

# Cities, nations and divine service: identifying Spanish merchants in late medieval Bruges

ANDREW BROWN

School of Humanities, Massey University, Sir Geoffrey Peren Building,  
Turitea Site, Palmerston North, New Zealand

**ABSTRACT:** This article explores the relationship between ‘national identity’, the urban environment and its religious practices. As a gateway city, where locals met foreigners to an unusual degree, late medieval Bruges provides a useful case-study. The focus is on the processes that shaped expressions of identity. These often involved religious rhetoric and practices. Foreign merchants, such as the Biscayans and Castilians, were grouped into ‘nations’, and identified with their homelands, especially in their chapels; but why and how they did so was not the result simply of patriotism or a sense of otherness, but of urban and strategic agendas, their own and those of native citizens.

In December 1451, a dispute between the Biscayans and Castilians, both members of the ‘nation’ of Castile in Bruges, was brought before the city aldermen. The Biscayans complained that the ‘merchants of the confraternity of Burgos’, as they called the Castilians, had falsely claimed pre-eminence over all merchants from ‘Spain’, by insisting on precedence at funerals in their chapel within the Franciscan church. Yet Biscayan ships had frequented Flanders long before any from Burgos; merchants from Burgos had taken the name ‘Spaniards’, but their consuls were a recent creation, and this did not override the Biscayans’ ‘ancient rights’. Letters from the ‘king of Spain’ testified to their valiance against the Saracens; Biscayan prowess had been recorded in chronicles. The Burgos merchants had even impugned the king’s honour by placing their city’s arms in the chapel windows. However, the Castilians viewed matters differently. They were puzzled that the ‘merchants of the coast’, as they termed the Biscayans, called themselves ‘Spaniards’: their king was king of ‘Castile’, and Burgos was its chief city, the ‘capital of the nation’. They had granted the Biscayans use of the chapel, which Castilian merchants had endowed bountifully; and the Biscayans had presumed to place their own arms above those of the king.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Stadsarchief, Bruges (SB), 96, 14, fol. 50r; L. Gilliodts-Van Severen, *Cartulaire de l’ancien consulat d’Espagne à Bruges* (GVS, *Cartulaire*), 2 vols. (Bruges, 1901–2), vol. I, 44.

The Biscayans and Castilians voiced heated arguments about who they were and who they were not. They did so in French, in an urban Flemish court of law, and with reference to their devotional activities. Their dispute introduces the main themes of this article: the complex nature of group and 'national' identities in the late medieval period, and the role of the urban environment and its religious practices in expressions of them. Bruges was exceptional in late medieval Europe for the number of its visiting and resident foreign merchants, and its population, peaking in the fifteenth century at 45,000, included at least several hundred of them.<sup>2</sup> Many, though not all, were grouped as 'nations', those from Spain being among the most important.<sup>3</sup> The bulk of recent research on merchant guilds or nations has been focused, quite naturally, on their economic activities: nations in foreign cities were formed primarily for commercial purposes, and their organizational structures were determined by their business priorities.<sup>4</sup> Certainly, their devotional activities have not been ignored but fuller consideration of the specific urban socio-religious context in which they took place is often lacking. This context had a significant part to play in the shaping of foreign 'identities'.

Several issues need to be clarified. Attempting to search simply for the 'identity' of foreign merchants seems doomed. The term is slippery: to claim an identity presupposes expressing sameness and difference simultaneously.<sup>5</sup> The quest to find identities risks running aground for at least two reasons: on the one hand, the term may assume too much, as though identity were a solid, immovable given; and on the other, it may imply too little. Qualifying identity as fluid and inconstant empties the term of meaning: a fluid identity is perhaps not an identity at all.<sup>6</sup> So the historian seeking 'identities' must chart a delicate course between a Scylla of reification and a Charybdis of vacuity. Perhaps identities were perceived

<sup>2</sup> At least 300 nation members lined up for a ducal entry ceremony in 1468; but 2,000 foreign merchants may have been present in Bruges and its outports. For estimates of numbers of resident foreign merchants, see O. Gelderblom, *Cities of Commerce: The Institutional Foundations of International Trade in the Low Countries, 1250–1650* (Princeton, 2013), 23–5.

<sup>3</sup> 11 main 'nations' existed in mid-fifteenth-century Bruges: the Hanse merchants were the most numerous (but rarely resided for long periods); Italians, who often resided for longer, but whose numbers were divided out principally amongst the Venetians, Genoese, Florentines and Luccans; not so numerous, but residing for longer periods than the Hanse, were nation members from the Iberian peninsula (Biscayans, Castilians, Catalans and Portuguese). The English and Scottish were less well represented. In general, see J. Marechal, *Europese aanwezigheid te Brugge: de vreemde kolonies (XIVde–XIXde eeuw)* (Bruges, 1985); A. Vandewalle (ed.), *Les marchands de la Hanse et la banque des Medicis. Bruges: marché d'échanges culturels en Europe* (Bruges, 2002). For studies on particular nations in Bruges, see below.

<sup>4</sup> See in general S. Ogilvie, *Institutions and European Trade. Merchant Guilds, 1000–1800* (Cambridge, 2011); Gelderblom, *Cities of Commerce*. For typologies of merchant guilds based on their degree of control and delegation, see O. Gelderblom and R. Grafe, 'The rise and fall of merchant guilds: re-thinking the comparative study of commercial institutions in premodern Europe', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 40 (2010), 477–511.

<sup>5</sup> S. Lawler, *Identity. Sociological Perspectives* (Cambridge, 2008), 2; B.M. Bedos-Rezak, 'Medieval identity: a sign and a concept', *American Historical Review*, 105 (2000), 1497.

<sup>6</sup> R. Brubaker and F. Cooper, 'Beyond "identity"', *Theory and Society*, 29 (2000), 1–47.

as objective things,<sup>7</sup> and were articulated or performed: the Biscayans and Castilians claimed that a people named 'Spaniards' existed. Even so, their claims did not emerge simply from an 'identity', but as some theorists emphasize from processes of identification and deliberate strategy.<sup>8</sup>

Similar issues arise over the vexed question of 'national identity'. Debate on the form, strength or even existence of nations in the later Middle Ages is long in the tooth but remains lively and still touches sensitive nerves. Part of it relates to the role played by state power in constructing nationhood. From a modern perspective, medieval kings lacked the machinery of government to weld their subject peoples into nations.<sup>9</sup> Yet from a medievalist's perspective, state power was increasing in some parts of Europe, and its weakness in other parts did not prevent nationhood from being expressed.<sup>10</sup> Too much emphasis is placed on the creation of national identity as a top-down process, and not enough on its emergence from the bottom up.<sup>11</sup> Patriotic sentiments, based on a sense of common language, customs and history, were generated at a local level,<sup>12</sup> as the Castilians and Biscayans seem to show. However, their claims were not necessarily built on ardent patriotism. Indeed, the relevance of merchant nations to 'national identity' is questionable. Neither the Castilians nor the Biscayans constituted a 'nation' by any modern standard: neither formed (to use Anthony Smith's contested definition) 'a named community possessing an historic territory, shared myths and memories, a common public culture and common laws and customs'.<sup>13</sup> Nor did either of them form a 'people', as the term *nacio* was partly understood in the medieval period: they were adopting a nomenclature

<sup>7</sup> On objectifications of identity, see Bedos-Rezak, 'Medieval identity'. For merchant 'identities' notwithstanding their 'shifting' nature, see K. Reyerson, 'Identity in the medieval Mediterranean world of merchants and pirates', *Mediterranean Studies*, 20 (2012), 129–46.

<sup>8</sup> I. Baatsen and A. De Meyer, 'Forging or reflecting multiple identities? Analyzing processes of identification in a sample of fifteenth-century letters of remission from Bruges and Mechelen', in V. Soen, Y. Junot and F. Mariage (eds.), *L'identité au pluriel. Jeux et enjeux des appartenances autour des anciens Pays-Bas, XIVe–XVIIIe siècles* (Lille, 2014), 24–5; W.J. Van Bakkum and P.M. Cobb (eds.), *Strategies of Medieval Communal Identity: Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (Groningen, 2004), 1–10.

<sup>9</sup> J. Breuilly, 'Changes in the political uses of the nation: continuity or discontinuity', in L. Scales and O. Zimmer (eds.), *Power and the Nation in European History* (Cambridge, 2005), 67–101. But see R.R. Davies, 'Nations and national identities in the medieval world: an apologia', *Revue Belge d'histoire contemporaine*, 34 (2004), 567–79; P. Hoppenbrouwers, 'The dynamics of national identity in the later Middle Ages', in R. Stein (ed.), *Networks, Regions and Nations: Shaping Identities in the Low Countries, 1300–1650* (Leiden, 2009), 19–41.

<sup>10</sup> L. Scales, *The Shaping of German Identity. Authority and Crisis, 1245–1414* (Cambridge, 2012), 526–36.

<sup>11</sup> V. Soen, Y. Junot and F. Mariage, 'Identité et histoire des anciens Pays-Bas. Enjeux thématiques et renouvellement historiographique', in Soen, Junot and Mariage (eds.), *L'identité au pluriel*, 9–20.

<sup>12</sup> S. Reynolds, 'The idea of the nation as a political community', in Scales and Zimmer (eds.), *Power and the Nation*, 54–66; R.R. Davies, 'The peoples of Britain and Ireland, 1100–1400', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, sixth series, 4–8 (1994–98).

