

SUMMARY

JERUSALEM - ROME - COMPOSTELA

PEREGRINATIONES MAIORES AT THE END OF THE MIDDLE AGES

Almost every possible aspect of the mediaeval stage of the most important pilgrimages (*peregrinationes maiores*) in the history of the Roman Catholic Church has been analysed. The literature on the subject has become so vast that it can no longer be grasped easily. Each new study on the phenomenon in question runs the risk of repeating what has been known for long. This holds true even for specific peregrinations, not examined previously, which could become at best a contribution that does not offer much that is new.

The author, well aware of this risk, has nonetheless attempted to overcome certain limitations stemming from the tradition of studies into the pilgrimage movement and the research questionnaires used for this purpose. She has accepted as her point of departure a rather banal but rarely considered view, namely, that in late mediaeval Catholic Europe (although, after all, not only in this particular epoch) each region, country and town offered a different pilgrimage horizon, by no means only geographical. In the middle of the 14th century a resident of Rome on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land would arrive in Bethlehem with the image of *Presepio* sculpted by Arnolfo di Cambio for the Santa Maria Maggiore basilica deeply embedded in his mind. A pilgrim from Pisa would recall the *Adoration of the Magi*, a sculpture by Giovanni Pisano, embellishing the pulpit of the local cathedral. An inhabitant of Cracow would summon up a scene "depicted" in a sermon by a local Franciscan and just as deeply ingrained in his imagination. At the end of the 15th century these images differed considerably due to the distinctiveness of Italian Renaissance art in comparison to the Gothic art still prevailing north of the Alps. The discrepancies of the pilgrimage horizon should, therefore, be understood also as differences produced by the cultural standards followed in particular regions, estates and environments. The presented book examines them while keeping in mind a single concrete milieu - the burghers of Wroclaw, or, more precisely, their upper strata. The author has endeavoured to understand this specific culture by resorting to texts about pilgrimages to the Holy Land and Santiago de Compostela written by Peter Rindfleisch (d. 1535), a merchant from Wroclaw.

The selection of Wroclaw and Rindfleisch's accounts is not accidental. The late mediaeval pilgrimage movement is characterised by a significant and very well documented participation of townspeople. Additionally, documentation from Wroclaw belongs to those rare sources found in Polish libraries and archives which make it possible to analyse mediaeval *peregrinationes maiores*, and the two texts by Rindfleisch are the only burgher accounts from the period under examination.

Rindfleisch wrote testimony of both his expeditions - a concise diary of the pilgrimage to the Holy Land (1496) and a plain itinerary of his pilgrimage to the tomb of James the Greater in Compostela (1506/7), almost limited to enumerating the stages of the journey.

The texts are preserved in a small manuscript, the size of which corresponds to that of pilgrimage books and which was written in ca the mid-16th century, already after Rindfleisch's death. We cannot exclude the possibility that they are an edition prepared by the author of the manuscript upon the basis of notes taken by Peter; this holds true particularly for the diary. Thanks to these two texts the modest Wroclaw documentation pertaining to *peregrinationes maiores* can be regarded as specifically representative of European sources and as a portrayal of the late mediaeval pilgrimage movement - both texts are typical for such peregrinations. In turn, town documentation - predominantly the testaments of the *romipetae*, i.e. pilgrims travelling to Rome - as well as evidence of the attempts made in the Roman See by the burghers of Wroclaw to obtain private indulgences, access to Roman archives and, finally, Roman pilgrimage guidebooks comprise the core of the sources used for studying the peregrinations of townspeople to the Eternal City.

Late mediaeval *peregrinationes maiores* - with priority given to the pilgrimages to the Holy Land - were an expressly total religious experience. They covered almost all the religious practices, the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist, as well as a wide range of liturgical services, and appeared to concentrate on all the most relevant cults and spiritual trends of the period. Each had a different beginning as well as a unique content and purpose. The literature which originated in connection with the *peregrinationes* is a specific mirror reflecting all the differences (but also similarities) and remains, above all, an account of the perception of the pilgrimages, and thus also of the cultural horizons and identities of the authors of the diaries, itineraries and guidebooks. This feature is especially valuable in view of the absence of other written testimonies of this particular identity. A researcher dealing with the 14th and 15th century culture of Florence does not face such a problem, but for a historian writing about Wroclaw they remain an invaluable source.

