acquaintances. In Rome, Jean de Tournai addressed the bishop of Tournai, who had previously been deacon of the collegiate church Notre-Dame de la Salle (later Saint-Géry) in Valenciennes. Jean had known him as a boy in Valenciennes and he now asked the bishop to help him approach the Pope:

> Cedict jour je présentay l'aultre lettre de recommandation a monseigneur l'evesque de Tournay, lequel s'appelloit de surnom Monissart, natif de la ville de Montz en Haynaut, et estoit doyen de l'eglise Nostre Dame de la Salle en Vallentiennes. [...] Auquel evesque de ma josnesse j'avois en grande cognoissance, et ce adcause que j'avois par plusieurs annees chanté a touttes les heures du jour la ou il avoit esté présent; lequel seigneur madicte lettre présentée, me recognut tresbien et me fit fort grand chiere.[40]

> (On that day I presented the other letter of recommendation to *Monseigneur* the Bishop of Tournai, whose surname was Monissart, native of the town of Mons in Hainaut and who had been dean of the church Notre-Dame de la Salle in Valenciennes. [...] I had known the bishop very well during my youth, because I used to sing the Hours in his presence. After having been presented with my letter, said lord recognized me very well and received me with joy.)

The medieval *nationes* — although during the Middle Ages very loosely defined, with a meaning that frequently changed over time and varied according to circumstance — were another point of convergence for people who had a certain feeling of shared origin or culture.[41] For instance, once he arrived in Venice, Jean de Tournai asked for an inn called the White Lion, owned by a married couple born in Ghent:[42]

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40 Jean de Tournai, *Le récit des voyages et pèlerinages*, pp. 42–43.

41 The etymological origin of *natio* is the Latin *nasci*, 'to be born'. The term is a geographical reference to one's place of birth and does not necessary imply genetic or ethnic belonging. For a critical discussion of the medieval use of *nationes*, see: Kahl, 'Einige Beobachtungen zum Sprachgebrauch von *natio*'; Reynolds, *Kingdoms and communities in Western Europe*; Geary, *The Myth of Nations*; and Breuilly, 'Changes in the Political Uses of the Nation'. The evidence from the pilgrims' accounts strongly disqualifies statements such as 'Nevertheless, in many cases at least, terms like *populus* and *natio* were clearly deployed to signify communities understood simultaneously as political and ethnic unities', Scales and Zimmer, 'Introduction', p. 7.

42 Located in San Bartolomeo, owned and staffed by people from Flanders; see: Van Gelder, *Trading Places*, pp. 105–06. In the sixteenth century, an *albergo del Leon bianco* was located in the Ca' da Mosto situated on the Canal Grande near the Rialto; see: Schülz, 'Ca' da Mosto', esp. p. 87 n. 8.

Moy venu audict Venize, j'arrivay en la place sainct Marc, je demanday aprés le Lyon Blanc et on m'y adrescha. Moy venu a l'hostel, mon hoste s'appelloit Jacop et estoit natif de la ville de Gand au païs de Flandres, et sa femme pareillement, lesquelz me reçuprent bien gracieusement.[43]

> (Coming to said Venice, I arrived at Saint Mark's square. I asked for the White Lion and they brought me there. Arriving at the inn, my host was named Jacop and he was born in the town of Ghent, in the land of Flanders, as was his wife, and they received me kindly.)

Jacop and his wife were almost certainly primarily speakers of Middle Dutch (Flemish). Coming from Ghent, they also would have had knowledge of French and Picard. Jean de Tournai, although francophone, had a predilection for these hosts who were born in Flemish-speaking Flanders, and he was informed beforehand that this inn was an appropriate choice for lodging.

Curiously, Pierre Mesenge and his company asked for exactly the same lodging, because in their perception it was the usual assembly place of the French: 'Et nous allasmes loger au Lyon blanc ou les francoys logent communement ou nous trouvasmes dautres pelerins dont nous fusmes tresjoyeux' (And we went to stay in the White Lion where the French stay together and where we found other pilgrims, to our great joy).[44]

A few lines further down in his text, however, Pierre testifies that his group definition based on geographical origin was in reality quite variable: 'Apres disner nous pelerins francoys, brebencons, lorrains et flammens assemblasmes a Saint Marc pour deliberer si nous prendrions la nave ou la gallee pour faire nostre voyage' (After dinner we, French, Brabantian, Lorrainian, and Flemish pilgrims, assembled at Saint Mark's to discuss if we should take a ship or a galley for our voyage).[45] It turns out that for Pierre Mesenge 'we' did not necessarily refer to 'subjects of the king of France', but could include 'people coming from a larger geographical area in north-western Europe'. It is also interesting to note that the discussions in Saint Mark's Cathedral were performed unproblematically by speakers of different languages: French, Flemish, and possibly also German.