<sup>13</sup> A.D. Smith, 'When is a nation?', *Geopolitics*, 7 (2002), 15.

applied to certain corporate groups who did not always correspond neatly to territories and peoples, or stimulate patriotism.<sup>14</sup> They were merchants with their own agendas, and their expressions of patriotic loyalty were often more strategic than sentimental.

However, they also entered Bruges as foreigners. Much has been written about the importance of the 'Other' in creating national identity,<sup>15</sup> and the relationship between foreign merchants and native citizens has been conceptualized in these terms.<sup>16</sup> How 'other' foreigners felt was partly determined by how 'other' they were made to feel: the process of identification is relational and two-way.<sup>17</sup> The 'otherness' (or otherwise) of foreign merchants in Bruges is not easily characterized because attitudes of native citizens towards foreigners were ambiguous: local patriotism and agendas could sharpen a sense of difference between both parties; some locals were less well disposed to foreign merchants than others. At the same time, 'foreigners' in Bruges were a hybrid group, differing in their associations with the city: by no means all foreign merchants were members of nations, many were transient,<sup>18</sup> others lived in the city as counsellors, officers or suppliers of the princely household,<sup>19</sup> others still became citizens, while the families of some were to reside in Bruges for more than a generation.<sup>20</sup> Yet many types of foreigners in Bruges could also be integrated into local society, most directly through purchase of 'citizenship' (burghership or *poorterschap*). This privilege varied greatly

<sup>14</sup> For clerical 'nations', see H. de Ridder-Symoens, 'Mobility', in W. Rüeg and H. de Ridder-Symoens (eds.), *A History of the University in Europe*, vol. I (Cambridge, 1992), 282; C. Weeda, 'Ethnic stereotyping in twelfth-century Paris', in M. Cohen and J. Firnhaber-Baker (eds.), *Difference and Identity in Francia and Medieval France* (Farnham, 2010), 115–35. Flemings in Rome were distributed between two associations: C. Conforti, 'Introduction', in J. Bottin and D. Calabi (eds.), *Les étrangers dans la ville. Minorités et espace urbain du bas Moyen Âge à l'époque moderne* (Paris, 1999), 88–91. Hanse merchants did not necessarily promote a Germanic identity: Scales, *Shaping*, 437–45.

<sup>15</sup> On the influential work of F. Barth, see J. Firnhaber-Baker, 'Introduction', in Cohen and Firnhaber-Baker (eds.), *Difference and Identity*, 3.

<sup>16</sup> J. Wubs-Mrozewicz, 'Interplay of identities: German settlers in late medieval Stockholm', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 29 (2004), 53–67; *idem*, 'Rules of inclusion, rules of exclusion: the Hanseatic Kontor in Bergen in the late Middle Ages and its normative boundaries', *German History*, 29 (2011), 1–22.

<sup>17</sup> C. Tilly, 'Citizenship, identity and social history', in *idem* (ed.), *Citizenship, Identity and Social History* (Cambridge, 1996), esp. 5; R.C. Trexler, 'Introduction', in *idem* (ed.), *Persons in Groups. Social Behavior and Identity Formation in Medieval and Renaissance Europe* (New York, 1985), 3–16.

<sup>18</sup> Especially the Hanse, see A. Greve, 'Vreemdelingen in de stad: integratie of uitsluiting?', in M. Carlier et al. (eds.), *Core and Periphery in Late Medieval Urban Society* (Leuven, 1997), 158. For a black market at Sluis, involving foreign merchants, see B. Lambert, 'Merchants on the margins: fifteenth-century Bruges and the informal market', *Journal of Medieval History*, 42 (2016), 1–29. I thank the author for sending me his article in advance of publication.

<sup>19</sup> Ducal visits to Bruges increased in the mid-fifteenth century; see E. Lecuppre-Desjardin, *La ville des cérémonies. Essai sur la communication politique dans les anciens Pays-Bas bourguignons* (Turnhout, 2004), 34.

<sup>20</sup> For the Adornes family, see N. Geinaert, *Het archief van de familie Adornes en de Jeruzalemstichting te Brugge*, 2 vols. (Bruges, 1987), vol. I, 1–8.

between towns in terms of rights and implications, but it often strongly determined the status and identification of foreign merchants.<sup>21</sup>

Expressions of national identity are thus explored here not as products simply of patriotism or alterity, but as processes of identification and strategy. Particular attention though is given to their religious dimension. In claiming group, civic or national identities, reference to the sacred was invariably invoked or displayed – such was the authority of religious discourse in late medieval Europe, and the ubiquity of devotional group practices, especially in the form of fraternities. But the way these references and practices intersected with commercial and urban agenda needs further study. Moreover, although the business priorities of nations determined their organizational structures, their expressions of group identity assumed social and religious guises. The devotional activities of foreign merchants have been commented on, as forms of sociability to further economic ends<sup>22</sup> or group cohesion,<sup>23</sup> and as pathways towards integration into local society.<sup>24</sup> But more attention can be given to their role in two-way processes of identification, and therefore the socio-religious context in which they took place.<sup>25</sup> The chapels of nations also need to be

<sup>21</sup> In some, it gave foreign merchants entrée into local social networks and government; in others, foreigners remained ‘guests’, without rights to possess houses or conduct trade. See generally Ogilvie, *Institutions*, 51–8; D. Keene, ‘Introduction: segregation, zoning and assimilation in medieval towns’, in D. Keene, B. Nagy and K. Szende (eds.), *Segregation – Integration – Assimilation. Religious and Ethnic Groups in the Medieval Towns of Central and Eastern Europe* (Farnham, 2009), 11–13; D. Menjot, ‘Introduction. Les gens venus d’ailleurs dans les villes médiévales: quelques acquis de la recherche’, in C. Quertier, R. Chilà and N. Pluchot (eds.), *Arriver’ en ville. Les migrants en milieu urbain au Moyen Âge* (Paris, 2013), 21–5; L. Lucassen and W. Willems, ‘Introduction: cities, institutions and migration in the Low Countries’, in *idem* and *idem* (eds.), *Living in the City. Urban Institutions in the Low Countries, 1200–2010* (New York, 2012), 2, 5. For contrasting situations in Stockholm, Novgorod and Bergen, see Wubs-Mrozewicz, ‘Interplay of identities’; *idem*, ‘Rules of inclusion’. In London, ‘aliens’ were distinguished from ‘foreigners’ (*forani*) who were not ‘free of the city’: D. Keene, ‘Du seuil de la Cité à la formation d’une économie morale: l’environnement hanséatique à Londres entre XII<sup>e</sup> et XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles’, in Bottin and Calabi (eds.), *Les étrangers*, 409–24. For ‘denization’ as a category of citizenship, see B. Lambert and W. M. Ormrod, ‘Friendly foreigners: international warfare, resident aliens and the early history of denization in England, c. 1250–c. 1450’, *English Historical Review*, 130 (2015), 1–24.

<sup>22</sup> Ogilvie, *Institutions*, 8–11.

<sup>23</sup> See comment on commemorative practices of the Hanse and Venetians in Bruges: E. Spindler, ‘Between city and sea: portable communities in late medieval London and Bruges’, in M. Davies and J.A. Galloway (eds.), *London and Beyond. Essays in Honour of Derek Keene* (London, 2012), 187, 191–8. For merchant festivals needing to express a sense of ethnic difference from locals, see A. Mänd, ‘Festival scenarios of the Hanseatic merchants in late medieval Livonia’, *European Medieval Drama*, 6 (2003), 97.

<sup>24</sup> See comment in passing on this issue: Menjot, ‘Introduction’, 25. See the example of Castilians in Nantes: L. Moal, ‘Les Castillans à Nantes aux XV<sup>e</sup> et XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles. Négoce et notabilité’, in Quertier, Chilà and Pluchot (eds.), *Arriver’ en ville*, 261–81. For the ‘integration’ of Castilians in Bruges but for the mid-sixteenth century, see W.D. Phillips Jr, ‘Local integration and long-distance ties: the Castilian community in sixteenth-century Bruges’, *Sixteenth Century Journal*, 17 (1986), 33–49. The London Hanse had their own Steelyard church, but members apparently frequented London parishes (Keene, ‘Du seuil de la Cité’).

<sup>25</sup> For recent comment on the role of religious spectacles and symbolic media for identity-formation within the Low Countries, see R. Stein, ‘An urban network in the medieval Low

situated in this context: they may well have catered for 'religious needs',<sup>26</sup> or conversely generated 'social capital' for secular purposes,<sup>27</sup> but their part in processes of identification can be more directly addressed.<sup>28</sup> In their dispute, the Castilians and Biscayans carefully referred to their own contribution to divine service, evidently to strengthen their case before the Bruges magistrates and to articulate a sense of group identity.

The evidence available for Spanish merchants provides a useful case-study to explore how such expressions of identity were generated and shaped by the urban and religious context; first by considering how, by their devotions, nations from Spain identified themselves in Bruges; then at how they were identified within the wider urban setting and in relation to burghership.