The book is divided into three parts, each dealing with a different pilgrimage, examining problems of crucial significance for an analysis and interpretation of *peregrinationes maiores*: the writings unique for the pilgrimages, the journey and, finally, the sacred topography of the Holy Land, Rome and *Camino de Santiago*. By building an image of the late mediaeval pilgrimages undertaken by the residents of Wroclaw to the most important pilgrimage sites, the author intended to capture reflected elements of the religious culture of the period. In doing so, she recognised that this objective may be reached by resorting to an analysis of the pilgrimages and, more precisely, the possibility that the Wroclaw burghers grasped the enormous load of religious and, more extensively, cultural content accompanying each peregrination.

The pilgrims came from a variety of backgrounds; the pilgrimages forced them incessantly to confront the knowledge and imagery embedded in their minds with a reality which only partly could be subjected to those minds, and with experiences witnessed with their own eyes and ears; their novelty was so great that it demanded opening up to new knowledge and different cultural standards. Peter Rindfleisch seems to say little about this confrontation; moreover, we do not have any accounts of Roman pilgrimages written by other residents of Wroclaw. Not all is lost, however. The much richer sources from Nuremberg

- produced by the inhabitants of a town of Upper German culture and language, as in the case of Wrocław, but also of a town maintaining extremely close contacts with the capital of Silesia - yielded tentative analogies and filled the gaps in Silesian documentation. On the other hand, numerous accounts, itineraries and guidebooks written by pilgrims from German lands, Italy, France or England were confronted with the Rindfleisch texts. This is not without reason: the image of late mediaeval "grand" pilgrimages offered by the literature on the subject has been recreated primarily on the basis of more than ten of the most extensive accounts. Its essential part is, therefore, composed of what can be described as the perception potentiality of the pilgrimage - the widest possible horizon of the adoption and rationalisation of religious content, cultural differences, and the perception of time and space. On the other hand, researchers sometimes forget that this image was accessible to just a few pilgrims, who shared the experiences of the journey, meeting at its destination and participating in the pilgrimage ritual. Spiritual experiences, the comprehension of religious content, the perception and traces of ancient culture in Rome or the civilisational distinctiveness of Islam in the Middle East remained an individual phenomenon and at times essentially so. It is within the boundaries of this potentiality that the author tried to define the cultural standards of a pilgrim from Wrocław.

Presumably, that pilgrim arrived in the Holy Land well prepared. His familiarity with the sacred history stemmed from sermons enabling him to better understand and remember liturgical readings, the iconography of church paintings and carved decorations, mystery plays, Nativity creches and Palestinian relics that could also be found in Wrocław churches, evoking the concrete imagery of Biblical scenes. Jerusalem, Bethlehem or the Mount of Temptation - places well known and familiar - now appeared to become open-air churches, sanctuaries of the presence of Jesus, Our Lady, the apostles, the Three Kings and some of the prophets and patriarchs. He became helpless, however, when confronted with a specific situation, especially the sacred topography of Jerusalem - a multitude of holy sites commemorating the same Biblical or apocryphal events. The pilgrim was incapable of delving into a labyrinth of the spiritual and material reality of the town, built of the separate history of three religions and an even greater number of creeds, as well as of overlapping temples and places belonging to those religions, the intermixed traces of a Jewish, Roman, Byzantine, Arabian, Crusades and Mamelouk past. Only a few of the best educated pilgrims were capable of moving within this labyrinth and even then with the greatest of difficulties. Most were unacquainted with the history of the town and the Old Testament and insufficiently familiar with the New Testament. The domination of the Biblical text (more precisely: the Gospels) visible in the descriptions of *loca sacra* in such diaries as Rindfleisch's is, therefore, unique and in certain respects illusory. Biblical events became subjected to the order and topography of the *sanctus circuitus* (which turned the chronology recorded in the Holy Scriptures upside down), so the pilgrim recalled them fragmented and separate, each in a corresponding sacred site, framed with the formula of a *locus ubi*. Fragments of sacred history, decipherable by all pilgrims, succumbed to unavoidable visualisation once they were "translated" into concrete sites. Such visualisation was by no means identical, since it was

created by images of carved and painted altars, the painted decorations of churches and chapels, and mystery or Nativity plays.

The Venetian-Franciscan organisation of the late mediaeval pilgrimage to the Holy Land restricted its range to a standard route recreating events recorded in the Gospels, the apocrypha and, at times, more recent cults (the Veil of Veronica). The pilgrims examined the sites and objects pointed out by the Franciscans or their better-educated companions. This situation did not provide numerous opportunities for a significant expansion of the rudimentary religious knowledge with which the Wrocław pilgrim arrived at the Lord's Sepulchre. The intellectual chasm between his diary and *Evagatorium* by Felix Fabri, and even the accounts by Santo Brasca, a resident of Milan, illustrates, at least to a certain degree, the profound differences in the perception of the religious and cultural content offered by the pilgrimage.