As discussed above, in Santiago, Jehan de Zeilbeke also apparently had no problem finding the inn The Three Doves. The inn was owned by a Flemish woman who treated him well, possibly because of their shared culture and language. It was customary practice to lodge people according to their *natio*, because Jehan de Zeilbeke notes that poor pilgrims were lodged in this way in the Hospital Real in Santiago: 'Chacun quj veult la logier est logie selon son estaet et chacun nachion en son quartier homes et

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43 Jean de Tournai, *Le récit des voyages et pèlerinages*, p. 86.
44 Amiens, Bibliothèque municipale, MS Lescalopier 99, fol. 4ᵛ.
45 Amiens, Bibliothèque municipale, MS Lescalopier 99, fol. 4ᵛ.

femmez chacun parluj' (Everyone who wishes to stay there will be lodged according to his social class, and every *natio* has its own quarter, men and women separated).[46] The grouping of pilgrims in Santiago de Compostela according to their *natio* was not always applied very strictly, because Jean de Tournai from Valenciennes in the Habsburg Low Countries stayed in an inn with the sign of the *Escu de France* — typically referring to a heraldic shield with three French royal lilies — where he met two men from Picardie in France.[47]

Political and courtly relations were yet other types of social networks co-shaping the pilgrims' itineraries. Some men from Pierre Mesenge's party diverted from the Alps to Genoa to see the French king, Louis XII, who was there with his army in order to suppress the town's revolt and to defend it against the emperor:[48]

> Le mardi xxvijᵉ jour dudit moys davril nous allasmes diner a Viliane et apres disner aucuns de nostre compaignye prindrent le chemin de Thurin pour aller tout droit a Pavye et les autres sen allerent par Gennes ou estoit le Roy. Et la sen retournerent audit lieu de Pavye ou ils arriverent le deuxieme jour de may.[49]

> (On Tuesday the 27th day of said month of April we had dinner in Avigliana and after dinner some men of our group took the road to Turin to go straight to Pavia and the others went to Genoa, where the King was. And from there they returned to said town of Pavia where they arrived the second day of May.)

Next to social networks of family, friends, and courtly relations, which nevertheless could stretch out over vast distances as we have seen, the pilgrims also made use of long-distance commercial networks. These varied from itineraries used for trade and transportation to internationally operating trading firms and banks. Some of these late medieval multinationals were called *compagnie*.[50] Merchants' networks and *compagnie* had an important facilitating function in Jean de Tournai's pilgrimage. After the banquets with a group of business relations in Antwerp, Jean was accompanied by two merchants from Cologne to their hometown. Upon arrival, they

46 Douai, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 793, fol. 32ʳ; Desmarets, 'Jehan de Zeilbeke (1511)', p. 202.

47 Jean de Tournai, *Le récit des voyages et pèlerinages*, p. 322.

48 A contemporary account with spectacular miniatures can be found in Jean Marot's *Voiage de Gênes* (Paris, BnF, MS fr. 5091).

49 Amiens, Bibliothèque municipale, MS Lescalopier 99, fol. 4ᵛ.

50 For the phenomenon of the international trading and banking *compagnia*, see: Gelderblom, *Cities of Commerce*, pp. 84–86; Pinto, *Economie urbane ed etica economica*, pp. 115–16; Hunt, *Medieval Super-Companies*; and Parker, 'Entrepreneurs, Families, and Companies', pp. 202–07.

showed him the town and arranged for a convivial dinner in the house of an important family member of theirs, Jacob van Bulle, one of Cologne's aldermen.[51] Another of Jean de Tournai's business relations from Antwerp, Cornille Van Bomberg, apparently kept a lodging in Venice, managed by a Flemish servant who lived there on a more permanent basis. Jean was invited to stay there, but he declined the offer:

> Le serviteur de Cornille van Bomberg demorant en la ville d'Anvers lequel s'appelloit Guillaume Mol, me vint bienveigner et me dit que ma chambre estoit appointié et que son maistre Cornille luy avoit rescript qu'il me fist ottel comme a sa propre personne et que je ne paierois riens de nulz despens, car son maistre luy avoit commendé par lettres qu'il luy avoit rescript. Neantmoins, je m'excusay et ossy je le remerciay, et demoray à ladicte hostellerie du Lion Blanc.[52]

> > (The servant of Cornille Van Bomberg who was in the town of Antwerp, whose name was Guillaume Mol, came to welcome me and informed me that my room was ready and that his master Cornille had written him that he should prepare the house as he would have done for him and that I would not have to pay any of the expenses, because his master had ordered it in the letters that he had written. Nevertheless, I excused myself, thanking him, and stayed at the said inn of the White Lion.)

It is noteworthy here that even before the establishment of state-regulated international postal services, communication by letter over long distances was already well organized.[53] It is also striking that it was natural for all those involved to expect a servant to be able to read letters with instructions.

Through his business activities, Jean de Tournai was apparently connected to a wider international trade and finance network operating on a pan-European scale: the *compagnie des Mousquerons*. Mousqueron most likely refers to an international firm in which Alexandre and Jean Mousqueron, or Moscheroni, from Bruges, participated,[54] and which apparently also ran a banking branch in Rome:

> Le vendredy au matin le XIe d'apvril aprés Pasques *anno Domini* mil IIII^c. IV^xx et VIII, je m'en vins en Camp de Flours a tout plusieurs

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51 Jean de Tournai, *Le récit des voyages et pèlerinages*, pp. 24–25.
52 Jean de Tournai, *Le récit des voyages et pèlerinages*, pp. 86–87.
53 Allan, *Post and Courier Service*, pp. 1–21; Caizzi, *Dalla posta dei Re alla posta di tutti*; Contamine, 'Introduction', esp. pp. 14–18; Doumerc, 'Par Dieu écrivez plus souvent!'; Infelise, 'From Merchants' Letters to Handwritten Political *Avvisi*'; Infelise, 'La circolazione dell'informazione commerciale'; and Kittler, 'Caught between Business, War and Politics'.
54 Blanchet-Broekaert, ed., *Le voyage de Jean de Tournai*, p. 61.

lettres, entre lesquelles j'en avois deux de grand recommandation: l'une adreschante a Pierrequin Sellenbien au banc des Mousquerons, laquelle je presentay audict Pierrequin, et fus fort bien recupt audict bancq et y fus logés tout autant comme je fus audict Romme.[55]

> (Friday morning the 11th of April after Easter, the divine year 1488, I arrived at the Campo de'Fiori with several letters, among which I had several with very important recommendations: one addressed to Pierrequin Sellenbien at the bank of the Mousquerons, which I presented to said Pierrequin. And I was very well received at said bank and I stayed there as long as I was in said Rome.)

Once he had arrived in Venice, another member of the *compaignie des Mousquerons* came to meet Jean de Tournai: 'Aprés me vint bienveigner Jehan Marchecler, natif de Tournay, adcause des lettres que j'avois raporté de Romme, car il estoit de la compaignie des Mousquerons' (And then Jehan Marchecler, born in Tournai, came to greet me because of the letters that I had brought with me from Rome, and he was of the *compaignie des Mousquerons*).[56] Jean de Tournai's business activities had apparently given him strong connections to the *compagnie* of the Mousquerons, and Jean made use of their facilities for travel, lodging, and communication. It is even possible that Jean used their bank for international money withdrawals, because it does not seem likely that he would have carried heavy and cumbersome cash with him for his expenses during his entire pilgrimage.

In a similar vein, Jehan de Zeilbeke recommended that his readers place approximately 900 *livres* in a commercial bank, in Bruges or elsewhere, five to six months before leaving on a pilgrimage, because it was safer to travel with letters of credit than with cash. The letters could be exchanged in Rome, Venice, or elsewhere.[57] In this manner, the financial services that were originally created for international business were also used by pilgrims.

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55 Jean de Tournai, *Le récit des voyages et pèlerinages*, p. 42.