### Nations identifying themselves: chapels and divine service

From the late thirteenth century, Bruges was a gateway city of international commerce, serviced by local brokers and hostellers, to which foreign merchants were increasingly drawn.<sup>29</sup> Their desire to reside and access markets, and reduce transactional costs, stimulated a need for corporate structures.<sup>30</sup> The Hanse merchants extracted economic privileges, notably relating to wholesale commodities, from the counts of Flanders and city magistrates. Italians from various cities began to arrive in numbers from the end of the thirteenth century.<sup>31</sup> The Catalans (representing Barcelona, but also Mallorcans and Valencians, within Aragon) exported Mediterranean products to Flanders; they established consuls in Bruges in 1330.<sup>32</sup> Castilian merchants brought merino wool and other commodities (leathers, iron and dried fruit), their boats returning with Flemish textiles

Countries. A cultural approach', in *idem* (ed.), *Networks*, 43–71; A.-L. Van Bruaene, 'The Habsburg theatre state. Court, city and the performance of identity in the early modern southern Low Countries', in *ibid.*, 131–49.

<sup>26</sup> Gelderblom and Grafe, 'Rise and fall', 485.

<sup>27</sup> Ogilvie, *Institutions*, 9–11, 427–30.

<sup>28</sup> For 'ethnic and national identities' and chapels in a sixteenth-century context, see C. Conferti and E. Sánchez de Madariaga, 'Churches and confraternities', in D. Calabi and S.T. Christensen (eds.), *Cultural Exchange in Early Modern Europe*, vol. II: *Cities and Cultural Exchange in Europe 1400–1700* (Cambridge, 2006), 349.

<sup>29</sup> J.M. Murray, *Bruges, Cradle of Capitalism 1280–1390* (Cambridge, 2005), 178–90; P. Stabel, 'Bruges and the German Hanse: brokering European commerce', in L. François and A.K. Isaacs (eds.), *The Sea in European History* (Pisa, 2001), 37–55.

<sup>30</sup> Murray, *Cradle of Capitalism*, 219–29.

<sup>31</sup> P. Stabel, 'De gewenste vreemdeling. Italiaanse kooplieden en stedelijke maatschappij in het laat-middeleeuwse Brugge', *Jaarboek voor middeleeuwse geschiedenis*, 4 (2001), 189–221; and for the Genoese in Bruges, see B. Lambert, 'De Genuese aanwezigheid in laatmiddeleeuws Brugge (1435–1495). Een laboratorium voor de studie van instellingen en hun rol in de economische geschiedenis', Ghent University Ph.D. thesis, 2011.

<sup>32</sup> Mallorca was incorporated into the crown of Aragon in 1349. Catalan fleets largely operated out of Andalusian ports; see P. Desportes Bielsa, 'El consulado catalán de Brujas (1330–1488)', *Aragón en la Edad Media*, 14–15 (1999), 375–90.



in particular. They gained privileges in 1348 and 1367, and in 1428 the right to be a 'nation'.<sup>33</sup>

The principal reasons for becoming a 'nation' were economic: a degree of judicial autonomy within the host city helped merchants protect their interests, and deal with commercial disputes according to the legal rules of their home towns.<sup>34</sup> Their business interests were fundamental to the structures they adopted. But their status and identity as nations were expressed visually and spatially. Their charters bore distinctive seals;<sup>35</sup> certain houses and districts became their places of activity; some nations acquired their own 'lodges'. In 1466, the Castilians were active near the Beurse square, and in 1483 were occupying a house in the Lange Winkele.<sup>36</sup> However, not all nations possessed their own buildings: even the Hanse did not acquire its own house until 1457.<sup>37</sup> Occupation of the civic landscape by nations was limited: until 1434, the Castilians used the hostelry of Jacob van der Beurse.<sup>38</sup> In fact, the corporate presence of nations was earliest developed within sacred spaces; and regardless of their business procedures, almost all nations in Bruges acquired altars for mass within mendicant churches,<sup>39</sup> and most secured space to bury their dead.<sup>40</sup> In 1414, before becoming a 'nation', the Castilians were granted use in the Franciscan friary of the Holy Cross chapel, which they dedicated to St James, their homeland saint.<sup>41</sup> From 1432, they placed their deceased

<sup>33</sup> For Castilians in Bruges, particularly their economic role, see J. Maréchal, 'La colonie Espagnole de Bruges du XIVe au XVe siècle', *Revue du Nord*, 35 (1953), 5–40; H. Casado-Alonso, 'La nation et le quartier des Castillans de Bruges XVe–XVIe siècle', in Bottin and Calabi (eds.), *Les étrangers*, 365–76; J.D. González Arce, 'La universidad de mercaderes de Burgos y el consulado castellano en Brujas durante el siglo XV', *En la España Medieval*, 33 (2010), 161–202; H. Casado-Alonso, 'La colonie des marchands castillans de Bruges au milieu du XVe siècle', in *Diplomates, voyageurs, artistes, pèlerins, marchands entre pays bourguignons et Espagne aux XVe et XVI siècles*, Publications du centre Européen d'études Bourguignonnes, 51 (Neuchâtel, 2011), 233–52.

<sup>34</sup> Gelderblom, *Cities of commerce*, 1–18; González Arce, 'La universidad', 174.

<sup>35</sup> Maréchal, 'La cologne espagnole', 29.

<sup>36</sup> SB, 165 (1465–69), fol. 36r; C.L. Carton (ed.), *Het boeck van al 't gene datter geschiet is binnen Brugge sichten Jaer 1477, 14 Februarii, tot 1491* (Ghent, 1859), 49.

<sup>37</sup> L. Devliegheer, 'Het Oosterlingenhuis te Brugge', in N. Jörn, W. Paravicini and H. Wernicke (eds.), *Hansekaufleute in Brügge. Bd. 4: Beiträge der Internationalen Tagung in Brügge April 1996* (Frankfurt am Main, 2000), 13–32. This contrasts with the Hanse in London which had its own enclave (the Steelyard): Keene, 'Du seuil de la Cité'.

<sup>38</sup> Maréchal, 'La cologne espagnole', 32.

<sup>39</sup> N. Geinaert, 'Universitas mercature. Marchands, culture et religion à Bruges au Moyen Âge', in Vandewalle (ed.), *Les marchands*, 152–6.

<sup>40</sup> For the Catalans in the Carmelite church, and rules in 1357 including post-obit masses, see Archief van de ongeschoeide karmelieten Brugge (AkB), Liber Oblongus (LO), fols. 87r–88r, 180r–v; A. Paz y Meliá (ed.), *El Llibre del consolat dels mercaders catalans en Bruges (1330–1537)* (Madrid, 1922). In the same church, the English-chapel priest (1344) could say mass in a 'loud and . . . public voice' (1344). The Scots (1366) had to celebrate mass at an altar in 'suppressa voce', but acquired a papal indulgence for a chapel in 1369, which by 1457 celebrated all the sacraments (after dispute with other parishes): AkB, LO, fols. 18r–21v, 58r–60r; Nr. E 0063.

<sup>41</sup> The Burgos merchants formed a St James brotherhood in Burgos; see González Arce, 'La universidad', 180. The English adopted St Thomas Becket, the Scots St Ninian, the Italians their cities' cults.

members' coats of arms in the chapel windows.<sup>42</sup> After negotiation with a local family, they were permitted in 1452 to install gravestones in the chapel.<sup>43</sup>

Worship in a common chapel was a key means to develop a sense of corporate belonging among members, living and dead,<sup>44</sup> and to identify publicly with a wider nationality. However, it did not prevent Castilians and Biscayans from quarrelling. In 1455, they split into two nations: the Castilian (or 'Spaniards') and the Biscayan. Their differences reflected economic competition rather than local loyalties: the Biscayans did include merchants from the particularist Basque region, but also merchants from towns along the northern Castilian coast, who rivalled Burgos for control of maritime trade.<sup>45</sup> In pursuit of these economic goals, both parties made reference to their devotional aspirations, loyalties to the king and a 'Spanish' nationality. Their dispute in 1451 was referred to the king of Castile – who denounced Biscayan presumption for placing their arms above his own. In 1455, the Castilians again brought the king's attention to their work in the chapel, begun in a 'time without memory'. They later established presences in the Augustinian<sup>46</sup> and Observant<sup>47</sup> churches, but continued to assert precedence over the Biscayans in the Franciscan friary. Around 1499, the Biscayans planned 'out of devotion' to expand the chapel, and close its doors to the 'Spaniards'. The nation of Spain insisted that they still funded chapel repairs (without prejudicing royal arms); and its jurists advised contributing to Biscayan plans for the '*chose commune*'.<sup>48</sup> Similar rhetoric, referring to religious needs, was deployed in cases nations took to the aldermen on their rights to exact insurance levies (*avaries*). The Castilians justified taxing all Castilian vessels arriving in Flanders, and any merchandise on them,<sup>49</sup> partly by emphasizing their need to meet chapel expenses.<sup>50</sup> In 1515, the Spanish (Castilian) consuls again claimed levies from Biscayans, because they needed to sustain the nation's chapel and masses for their ships. The Biscayans retorted with arguments used

<sup>42</sup> SB, 304 (2, 3).

<sup>43</sup> SB, 304 (14); GVS, *Cartulaire*, vol. I, 47.

<sup>44</sup> Perhaps attendance at certain masses in the nation chapel was compulsory, as was the case for the Luca merchants in theirs: R. de Roover, 'La communauté des marchands Lucquois à Bruges de 1377 à 1404', *Annales de la société d'émulation de Bruges*, 86 (1949), 49–51.