Pilgrims arrived in Rome first and foremost for indulgences closely connected with the Station Churches and the collections of relics. They came to a city whose soil they knew had been soaked in the blood of martyrs; they were also aware that it contained the tombs and bodies of the apostles, that they would be able to worship the *Volti Santi* and that an enormous number of the most valuable holy testimonies of the Revelation, Incarnation and Redemption had been transferred from Jerusalem. The pilgrim walked, therefore, from basilica to basilica, as if taking part in a gigantic spectacle of the ostension of relics, and to thousands of years of indulgences added the most important, jubilee ones. The whole city could have appeared to be a single gigantic reliquary whose contents and ensuing mercies could be explained by an inventory suitable for the *ostensiones* - the lists of indulgences. There was no need, therefore, to provide accounts from such pilgrimages just as in the case of all other peregrinations connected with relics and indulgences in sanctuaries located closer to him and described only in rare instances.

The last of the *peregrinationes maiores*: the pilgrimage to St. James became a veritable paradigm of the mediaeval pilgrimage. Since its most essential part was the pilgrim's trail, it is not surprising that it was the latter and not the objective of the pilgrimage as such which acted as the main protagonist in descriptions of the religious expedition. This description paid slight attention, if at all, to Compostela, its cathedral and the tomb of the apostle featured therein (which, as numerous pilgrims of the period maintained, was highly dubious).

While reconstructing the cultural horizon of a late mediaeval pilgrim from Wrocław the author did not limit herself to an analysis of the perception of the pilgrimages' sacred topography, the adoption of associated religious content, or the comprehension of the "symbolic density" of the Roman Santa Sanctorum chapel and the Jerusalem *loca sacra*. Despite the inconvenient restrictions imposed upon studies by the literary scheme of a late mediaeval diary and pilgrim's guidebook, it seems possible to interpret its characteristic and excessively discernible "blank spots" when writings of this sort are compared with the most copious accounts. The absence of descriptions of towns passed on the way - in Venice only the local relics appear to have deserved notice - the failure to notice classical and

Renaissance Rome, and the omission of legends and apocryphal tales make us wonder about the extent to which the reason for this silence lay in cultural standards, slavish dependence on a given literary genre or the emulation of the existing descriptions of sacred sites and indulgences.

A Roman pilgrimage took place in the exceptional setting of the Eternal City - *caput mundi*, submerged in the ruins of ancient buildings and monuments and, during the 15th century, experiencing rapid transformations associated with the expansion of a new, Renaissance culture. There is a lot of evidence to suggest that in contrast to pilgrims setting off to the city on the Tiber from assorted Italian towns immersed in humanistic culture, the Wrocław *romipeta* did not tackle stereotypical images of Rome, so important for them. Neither did he face the (visual) stereotype - a collection of magnificent (although ruined) edifices and monuments, depicted on numerous 15th century Italian maps and paintings, nor its literary myth, which during the 15th century, and mainly due to Petrarch, reached humanistic milieus also outside Italy.

The distinguishing feature of *peregrinationes maiores* was their exceptionally imposing plot. The pilgrims literally submerged themselves in a thick forest of myths, legends and tales, with a significant part of which they were more or less acquainted since it comprised the core of the mediaeval literary *patrimonium*. Each pilgrimage possessed a suitable and unique plot - in the Holy Land the sources were the apocryphal gospels, in Rome - stories about the mythical founders of the city, emperors and popes, and along the trails leading to St. James - the tales about Charlemagne and his knights, as well as the miracles of St. James, celebrated along the routes and recalled in sermons. In the texts left behind by Rindfleisch and many other burghers from German-speaking lands we come across mere morsels of this diversity, which allows us to assume that, as it was little known, it was not remembered.

As an expedition to a world whose civilisation was not part of the West European *oecumene*, the pilgrimage to the Holy Land, involving a long and dangerous sea voyage, inspired a wish to report on the experiences connected with travelling and exploration. This desire was aroused by an interest in the East, the progress of Turkish expansion and the increasingly numerous printed accounts and pilgrim guidebooks. Lively curiosity was also stirred at the time by "wondrous" tales of assorted origin, told from manor house to tavern and city square by genuine and false *palmieri*. Merchants accustomed to distant voyages described those countries which they had not seen earlier. Only when they transcended their own geographical and cultural horizon, etched in their minds prior to the pilgrimage, did a confrontation with a new reality set into motion a cognitive potential which proved to be greatly differentiated. It is not by chance that texts delineating the widest possible limits of the perception of *peregrinationes maiores* were composed of accounts and guides written by people who embarked upon the travails of all three or at least two of the great pilgrimages and whose journey to the Holy Land encompassed the whole of the Middle East - from Cairo to Damascus and even Mecca - as well as those who, apart from an indulgence-oriented Roman itinerary, traversed the streets of Rome in search of its classical greatness.