56 Jean de Tournai, *Le récit des voyages et pèlerinages*, p. 86. There must have been a community of merchants from northern Europe in Venice, which was linked to international merchants' networks: 'My estant audict Venize, touttes les festes et dimences allois disner et souper avec les marchantz de par deça, entre lesquelz Jan de Grove, serviteur a Cornille van Bomberg, Gautier de Bruges, messiere Raisot, serviteur de Piet Dick et a aultres, Jehan Sars dudict Bruges, Jehan Marchaller'. (During my stay in Venice, on feast days and on Sundays I had dinner with the merchants from the north, among whom Jan de Grove, servant to Cornille van Bomberg, Gautier de Bruges, *messire* Raisot, servant to Piet Dick and others, Jehan Sars from said Bruges, Jehan Marchaller). Jean de Tournai, *Le récit des voyages et pèlerinages*, pp. 103–04.

57 Desmarets, 'Jehan de Zeilbeke (1511)', p. 218.

As observed above, the pilgrims shared a significant amount of infrastructure with internationally operating merchants: roads, river barges, provisions for horses, and inns. The two worlds usually operated together unproblematically, but the situation could be quite different aboard seafaring ships. Apparently, many of these ships were used for pilgrimage and commerce simultaneously; the combination of both interests regularly caused conflicts, as can be inferred from Pierre Mesenge's description, recounting a case in point. On the return trip from the Holy Land, his ship remained in Corfu for four days:

> De ceste longue demeure les pelerins murmurent fort contre le patron pour quoy il fist lever les anchres ledit jour de samedi xxxᵉ et penultime jour dudit moys doctobres. Et si fismes voille environ huit heures de matin. Ce quil fist seullement pour contenter les pelerins car apres que nous eusmes nage deux lieus ou environ il fist regecter les anchres en la mer et demeurasmes la tout le jour et le lendemain qui fut dymenche derrenier jour dudit moys durant lequel temps on apporta en la nave plusieurs marchandises qui estoient demoureess derriere, de quoy se sourdit grant debat entre les pelerins et ledit patron.[58]

>> (Because of this long stop the pilgrims protested strongly against the ship's master, leading him to have the anchors lifted on said day, Saturday, 30th day of said month of October, and we were under sail around eight in the morning. Which he only did to please the pilgrims, because after having sailed approximately two miles, he ordered the anchors be thrown out in the sea again and we stayed there all day and the following day, which was Sunday the last day of said month. During this time, they brought several pieces of merchandise that were left behind on the quay, and because of which a major dispute arose between the pilgrims and said ship's master.)

Due to the possible conflict between pilgrimage and commerce, Jehan de Zeilbeke gave the following revealing advice to future pilgrims on the last folios of his manuscript:

> Et le patron trompe les pelerins il lez mainent la ou il veulent pour lez marchans faire leur marchandise on dist que cest le naue dez pelerins mes che est mieulx le nauire des marchans dieu doint que vous peult bien aller.[59]

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58 Amiens, Bibliothèque municipale, MS Lescalopier 99, fol. 94ᵛ.
59 Douai, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 793, fol. 72ʳ; Desmarets, 'Jehan de Zeilbeke (1511)', p. 230.

(And the ships' masters cheat the pilgrims. They bring them where they want, so that the merchants can do their business. They say that it is the pilgrims' boat, but it is better to call it the merchants' boat. May God provide that you will travel well.)

Authoring a Pilgrim's Account and the Dissemination of Religious Knowledge

Late medieval pilgrims made use of internationally operating networks, both travel infrastructure and social networks, and in doing so, the pilgrims themselves and their accounts became a part of these networks as well. As discussed in this volume's introductory chapter about social network theory, one of the particularities of social networks is that they enable the transportation of objects, ideas, and — most importantly for my argument here — information, in this case religious knowledge. The texts of the pilgrims' accounts can be considered to be connected hubs in a transnationally operating information network, because they communicate to the readers information about pilgrimages to faraway places, about Christian morality and practices, and about sacred places.