<sup>45</sup> According to the 1455 statutes, the Castilian nation united merchants from Burgos, Seville, Toledo, Segovia, Soria, Valladolid, Medina del Campo, Logroño, Najera and other inland places; the Biscayan nation included merchants from Biscay, Guipúzcoa, Álava, Santander, Asturias, Galicia and Navarre.

<sup>46</sup> They contracted a copper-founder to place their arms on certain columns (1470): SB, 165 (1469–70), fol. 42v (GVS, *Cartulaire*, vol. I, 106).

<sup>47</sup> The church was founded in 1468 and consecrated in 1478; by 1474, the Spaniards had installed five windows, one with the image of St James: SB, 304 (27, 30, 31, 33, 36); GVS, *Cartulaire*, vol. I, 111, 114, 118, 124.

<sup>48</sup> SB, 304 (64); GVS, *Cartulaire*, vol. I, 194–8.

<sup>49</sup> Casado-Alonso, 'La colonie', 246–50. The same issue affected several nations: GVS, *Cartulaire*, vol. I, 53, 60, 65, 78, 243.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 78 (1458).



by jurists to tax royal subjects. There were two types of taxation, they explained: one raised for the 'necessity' of any town, college, university or nation; the other 'for the profit and utility of the prince and his *chose publique*'. The insurance levies belonged to the first type. The Spaniards agreed with these principles, but claimed the levies belonged to the second type.<sup>51</sup>

These self-interested disputes hardly suggest that any wider sense of national identity was felt or fostered. Yet nations were persistent in referring to their kingdom and to royal interests. To advance their own interests, the Castilians also exploited royal propaganda that had promoted the 'nation of Castile' in another context. Among their charters was a copy made in 1478 of a sentence delivered at the Council of Basel in 1434, recorded by a merchant from Burgos, which had granted precedence to the 'nation of Castile' – in this case the royal delegation of clergy – over the English nation.<sup>52</sup> The events surrounding this sentence had not been edifying: tensions between the Castilians and the English, over seating arrangements in church, reached such a pitch that in November 1435 some Castilians, including the archbishop of Burgos, plucked an English representative from his seat and cast him to the floor.<sup>53</sup> Other aspects of the dispute, however, could be recalled with profit. In asserting pre-eminence over the English, the Castilian clergy claimed to represent the whole of the Spanish nation, because Castile was heir to the Visigothic kingdom, had been evangelized by the Apostle James and had fought the Saracens. The same achievements were vaunted in Castilian chronicles;<sup>54</sup> and they are echoed in the document kept by the 'nation of Spain' in Bruges, for its own ends.

These expressions of patriotic allegiance were thus generated from a variety of sources. Perhaps the Spaniards' attachment to their king was genuinely felt. After all, in 1478, they greeted news in Bruges of the birth of Juan, son of their monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella, with 'great joy'.<sup>55</sup> Such warmth of allegiance had also been encouraged by devotional activities. The nation chapel in the Franciscan friary undoubtedly nurtured a sacred sense of corporate belonging towards each other, and towards a wider nation: emblems and images on chapel walls, windows, floors and ornaments created a space that surrounded them with allusions to their homeland and ruler. But most expressions of patriotism appear in

<sup>51</sup> SB, 304 (88); GVS, *Cartulaire*, vol. I, 231. The Castilians also claimed levies from the Catalans 'for the common... profit of the nation of Spain'. The Catalans alerted the aldermen to their need for levies to maintain their own chapel, and to their nation's rights, on which there was 'no memory to the contrary': SB, 304 (40, 41).

<sup>52</sup> SB, 304 (29); GVS, *Cartulaire*, vol. I, 114.

<sup>53</sup> V. Beltrán de Heredia, 'La embajada de Castilla en el Concilio de Basilea y su discusión con los ingleses acerca de la precedencia', *Hispania Sacra*, 10 (1957), 12–13.

<sup>54</sup> P. Linehan, *History and the Historians of Medieval Spain* (Oxford, 1993); T. Devaney, 'Virtue, virility, and history in fifteenth-century Castile', *Speculum*, 88 (2013), 732–7.

<sup>55</sup> Stadsbiblioteek, Bruges (SbB), Hs. 437, fol. 421r. A town clerk noted the Spaniards' celebrations for the new king 'born in their land' (Carton (ed.), *Het boeck*, 6).

situations that served other agenda, in which identifying with the ‘nation of Spain’ promoted economic interests. This does not mean that patriotic sentiments were without real significance; in any case, they have also to be gauged in relation to the urban context of Bruges. Why merchants from Spain identified themselves as ‘Spanish’, and why they adopted distinctive forms of religious practice and rhetoric, was also shaped by how they were themselves identified, within their host city. Their ‘joy’ following the royal birth in 1478 was in fact recorded by the Flemish rhetorician Anthonis de Roovere: locals identified foreign merchants in their midst in ways that also affected expressions of identity.

### Nations identified: the urban and religious context

Spanish and other foreign merchants were regarded as outsiders up to point. A birthplace outside Flanders could set them apart from locals.<sup>56</sup> Xenophobia occasionally erupted in its ugliest form: in 1436, 80 Hanse merchants were massacred at Sluis, Bruges’ outpost.<sup>57</sup> Low-key dislike of foreigners existed. In 1445, the count’s sheriff in Bruges punished Jehan de Halewijn for shouting ‘injurious words’ at Scotsmen, and ordering his servants to ‘kill them, kill them’.<sup>58</sup> Spanish merchants too could receive similar discourtesies: in 1486, two native men were punished for ‘coarseness’ towards ‘the nation of the Spaniards’.<sup>59</sup> Concerns were occasionally voiced that foreign merchants might violate citizens’ rights.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, native loyalties potentially made a foreigner’s sense of difference more acute. A degree of patriotism existed among locally born citizens, whose militia was organized to defend the county, whose representatives joined those of other towns in the Estates of Flanders, and whose history was preserved in the vernacular chronicles of Flanders.<sup>61</sup> Yet on the whole, Flemish patriotism did not necessarily breed hostility to foreign merchants, for it was complicated by other affiliations and attitudes. Burgundian rulers, though French in origin, were considered

<sup>56</sup> M. Boone, ‘The desired stranger: attraction and expulsion in the medieval city’, in Lucassen and Willems (eds.), *Living in the City*, 38.

<sup>57</sup> W. Paravicini, ‘Schuld und Sühne. Der Hansenmord zu Sluis in Flandern anno 1436’, in J. Schneider *et al.* (eds.), *Wirtschaft, Gesellschaft, Mentalitäten im Mittelalter. Festschrift Rolf Sprandel* (Stuttgart, 2006), 401–51 (though playing down xenophobia as the massacre’s cause). In 1379, foreigners’ houses were sacked during a rebellion: Greve, ‘Vreemdelingen’, 159.

<sup>58</sup> Brussels, Algemeen Rijksarchief (BAR), Rekenkamers (Rk), 13774, fol. 71v.

<sup>59</sup> Carton (ed.), *Het boeck*, 111.

<sup>60</sup> See the drapers’ complaints (1436): C.D. Liddy and J. Haemers, ‘Popular politics in the late medieval city: York and Bruges’, *English Historical Review*, 128 (2013), 796. For the case of a foreigner, the Luccan Dino Raponi, who had interests in the urban taxation system, and was singled out for criticism in 1411 possibly for his foreign origins, see B. Lambert, *The City, the Duke and their Banker: The Raponi Family and the Formation of the Burgundian State (1384–1430)* (Turnhout, 2006), 135.

<sup>61</sup> J. Oosterman, ‘De Excellente Cronike van Vlaenderen en Anthonis de Roovere’, *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse taal en letterkunde*, 118 (2002), 22–37.

'natural' counts; tensions between and within towns undermined Flemish solidarity. Bruges' versions of the chronicles of Flanders privileged the city's place within the county's history; and a more local sense of pride, evident for instance in buildings such as the Belfry and *Waterhalle*, promoted Bruges' own civic interests.<sup>62</sup>

These interests could often align perfectly well with those of foreign nations. The stereotype of the merchant city, receptive to outsiders, applied well to Bruges.<sup>63</sup> In 1438, Pero Tafur testified to the far-flung provenance of luxuries available in the city, including oranges and lemons from Castile; and even claimed that at Sluis 'all the nations of the world [eat] at a common table, without quarrelling'.<sup>64</sup> In a petition to the duke in 1450, the city was described as 'la plus renomme de tout le monde par le fait de marchandise qui se y hante'; departure of foreign merchants would weaken the 'common good'.<sup>65</sup> Civic governments strove to keep their foreign merchants within their walls, adapting procedures to deal with commercial disputes and opening up local courts to adjudicate on disputes.<sup>66</sup> Cases concerning Spaniards were usually conducted in mutually intelligible French.<sup>67</sup> Injuries inflicted on nation members were redressed, and in ways that borrowed from ecclesiastical practice: in 1486, the native insulters of the Spaniards were sent before them to beg forgiveness.<sup>68</sup>

A common identity, as well as a community of interest, between city and nation was promoted within a sacred rhetoric. During his ambassadorial visit to Scotland in 1468, the citizen Anselmus Adornes, of Genoese origin, called Bruges a '*universitas mercatorum*', indeed a 'mother' university like Paris, Bologna or St Andrews, but one of commerce.<sup>69</sup> He thus echoed a long-established notion of the city as a 'university' of sworn men, in which

<sup>62</sup> P. Stabel, 'The market-place and civic identity in late medieval Flanders', in M. Boone and P. Stabel (eds.), *Shaping Urban Identity* (Leuven, 2000), 43–64.