Should we find it surprising that the Rindfleisch accounts and similar diaries do not contain a record of an important experience shared by the pilgrims along their path, namely, an encounter with art? The author of the study draws attention to this fact primarily in that part of her publication which focuses on the perception of classical and Renaissance Rome. On the other hand, the absence of any mention of the architecture and decorations in the sanctuaries of the basilica of the Lord's Sepulchre, the interior of the Bethlehem basilica, the appearance of the basilica of St. Peter in Rome or the church of St. James in Compostela - to recall the most important peregrination destinations - forces us to ponder on its causes. Were the authors of the diaries, i.e. members of the elites of late mediaeval Gothic towns, insensitive to art? Or were they "blind" or indifferent to it whenever it was much too distant from their local art? Could it be that they were unable to describe their observations and impressions because they were exceedingly dependent on a literary model to which they resorted while keeping their own pilgrim's diary? Finally, did they fail to write because they were incapable of translating the images embedded in their minds into words? Although arguments supporting each of these solutions can be discovered in the sources, the author was unable to decide which provides the most powerful evidence. True, we are permitted to assume without any great risk that the cultural horizons of Rindfleisch and similar authors must have been much narrower than those of "burgher" Anselm Adorno, a citizen and later the mayor of Bruges, and, simultaneously, an aristocrat in the service of King James III of Scotland. For his accounts of a pilgrimage to the Holy Land (1470) Adorno used the services of his son (who accompanied him), a student at Padua, who listed more than ten of his predecessors - ancient and Early Christian authors-geographers - giving a genuine display of humanistic intellectual ambition by not omitting either Ptolemy or Zarathustra. Just as imposing is the list of the authors and texts cited by Marco di Bartolomeo Rustici, a Florentine goldsmith and painter, who went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land thirty years before Adorno: 17 classical authors, more than ten Fathers of the Church and theologians, the Bible and apocrypha, medical treatises and chronicles. Peter Rindfleisch, who in no manner demonstrated his intellectual ambitions, which would have had to be expressed in an account supplemented with erudite cosmographic fragments, was probably unable to provide evidence of the affiliation of the burghers of Wroclaw to a new culture that both he and his generation were the first to encounter more closely, also in their own town.

At the end of the Middle Ages the experiences of a pilgrim following the routes of *peregrinationes maiores* no longer possessed any pioneering traits, but consisted of a repetition of the itinerary, the manner and conditions of travelling, the contents of the pilgrimage, and the ritual forms. The overwhelming majority of the pilgrims' accounts were composed of diaries of collective experiences - this holds true mostly for pilgrimages to the Holy Land but also in the case of excursions to Rome or Compostela, even when they were carried out by individuals. The authors, therefore, did not see any obstacles to seeking assistance in the diary of another pilgrim, a guidebook to holy sites, or a list of relics and indulgences. Their efforts thus did not require literary talent, especially when the author's ambition did not exceed an itinerary-diary of a pilgrimage. In this respect, neither the texts

by Rindfleisch nor a large group of other accounts belong to travel literature *sensu stricto*. In the manner of many other pilgrims-diarists, the merchant from Wroclaw did not consider it suitable to describe his journey back from Compostela to Antwerp. Although his description of the sea voyage, as well as the ports and islands at which the galley carrying him to the Holy Land, seems to disclose the temperament and curiosity of a genuine traveller, it was to a considerable extent the outcome of succumbing to certain rules of a literary genre.

The vivid dependence of the accounts by Peter Rindfleisch on the form of a pilgrim's diary limited the range of the analysis and primarily restricted the formulation of generalising conclusions about the cultural horizons of the burghers of Wroclaw. A confrontation of what Rindfleisch could have seen, heard, found out, and understood - i.e. his perceptive potentiality - with what he recorded might easily produce a pessimistic connotation of cultural backwardness. It is necessary to remain cautious - the quality and contents of the Rindfleisch texts do not diverge from the majority of similar accounts by German burghers, including the residents of Nurnberg, which flourished in the second half of the 15th century.