Although the three pilgrim's accounts discussed here were never printed, the texts and their materiality show that they did actually find readers and that the information they contain was shared with wider audiences. Jehan de Zeilbeke's text only survives as an autograph manuscript, but he explicitly addressed future readers, most notably in the last part of his account, where he gives detailed advice on how to prepare for a pilgrimage and what to expect during the journey.[60] An inscription on the first folio of the manuscript also indicates that Jehan's account was intended for other readers: 'Memoire pour auertir touz pelerinz qui veullent aller a Rome pour prendre leur chemin comme nous lauez' (Account to advise all pilgrims who want to go to Rome to follow the same itinerary as we did).[61] Jean de Tournai's original text is now lost, but the single surviving manuscript reveals that it was copied at least once by a later scribe.[62] As indicated above, canon Pierre Mesenge's account was copied at least six times, which shows that it was disseminated relatively broadly. He, too, gives practical information to future pilgrims:

Les choses qui leur estoient necessaires lesquelles jay voullu mettre par escript affin que ceulx qui vouldront faire ledit voyage soyent aduertiz

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60 Desmarets, 'Jehan de Zeilbeke (1511)', pp. 217–30.
61 Douai, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 793, fol. 1ʳ.
62 Blanchet-Broekaert, ed., *Le voyage de Jean de Tournai*, pp. 29–30.

et instruictz de faire prouvsion de tout ce quil leur sera besoing tant en la mer que en la terre.[63]

> (The things that were necessary and that I wanted to put into writing so that those who would like to make said voyage will be informed and instructed to provision everything that they will need on sea and on land.)

Jehan de Zeilbeke and Jean de Tournai were both lay people who composed a religious text intended both for other lay people and for clerics. Their accounts were in part recorded while travelling, giving them a strong flavour of first-hand experience. Jehan de Zeilbeke gives the following comment on the gestation of his account: 'Et moy qui suy flamen et en faisant mon voyage le mis tout en flamen. Et moy aprez mon venue lay translate de flamen en franchoys qui mestoit paine et rompement de teste' (And me, being Flemish, noted everything during my pilgrimage in Flemish. And after my return I translated it from Flemish into French, which was very hard to do and gave me headaches).[64] Jean de Tournai tells his readers that he spent the endless days aboard the galley to the Holy Land occupied with drafting his account:

> Je m'en allois desjuner et puis je passoys le tampz à escripre au mieulx que je pooys, tout che que je veois pour ledict jour. En aprés nous alliesmes disner, aprés disner escripre, aussy dire mes heures, passer le tampz autour des gallios.[65]

>> (I usually had breakfast and afterwards used my time to put into writing as well as I could everything that I saw during that day. Later we would have lunch, followed by writing, praying the Hours, and hanging out with the rowers.)

Jehan de Zeilbeke and Jean de Tournai were both laymen who were capable of drafting a book-length account of their pilgrimages. They must have carried paper, pen, and ink with them during their entire journey, allowing them to note their experiences as they travelled. The two laymen taking up their pens and writing about a religious subject promotes them to authoritative voices in these matters.

The transfer of religious knowledge through pilgrim's accounts to wider audiences operates at three different levels. First, the accounts communicate practical information about pilgrimages to their clerical and lay readers: knowledge of roads and itineraries, and advice on how to negotiate, how to prepare, what to expect, and what to avoid. By giving the readers an

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63 Amiens, Bibliothèque municipale, MS Lescalopier 99, fol. 7ʳ.
64 Douai, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 793, fol. 65ᵛ.
65 Jean de Tournai, *Le récit des voyages et pèlerinages*, p. 117.

exciting narrative of a successful pilgrimage to the holy sites in Jerusalem, the readers were also incited to follow the author's example.

Secondly, the textual information given about holy places and religious practices — not only in Jerusalem, but also those encountered in Europe — provides the readers with first-hand knowledge about these places' material characteristics and religious importance, as well as religious practices. Jean de Tournai in particular gives detailed information about the relics and sacred sites he encountered during his journey: for instance, the relics of the Three Kings, the Thousand Virgins, and the head of Saint Ursula, and other relics in Cologne.[66] In Bologna he notes that the position of the priests in Italy during Mass is different from what he knew at home: with their faces turned towards the participants, instead of turning their backs to them.[67] Jean's descriptions of the seven major churches of Rome, their relics and indulgences, as well as other sacred sites and religious practices in that city, are particularly elaborate and very informative for the reader.[68]

Jean de Tournai experienced a spiritual transformation when he approached Rome:

> Je m'en vins disner à ladicte hostellerie et aprés mon repas prins, je vendis a mon hoste mes houseaux; et puis je prins ma bougette et mondict hoste m'alla querir ung baston. Et lors que je percupz ce baston, je me commencay ung peu a ratendrir, et adonc Jesu
> Crist quy jamais n'oublie ses serviteurs ne me laissa, et me vint en memoire qu'il estoit le jour de vendredy sainct; et comme Nostre Seigneur en cedict jour avoit pour nous reçut la mort et passion et qu'il estoit grande heure que je fasse penitence.[69]

> > (I had lunch in my hotel and after my meal, I sold my riding boots to my host, and I took my pilgrim's bag and my host found a stick for me. When I saw the stick, I started to become a little emotional. And Jesus Christ, who never forgets his servants, did not leave me. I remembered that it was Good Friday and how our Lord on that day had received death and suffered the Passion, and that it was about time for me to do penance.)

Pierre Mesenge, although a canon, actually wrote a more factual account than the two lay pilgrims studied here, but he, too, informs his readers about the spiritual experience of his participation in a procession in Venice, before departing from there to the Holy Land:

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66 Jean de Tournai, *Le récit des voyages et pèlerinages*, pp. 23–25.
67 Jean de Tournai, *Le récit des voyages et pèlerinages*, p. 37.
68 Jean de Tournai, *Le récit des voyages et pèlerinages*, pp. 46–83.
69 Jean de Tournai, *Le récit des voyages et pèlerinages*, p. 38. For spiritual transformation during pilgrimages, see: Locker, 'The Secret Language of Movement'.

> A la quelle procession toutes les eglises de la ville tant de religion que parochialles assistent qui est la plus singuliere et magniffique chose que jaye jamais veue. Et ne croy point que en toute la crestiente se face procession si sollempnelle ne si deuote.[70]

> > (In which procession all the city's churches participate, both those of convents and parishes, which is the most singular and magnificent thing that I have ever seen. And I do not think that in all Christianity there is another procession that is comparable in solemnity and devotion.)

By recounting the spiritual aspects of pilgrimages and their own participation in religious exercises, as well as the accounts of their confessions and prayers during their travels, the pilgrims depict themselves as exemplary men of virtue, inviting their readers to follow their examples, either by entering upon a pilgrimage or imitating them in devout behaviour.

A third function of the pilgrim's accounts is to provide the readers with enough vivid details so that they can perform a virtual pilgrimage by simply reading the text, or by listening to someone else reading aloud from the text.[71] First-hand knowledge of sacred sites in Jerusalem, Compostela, Rome, and sacred places encountered elsewhere in Europe, journeyed with the pilgrims through the international travel network to readers at home. Those who could not embark upon a real pilgrimage because of their situation, for instance because they were restrained by religious vows, a lack of sufficient funding, or the demands of family and business, could use a pilgrim's account as a starting point for a virtual pilgrimage, in which the descriptions would make the devotional exercises more vivid and would allow the reader to imagine himself or herself travelling with the narrator.

Conclusion

Medieval travel networks such as roads, rivers, and seafaring routes were important infrastructure which not only connected merchants and internationally operating companies, but also facilitated the movement of pilgrims. These travel resources, enabling the extraordinary mobility of medieval people, also allowed them to create social networks stretching over the whole European continent and even beyond. With the mobility of merchants and pilgrims, religious knowledge was transferred over equally large distances. Pilgrims and their accounts, such as the three late fifteenth-

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70 Amiens, Bibliothèque municipale, MS Lescalopier 99, fol. 8ᵛ.

71 Beebe, *Pilgrim and Preacher*; on virtual pilgrimage, see pp. 178–201, but mainly described as a phenomenon that occurred in relation to the Observant movement and the increasing enclosure of nuns.

and early sixteenth-century texts studied here, were connected hubs in these social networks and, as a consequence, they were instrumental in the transfer of practical knowledge, and above all of religious knowledge and practices over thousands of kilometres. The pilgrims, both lay and religious, were on the move and connected human beings. They created an authoritative voice in the accounts of their pilgrimages. In their accounts, the authors shaped their own identities as humble, yet religiously exemplary pilgrims. At the same time, they directly influenced the circulation of religious knowledge among their lay and religious audiences, thus creating a community of readers of their own.

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