<sup>63</sup> This stereotype was sustained well beyond Bruges' peak as an international centre: Marcus Gheeraerts' city map (1562) is entitled 'Brugae Flandorum urbs et emporium mercatu celebre'; contemporary humanist texts made comparisons between Bruges and ancient republics (receiving strangers): K. Tilmans, 'Republican citizenship and civic humanism in the Burgundian-Habsburg Netherlands (1477–1566)', in M. van Gelderen and Q. Skinner (eds.), *Republicanism. A Shared European Heritage*, vol. I (Cambridge, 2002), 117.

<sup>64</sup> P. Tafur, *Travels and Adventures 1435–1439*, ed. M. Letts (London, 1926), 200–1.

<sup>65</sup> GVS, *Cartulaire*, vol. I, 41.

<sup>66</sup> Gelderblom, *Cities of Commerce*, 42–50. But note qualifications to the ability of town governments to adapt local arrangements: B. Lambert and J. Dumolyn, 'Cities of commerce, cities of constraints. International trade, government institutions and the law of commerce in later medieval Bruges and the Burgundian state', *Tijdschrift voor sociale economische geschiedenis*, 11 (2014), 89–102.

<sup>67</sup> Italians were dealt with in French; the Hanse, English and Scots in Flemish. For the pragmatic use of language in Flanders, see M. Boone, 'Langue, pouvoirs et dialogue. Aspects linguistiques de la communication entre les ducs de Bourgogne et leurs sujets flamands (1385–1505)', *Revue du Nord*, 91 (2009), 9–33.

<sup>68</sup> A woman who stole from a Spanish merchant in 1500 was made to ask his forgiveness on her knees (Rijksarchief, Bruges (RB), Proosdij, 1513, fol. 25r).

<sup>69</sup> Geinaert, '*Universitas mercature*', 151. Bruges was a 'university' in the papal indulgence (1306) for the Holy Blood relic (copy in AkB, LO, fol. 63r).

peace and justice reigned for the 'common good'.<sup>70</sup> Nations could also be termed 'universities': in 1494, the Spanish nation was referred to as a 'university of all the merchants of the noble city of Burgos'.<sup>71</sup> Comparison with universities lifted city and nation onto a more sacred plane. Peace and justice were manifestations of divine love; civic governments tirelessly repeated their aim to realize divine love on earth.<sup>72</sup> Within this discourse, spiritual and commercial endeavour were also aligned. In 1455, the city magistrates reassured the Spanish nation that 'God would not wish' to see its goods failing to reach Bruges.<sup>73</sup> A petition to Archduke Maximilian in 1488, from townsmen opposed to the ruling faction, insisted that foreign merchants enjoy their rights 'peacefully' so that Bruges would remain a 'profitable' city, where 'peace, justice... trade and industry' would flourish, and benefit the prince.<sup>74</sup> The association between civic wealth and divine favour was equally familiar to Spanish merchants: Castile's superiority over the English proclaimed at the Council of Basel was partly proved by its greater size and number of towns; this abundance of wealth indicated God's favour towards a chosen people.<sup>75</sup>

An identity common to both city and nation was suggested by the involvement of nations in rulers' entry ceremonies into Bruges. This urban custom had long served to express a relationship between city and ruler that was more than secular; and by the fifteenth century, the staging of dumbshows, often with biblical scenes, enhanced its sacred character.<sup>76</sup> In the chronicles of Flanders, nations were observed to line the streets at these events from at least 1430.<sup>77</sup> In 1440, following a rebellion, they rode out with the city's comital officers (the bailiff and sheriff) to greet the prince. The horses they fielded were numbered in local chronicles.<sup>78</sup> Similar arrangements were made during later entries; and in 1486 a city clerk itemized the nations' impressive display of torches and tapestries.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>70</sup> P. Boucheron, D. Menjot and M. Boone, *La ville médiévale. Histoire de l'europe urbaine* 2 (Paris, 2003), 228.

<sup>71</sup> This was by the 'bailiff' of Bruges (the count's official): GVS, *Cartulaire*, vol. I, 170. See above for Castilian and Biscayan reference to their status as universities in 1515.

<sup>72</sup> For instance: SB, 96, 1, fol. 48r-v (1360). Anthonis de Roovere wrote: 'Brugghe es eene stede van coopmanscepe ende payze' (SbB, Hs. 437, fol. 399r).

<sup>73</sup> SB, 96, 11, fol. 320r (GVS, *Cartulaire*, vol. I, 67).

<sup>74</sup> J. Dumolyn, "'Our land is only founded on trade and industry.'" Economic discourses in fifteenth-century Bruges', *Journal of Medieval History*, 36 (2010), 374–89.

<sup>75</sup> L. Parra García, 'Propositio super altercatione praeminentiae sedium inter oratores regum castellae et angliae in Concilio Basiliensi o los argumentos de Alfonso de Cartagena por la preeminencia de España', *Cuadernos de Filología Clásica. Estudios Latinos*, 22 (2002), 477.

<sup>76</sup> For oaths sworn over relics in first entries of princes: Lecuppre-Desjardin, *La ville des cérémonies*, 136–41.

<sup>77</sup> SbB, Hs. 436, fol. 168r-v.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, fols. 209r–210r.

<sup>79</sup> For 1457, see N. Despars, *Cronycke van Vlaenderen ende graefscpe van Vlaenderen... van de jaeren 405–1492*, ed. J. de Jonghe, 4 vols. (Bruges, 1839–40), vol. III, 541; for 1468, see A.J. Enschedé, 'Huwelijksplechtigheden van Karel van Bourgondië en Margaretha van York', *Kronijk van het historisch genootschap gevestigd te Utrecht*, 22 (1866), 17–71; for 1477, see SbB, Hs. 437, fols. 396v–397r; for 1486, see Carton (ed.), *Het boeck*, 121–3.

Such descriptions achieved an impression of productive harmony: the image of wealthy nation members issuing from city gates as the prince approached was the image aldermen promoted of their city as a 'university of merchants', blessed with riches at the disposal of the prince and the common good.

The city magistrates could thus identify nations as institutions that shared their values. Indeed, however foreign in origin, nations were recognizably urban in character. Their insistence on past privileges being written down, archived and chronicled, or even being outside 'memory', was entirely characteristic of other groups within cities.<sup>80</sup> Their commemorative practices mirrored those of other urban fraternities that all adopted their own patron saints – many of which, being 'universal' within the church, were non-local in origin. Some of these saints may well have become localized and associated primarily with the identity of particular groups: cults patronized by nations in Bruges were not often taken up by native citizens.<sup>81</sup> But nations occasionally contributed to the shrines of cults that had civic-wide followings in Bruges: the bells of St Donatian attracted nation benefaction in 1432, as did the new shrine of St Boniface in 1469.<sup>82</sup> The same projects were also supported by the civic government.<sup>83</sup> Indeed, the encouragement city councils gave to divine service was an important part of their efforts to promote a vision of the city, and their role within it, as aspiring towards the sacred. In entry ceremonies, the city would often allude to itself as an earthly or celestial Jerusalem.<sup>84</sup> The custom of expelling miscreants from the city gates on pilgrimages to distant shrines – including to Santiago (St James) – reinforced the perception of the cityscape as holy.<sup>85</sup> The generation of mass and other liturgical celebrations contributed to the process of making good citizens: in establishing a new musical endowment by 1483 for the public and daily

<sup>80</sup> For 'urban' uses of literacy, see M. Mostert, 'Studying medieval urban literacy: a provisional state of affairs', in A. Adamska and Mostert (eds.), *Uses of the Written Word in Medieval Towns: Medieval Urban Literacy II* (Turnhout, 2014), 4–10; É. Crouzet-Pavan and É. Lecuppre-Desjardin, 'Les mots de l'identité. La ville, le pouvoir et l'écrit en Europe aux derniers siècles du Moyen Âge', *Histoire urbaine*, 35 (2013), 5–12.

<sup>81</sup> The corn-carriers though had an altar (1474) dedicated to the Scottish St Ninian (RB, Sint-Gillis, 27, fol. 121v); and the Bruges minstrels adopted the Luccan *Volto Santo* (Geinaert, 'Universitas mercature', 152–8).

<sup>82</sup> For Scottish and German nations' gifts to the bell 'Donatianus' in St Donatian's (1432), see Bischoppelijk Archief, Bruges (BAB), G3, 1431/2, fol. 18r; for gifts of 'diverse nations' (Spaniards and Genoese) to St Boniface's new shrine in Our Lady's (1469), see RB, OLV, 1217, fols. 261r, 264r. In 1489, on St Donatian's day, the clerk of the Biscayans gave a *postulatus* (though of low-quality gold) to St Donatian's feretory, on behalf of a poor man of their nation who had died in prison (BAB, G6, 1489/90, fol. 9r).

<sup>83</sup> For earlier municipal contributions to St Donatian's bell tower, see BAB, 216, 1413/14, fol. 81r.

<sup>84</sup> G. Kipling, *Enter the King: Theatre, Liturgy, and Ritual in the Medieval Civic Triumph* (Oxford, 1998), 24–6, 36–7, 50–1, 58–9.

<sup>85</sup> J. van Herwaarden, *Opgelegde bedevaarten. Eene studie over de praktijk van opleggen van bedevaarten (met name in de stedelijke rechtspraak) in de Nederlanden gedurende de late middleeuwen (ca. 1300–1550)* (Amsterdam, 1978).

singing of the *Salve regina*, the city council considered it beneficial for every 'devout' person to attend.<sup>86</sup> The municipal emphasis on increasing divine service within the city partly explains why the Castilians and Biscayans in their disputes consistently harped on their own devotional activities before the city courts: it was a strategy likely to play well with local aldermen.

Yet for all the rhetoric of sacred harmony between city and nations, important differences remained. The most obvious was that the particular economic interests of nations did not always match those of their host city. Commercial advantages given to nations were sometimes grudgingly granted. Hanse members habitually flounced out of town or fled to escape unrest, and had to be coaxed back with sweeteners and privileges.<sup>87</sup> When the city, or factions within, rebelled against their prince, nations aligned themselves with the latter.<sup>88</sup> The economic dislocation following rebellion in 1488 proved particularly disruptive, for some nations never came back, by then preferring to reside in Antwerp. The Hanse temporarily returned, as more permanently did the Spaniards, who in 1494 were granted privileges and grander lodgings but at colossal expense to the city.<sup>89</sup> These economic points of tension were played out in ceremonial contexts.

The community of interest between nations and city presented at entries was in fact more apparent than real. Absent from local accounts of them is any suggestion that nations had their own agenda: the nations' collective contribution is emphasized rather than the differences between them. But matters of status did trouble the Biscayans and Castilians: the king of Castile in 1455 recognized their need to establish a hierarchy between them at these events.<sup>90</sup> Differences of agenda were perhaps obscured in earlier entries: whereas local craft guilds from 1440 onwards staged their own dumbshows, which could allow them to display craft interests and prestige, nations generally did not. But in the entry made in 1515 by Charles, the new Hapsburg count of Flanders, nations systematically put on dumbshows, thus revealing their own agendas more clearly. The political context of this entry was a changed one: the returning nations – the Spaniards (Castilians), Aragonese (Catalans), the Hanse and Italians – were in a stronger position, the city was suffering decline and its new count was heir to a Hapsburg empire. Two versions of the event were funded by the civic government, one in French by Remi Du Puys, and one in Middle

<sup>86</sup> R. Strohm, *Music in Late Medieval Bruges* (Oxford, 1990), 33, 39, 85–6; W. Vorsterman (ed.), *Dits die excellentie cronike van Vlaenderen* (Antwerp, 1531), fol. 220r.

<sup>87</sup> Stabel, 'Bruges', 46.

<sup>88</sup> J. Dumolyn, *De Brugse opstand van 1436–1438* (Kortrijk, 1997), 267–95; J. Haemers, *De strijd om het regentschap over Filips de Schone. Opstand, facties en geweld in Brugge, Gent en Ieper (1482–1488)* (Ghent, 2015).

<sup>89</sup> The residence cost 400 lbs. gr.: SB, 96, 12, fol. 144r (GVS, *Cartulaire*, vol. I, 183).

<sup>90</sup> SB, 304 (68, 69); GVS, *Cartulaire*, vol. I, 68–73. For an example of intense quarrels between foreign merchants at an entry, not acknowledged in all the contemporary accounts, see the case of Antwerp in 1549: S. Bussels, *Spectacle, Rhetoric and Power. The Triumphal Entry of Prince Philip of Spain into Antwerp* (Amsterdam, 2012), 51–6.



Dutch by a local rhetorician Jan de Scheerere.<sup>91</sup> Both emphasize the event's spectacular nature and the nations' contribution to it, but differences of outlook and identity become evident between nations and city. The nations' spectacles, flattering Hapsburg imperial ambitions, destabilized the thematic sequence of dumbshows staged by the civic government, illustrating the historic and often sacred links between city and count.<sup>92</sup> The last civic dumbshow showed a Wheel of Fortune which Charles was to move in Bruges' favour, but a Wheel had already appeared in a Spanish spectacle, attended by two Spanish-born Roman emperors, and with a miniature Charles perched on top. Comparing the two versions suggests the civic authorities were uncomfortable with these thematic disjunctures. Du Puys' version was destined for a courtly audience, and differs from de Scheerere's, intended for a local, urban readership; and it includes passages, omitted from the latter, that indicate differences of agenda.<sup>93</sup> The Spaniards' Wheel of Fortune prompts Du Puys (unlike de Scheerere) to linger on the lessons a prince might draw from reflecting on Fortune's unpredictability, and on past empires that had fallen to vice.<sup>94</sup> Peace was better promoted by the city than by nations. Du Puys alone reminds his courtly readers of the 'efroyssement' Charles had experienced on hearing the 'force trompettes clarions' from the Spanish nation's house; and recalls the chaos when the tower erected by the Aragonese, and filled with gunpowder for a repeat show, had accidentally exploded.

Local attitudes to nations were equivocal. On the one hand, the urban and religious customs of Bruges diminished any potential sense of difference between foreign nation and host city. As religious fraternities, nations were like other urban groups; they shared similar values with those of city magistrates and commercial elites, and indeed made strategic use of them. On the other hand, though, divergences in economic agenda, and in relation to the prince, could also be played out in customary ceremonies. These agenda, more than a foreign origin, worked at times to create perceptions of nations as different. But a key urban custom to identifying any town inhabitant, including those of foreign origin, was burghership: how nations and foreigners were perceived was also related

<sup>91</sup> S. Anglo, *La tryumphantte entrée de Charles prince des espagnes en Bruges 1515* (Amsterdam, 1973); S. Mareel, 'Jan de Scheereres *Triumphe ghedaen te brugge ter intreye van caerle*. Teksteditie met inleiding en aantekeningen', *Jaarboek De Fonteyne*, 55 (2005), 79–143.

<sup>92</sup> Du Puys toned down the Hanse's flattering reference to Alexander (Anglo, *La tryumphantte entrée*, 13). Bruges was identified as Jerusalem in the third civic dumbshow; the Spaniards staged a Jerusalem without reference to Bruges.

<sup>93</sup> Omissions from the Dutch version may also reflect its relative brevity: Mareel, 'Jan de Scheereres *Triumphe*', 92.

<sup>94</sup> This is followed by a scene of a flourishing garden: both versions agree that it betokened a harmonious realm, but Du Puys adds that it was similar to the realms of King David's son and of Duke Philip the Good – thus harking back to the civic dumbshows, the second drawing parallels between King David and counts of Flanders, the eighth referring to Duke Philip's reign, when 'merchandise . . . had flourished'.

to their legal status within the city; and this too was conceptualized in spiritual terms.

### Nations and foreigners identified: burghership

Burghership in late medieval towns was a somewhat exclusive category:<sup>95</sup> by no means all inhabitants of Bruges, even the native born, were legally included as 'burghers'. But it did not exclude the non-native *per se*: in fact the privilege of burghership in Bruges, compared with some European cities, was relatively open to foreign merchants, and gave them access to retail trade, mastership of craft guilds and city councils.<sup>96</sup> It was readily dispensed by Bruges authorities and easily purchased by foreigners, and it allowed some (like the Spaniard Jan de Sedano) to gain prominent positions in civic government.<sup>97</sup> There were complications. Potential obstacles restricted civic office-holding, perhaps reflecting a degree of native prejudice: a ducal privilege of 1414 allowed the city to exclude from aldermanship anyone born outside Flanders.<sup>98</sup> An amphibious status, as burgher and foreigner, could also create difficulties: some nation members who took out rights of burghership found themselves still treated as nation members for legal purposes, whereas others were dealt with as burghers to their disadvantage: when the Spaniard Pedro de Salamanca was arrested in 1499, the sheriff insisted on treating him as a burgher and not a Spanish nation member.<sup>99</sup> Burghers of foreign origin did not necessarily pass as locals.

However, purchase of burghership did reduce distance between foreigner and native, especially because it also encouraged bonds between them that were more than legal and economic. The new burgher, as in many other towns, also became part of a corporate body perceived as sacred. Oaths, often over relics, had originally bound the inhabitants of the

<sup>95</sup> For a brief overview, see Ogilvie, *Institutions*, 51–8.

<sup>96</sup> M. Boone and P. Stabel, 'New burghers in the late medieval towns of Flanders and Brabant: conditions of entry, rules, reality', in R. Gerber *et al.* (eds.), *Neubürger im späten Mittelalter: Migration und Austausch in der Städtelandschaft des alten Reiches (1250–1550)* (Berlin, 2002), 317–32; R.A. Parmentier, *Indices op Brugsche poorterboeken*, vol. I (Bruges, 1938), vii–xii. In 1477, burghership was temporarily allowed only through marriage to a Bruges *poorter* (GVS, *Inventaire des archives de la ville de Bruges* (Bruges, 1871–95), vol. VI, 141).

<sup>97</sup> I. Falque, 'Entre traditions Flamande et Ibérique. Les œuvres religieuses Flamandes comportants des portraits d'Espagnols (1400–1550)', in *Diplomates*, 288. For the Genoese Andries de Costa who married locally and bought burghership in 1483, see Stabel, 'De gewenste vreemdeling', 189–221. But for the unusually costly sum for burghership paid by Tomasso Portinari (1483), see Boone, 'Desired stranger', 37.

<sup>98</sup> GVS, *Inventaire*, vol. IV, 323–4. The custom was occasionally enforced, for instance in the 1480s (probably for political reasons), when three aldermen were replaced for not being Flemish-born: SB, 114 (1468–1501), fols. 123v, 157r, 165v.

<sup>99</sup> GVS, *Cartulaire*, vol. I, 193. For the ambiguous status working the other way, see the claims in 1443 over the inheritance of William Kyvier, an English spicer buried in Bruges, whom the sheriff treated as a 'foreigner' despite his status as burgher: BAR, Rk, 13774, fols. 17r–18r. For Kyvier's burial (1438), see AkB, Liber Fundationum C (E 0012), fol. 42v; LO, fol. 101r (for Kyvier as 'opidanus brugensis').

early commune together; and new burghers later were required to swear an oath to the city.<sup>100</sup> Participation in this body came to be expressed in the most important and inclusive urban festivity: the procession of the Holy Blood relic on 3 May. The relic had strong associations with the protection of civic liberties when the procession began in the early fourteenth century; and it grew to include all the city's ecclesiastical bodies, the city's 54 official craft guilds, which constitutionally had voting rights onto the aldermen's benches, but also a large number of associations at sub-craft-guild level.<sup>101</sup> By becoming burghers and craft-guild members, foreigners could thus be identified as belonging to Bruges society and as contributing to its sacred common good.

There were also other religious networks of sociability in the city to which foreigners could connect. The city's many confraternities, though not formally included in the Holy Blood procession, were also conceived as forming part of a civic whole,<sup>102</sup> and foreigners, particularly the more resident Spaniards and Italians, figure in the most prestigious or popular of them. The Rosebeke brothers, who conducted an annual pilgrimage to Rosebeke, and comprised 'the principal burghers and notable men of the town', included 13 foreigners (2 from Spain) between c. 1470 and 1530.<sup>103</sup> More foreigners, however, joined fraternities requiring a passive kind of membership (the payment of fees in return for suffrages). Among the 605 known members of Our Lady of the Dry Tree in the Franciscan friary (c. 1465 to 1516), were 20 Spaniards, 20 Florentines, 8 Luccans, 6 Germans, 2 Englishmen and 1 Frenchman.<sup>104</sup> At least 80 foreigners between 1467 and 1530 were among the larger fraternity of Our Lady of the Snow, in Our Lady's parish church.<sup>105</sup> A few were involved in the fraternities of Our Lady of Hulsterloo,<sup>106</sup> Our Lady of Presentation and Jerusalem.<sup>107</sup>

<sup>100</sup> Boucheron, Menjot and Boone, *La ville médiévale*, 227, 318, 320; for early communal oaths 1127–28 in Bruges, see J. Rider (ed.), *Galbertus Brugensis. De multro, traditione, et occisione gloriosi Karoli comitis Flandriarum* (Turnhout, 1994), chs. 22, 35, 52, 55; for oaths sworn by Bruges' burghers, see SB, 114: i, fol. 10v (1398); ii, fol. 163r–v (1432).

<sup>101</sup> A. Brown, *Civic Ceremony and Religion in Medieval Bruges, c. 1300–1520* (Cambridge, 2011), 39, 51.

<sup>102</sup> The rhetorician Eduard de Dene was to include all the confraternities, along with craft guilds, churches and city government, in his farewell salute to the whole of Bruges society within his *Testament Rhetoricael* (1561); see D. Coigneau et al. (eds.), *Eduard de Dene. Testament Rhetoricael* (Ghent, 1976–80).

<sup>103</sup> SB, 509. The names of c. 200 members are recorded c. 1470–1510. The Spaniards were Pieter de Castille and Janot Albenel, both *poorters*.

<sup>104</sup> SB, 505.

<sup>105</sup> For over 5,000 members named in the fraternity accounts 1467–1530, see RAB, OLV: 1501, 1502; S. van de Capelle, 'De O.L.V.-broederschap ter sneeuw te Brugge gedurende de late middeleeuwen (ca. 1467–1536)', Katholieke Universiteit Leuven Licentiaat thesis, 1997.

<sup>106</sup> The fifteenth-century list of 1,200 members includes 18 foreigners from France (6), Genoa (4), England (3), Florence, Portugal, Scotland and Holland (1 each); see SB, 524, *Gilden Hulsterloo*; A. Schoutet, 'De broederschap van Onze-Lieve-Vrouw van Hulsterlo, 14de–16de eeuw. Archief en ledenlijst', *Handelingen van het genootschap voor geschiedenis te Brugge*, 127 (1990), 109–44.

<sup>107</sup> Geinaert, 'Universitas mercature', 152–8.

By purchasing burghership, and to some extent joining confraternities, foreigners could thus be identified as part of the corporate life of the city. The fact that relatively few nation members actually chose to do so is therefore of considerable significance. The reasons for this reluctance were economic: burghership allowed nation members access to retail trade, but disqualified them from the particular advantages in wholesale trade, as well as in legal autonomies, that were permitted to nations.<sup>108</sup> The consequence though was that nations and nation members were not identified as part of the citizen body. Nations were therefore given no place within the Holy Blood procession. As non-burghers, nation members were not only excluded from craft guilds, but also from other kinds of fraternity. The openness of local guilds to foreign merchants can be exaggerated. Foreigners populated certain confraternities, like the Dry Tree, because burghership was not a criterion of membership. Conversely, they were absent from other important guilds, largely because members of these had to be burghers. Of 900 St Sebastian archers between 1417 and 1512, only two were foreigners, both Spaniards.<sup>109</sup> No foreigners appear among the 1,000 or so St George crossbowmen between 1437 and 1500,<sup>110</sup> or among the White Bear jousters; and it was very unusual for first-generation foreigners to join a rhetorician chamber and the Holy Blood fraternity.<sup>111</sup> All of these fraternities had religious festivities, and they were particularly associated with civic government. The shooters and jousters enjoyed city funding for their competitions; the shooters formed part of the militia. The shooters and rhetoricians contributed to the Holy Blood procession and entry ceremonies.<sup>112</sup> The Holy Blood fraternity was virtually exclusive to ex-aldermen.<sup>113</sup> Thus, foreign merchants were generally absent from the kind of fraternity that required an active participation from its members, and from the kind that brought local elite groups closer to one another and to municipal circles.

Lack of burghership rights also reduced access to other social and devotional networks that fostered a sense of corporate belonging among locals. Most native burghers were buried within the church or cemetery of

<sup>108</sup> Stabel, 'Bruges', 45. For the later case in 1559 of Diego Pardo who strategically insisted he was 'not a Brugeois' but a member of the nation of Spain – in order to access the legal processes of his nation in the making of his will, see Phillips, 'Local integration', 36.

<sup>109</sup> Brown, *Civic Ceremony*, 145. Over 750 of these names come from guild accounts (1454–81); see L. Crombie, 'The archery and crossbow guilds of late medieval Bruges', *Handelingen van het genootschap voor geschiedenis te Brugge*, 150 (2013), 310–35. 'Francisco de Nagero' was a member in 1417; 'Jan Gaylges' in 1444.

<sup>110</sup> 'Pieter de Salamanke', named in 1477–80, and in the obituary list (SB, 385, Register, fol. 37v), may be the Pieter de Salamanca in trouble in 1499 (see above). Most (902) of these names come from the obituary list (from 1437) and accounts 1454–81 (Crombie, 'Archery', 278–309; Brown, *Civic Ceremony*, 146).

<sup>111</sup> For the unusual case of the Genoese Andries de Costa becoming a Holy Blood brother in 1493, see Archief van het Heilige Bloede, Bruges, Register 18, fol. 106r.

<sup>112</sup> A.-L. Van Bruaene, *Om beters wille: Rederijkerskamers en de stedelijke cultuur in de zuidelijke Nederlanden 1400–1650* (Amsterdam, 2008), *passim*.

<sup>113</sup> Brown, *Civic Ceremony*, 167–85.

their parish, the primary unit of sacramental care; only a minority chose burial in other religious houses (paying compensation to the parish clergy). Most craft guilds founded altars in parish churches.<sup>114</sup> Native parishioners increasingly endowed parish fabrics, feast days and poor tables from the late thirteenth century.<sup>115</sup> Some foreign merchants endowed poor tables in the fourteenth century,<sup>116</sup> some made bequests to parish church fabrics in the fifteenth.<sup>117</sup> Yet of the 415 benefactors endowing feast days in the six main collegiate or parish churches of Bruges between c. 1220 and 1520, very few were foreigners.<sup>118</sup> Burghers also made increasing use during the fifteenth century of craft guilds as overseers in their anniversary services.<sup>119</sup> Between 1470 and 1502, four Hanse merchants required the doublet-makers (*culkstickers*) to attend their anniversaries in the Carmelite church, but this was unusual.<sup>120</sup> Non-burgher foreigners did not generally have access to these forms of spiritual insurance. Those connected with the Burgundian court were an exception,<sup>121</sup> and St Donatian's administered the sacraments to the count's household.<sup>122</sup> But in general, burial and benefaction in parish churches were contingent upon possession of burghership.<sup>123</sup>

The career and benefactions of Jan Loupes illustrate some of the complexities in the identification of Spanish merchants in Bruges.<sup>124</sup> Born in Spain, Jan Loupes became a member of the Spanish nation in Bruges, but later a burgher, and was described in 1481 as one of the deans of the

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 321–8.

<sup>115</sup> M.T. Galvin, 'The poor tables in Bruges 1270–1477', Columbia University Ph.D. thesis, 1998.

<sup>116</sup> At least four German merchants endowed poor tables in the fourteenth century (Murray, *Cradle of Capitalism*, 226 n. 44), but none directly did so in the fifteenth (though the court supplier Heinrich Tarrax involved parish *dischmeesters* when endowing the Rosebeke fraternity (1468): SB, 509, fols. 63r–70r); R. Rößner, *Hansekaufleute in Brügge. Teil 5: Hansische Memoria in Flandern* (Frankfurt am Main, 2001).

<sup>117</sup> For gifts to St James' 1443–67 by a Genoese, a Florentine, a Spaniard, two Venetians and two Germans, see RB, Sint-Jacobs, 24, fols. 15r, 29v, 34r, 40r, 42v, 56r.

<sup>118</sup> See cases in St Donatian's of Jan Goldbeter (1370), Dino Rapondi and the Spaniard Jan Loupes (below). Figures come from church cartularies and *planarii* (Brown, *Civic Ceremony*, 101–5).

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 213–20.

<sup>120</sup> AkB, Liber C, fol. 18r; Liber E, fols. 20r, 40v. None of the seven other German merchants in the 'Foundation books' did so. Native citizens did not usually ask nations to oversee their obits – though Jan van Nieuwenhove (1506) required the Aragonese consul to attend his (LO, fols. 186v–187v).

<sup>121</sup> Tomasso Portinari (before and after he purchased burghership) bought a seat, founded a chapel, and gave a canopy (with Medici arms) for Corpus Christi processions in St James'; see RB, Sint-Jacobs, 98, fols. 38r, 81v, 99v, 106r, 107r; SB, 216, 1486/87, fols. 173v–174r.

<sup>122</sup> The Luccan Dino Rapondi, ducal servant, was buried in St Donatian's in 1416: BAB, A50, fols. 38v–40r.

<sup>123</sup> But for Castilian integration into parish life later, see Phillips, 'Local integration', 33–49.

<sup>124</sup> For Jan Loupes, see GVS, *Cartulaire*, vol. I, 74; BAB, A55, fols. 143r, 148v, 99v, 107v, 117r, 127v, 129r; A56, fols. 197v, 258v; A57, fols. 10v, 30r, 63v; A141, fols. 3v, 5v; D41, 643; D42, 102; RB, OLV, 1531, fol. 194v.

olive-oil buyers and soap-sellers.<sup>125</sup> He purchased a seat in Our Lady's parish and his wife joined the fraternity of Our Lady of the Snow. His foreign origins were never forgotten by himself or others. He was 'born in Spain' according to the parish cartulary; after his death in 1492, Rombout de Doppere, public notary and chaplain of St Donatian's, recalled him as a 'most famous merchant of the nation of Spain'. His executors were both Spaniards who had purchased burghership: Peter de Castille (married to Jan's daughter), and Gomes de Soria, praised by de Doppere for his 'utilitas' to Bruges, though remembered also as a 'hispanus'.<sup>126</sup> Ties with others from their homeland evidently remained indispensable to foreign merchants;<sup>127</sup> but burghership did give Jan Loupes access to St Donatian's. In 1481, he had a seat built near the choir, and after protracted negotiation, he founded a chapel, which his executors completed after his death, adding an obit by 1496 with distributions to local houses of poor sisters. Thus, foreign merchants found ways to integrate themselves into Bruges' devotional life despite their foreign origins; but such integration required long-term residency and identity as a burgher, and for most neither condition pertained.

The exclusion of nation members from burghership also explains why they set up altars within mendicant churches.<sup>128</sup> Foreign merchants who were not burghers were generally unable to choose burial in parochial churches. It required the special intercession of a native hosteller, Adrien de Vagheviere, 'citizen and the host of Spaniards', for a Biscayan in 1421 to be permitted burial in St John's chapel by the canons of St Donatian.<sup>129</sup> The connection of nations to friaries did not in itself separate them from native citizens: the friars were an integral part of urban life, hosting some craft guilds, and enjoying ties with the civic government. But mendicant relationships with parish clergy (as in other towns) remained problematic, especially in relation to rights over administering the sacraments and burying parishioners.<sup>130</sup> The attachment of nation members to friaries was another point of difference between them and native citizens, and

<sup>125</sup> In St Donatian's chapter act-books, he is referred to as 'deken van de olyevercoopen and zeepzieders' (BAB, A 55, fol. 148v) though technically the guild was that of the *vettewariers*, sellers of grease goods, who fell under the jurisdiction of the coopers and chandlers.

<sup>126</sup> BAB, A56, fols. 129r, 258v; A57, fols. 30r, 63v, 136r; P.H. Dussart (ed.), *Fragments inédits de Rombout de Doppere...Chronique Brugeoise de 1491 à 1498* (Bruges, 1892), 34, 66. Gomes joined the Dry Tree confraternity (1486); see SB, 505, Ledenregister, fol. 16r; Pieter de Castille, the Rosebeke fraternity (see above).

<sup>127</sup> See also the assistance given posthumously (1487) to the Luccan Guidone Milite, buried in St Donatian's, by his nation who petitioned the chapter to restore the gold-lettered inscription on his gravestone (BAB, A50, fols. 147r, 149r).

<sup>128</sup> Note also foreign involvement in the non-parochial Sint-Joos almshouse: in 1477, 6 Germans, 3 Portuguese, 3 Dutchmen, 1 Genoese and 1 Frenchman paid its fraternity's *jaargheld* (Archief OCMW, Bruges, Sint-Joos, Reg. 178, fols. 99v–100r).

<sup>129</sup> BAB, A50, fols. 114v–115r. The free-standing chapel of St John was dependent on St Donatian's.

<sup>130</sup> W. Simons, *Stad en apostolaat. De vestingen van de bedelorden in het graafschap Vlaanderen* (Brussels, 1987).



it resulted partly from their status as non-burghers, as much as it did from any sense of foreign identity.

### Conclusion

The processes that identified foreign merchants in cities were many: perceptions of 'otherness', commercial agenda and urban customs all played a part, although how these variables were played out, in different cities and among different groups, varied to a considerable degree. The case of the Spaniards in Bruges serves to highlight how strategic some of these processes could be within the urban environment. Expressions of a sense of foreign identity did not simply emerge from patriotic sentiment or a climate of native prejudice. And as part of these processes, religious rhetoric and practices also had significant roles to play, both in claiming a 'national' identity and in mediating a relationship with the host city.

Nations like the Castilians and Biscayans did express a strong sense of identity, but their contribution to any construction of 'national identity' was not straightforward. Their disputes might suggest that nationhood was not driven solely by royal needs from 'above'; and that motives besides patriotism could promote it from 'below'. These merchants did claim to belong to 'a named community possessing an historic territory, shared myths and memories'; and if their economic interests, legal rights and duties were not 'common' to all people from Spain, they were privileges granted by a king to whom they professed allegiance. Their claims did not necessarily emerge from patriotic sentiments, for most of them were made to further their commercial objectives; but this does not mean that they were empty or inconsequential. It was in these merchants' interests that 'the nation of Spain' be deemed to exist. By insisting on their Spanish identity, the Castilian merchants encouraged a sense that the exercise of royal power over inhabitants of Spain was beyond dispute, and that a wider national identity was real and solid. Their attention to the affairs of their king at the Council of Basel also illustrates how and why groups besides agents of the state might propagate a notion of nationhood; how it was transferred from the folios of chronicles, and from the exalted circles of royal court and church council, into a wider world of merchants and townspeople, who made it a matter of public discourse because it suited them to do so. Narrower strategic interests could at times promote a wider sense of national identity.

The process of identification is two-way, and Spanish patriotism was perhaps sharpened by an awareness of alterity within Flemish Bruges. A degree of native prejudice did persist. But the urban environment tended to reduce any sense of distance between host city and foreign merchants. The 'urbanity' of nations as institutions cut across perceptions of them in the city as 'other': issues besides their foreign origins were more likely to set them apart from locals. Lack of burghership rights, and its further

implications, did significantly identify nation members as separate from locals. Even so, a foreign origin was not in itself a barrier to burghership; and it was largely a result of strategic choice that Spanish merchants might not purchase the privilege. In fact, the most vocal articulation of a Spanish identity in Bruges appeared not in contexts of friction between Spaniards and Flemings, but in the quarrels between the Biscayans and Castilians themselves. Their expressions of a wider national identity were generated less because they felt or were made to feel 'other', but as a result of more localized issues.

Claims to an identity, as well as relationships between city and nations, were often communicated through religious rhetoric and practice: the part played by divine service in these processes of identification deserves more attention. The urbanity of nations was supported by a sacred rhetoric: identifying both city and nation as 'universities' elevated their relationship above the mundane. Conversely, the non-burgher status of nations was highlighted in religious and ceremonial contexts; while divergences in nations' agenda from the city's could be fingered in city-sponsored reports of entry ceremonies. The chapels and devotions of nations also played a part in more strategic manoeuvres. They could indeed contribute to a sense of difference: piety and patriotism were made more emotive by references to a homeland and its saintly patron in the charged context of sacred space. But nations' chapels were not necessarily established simply to preserve a sense of ethnic identity in a foreign city: more practical issues, such as the difficulty of access to local parishes, were more significant. As the Castilians and Biscayans also showed in their disputes, nations' contributions to divine service were deployed to further their own ends, before aldermen who strove to present their city, like their counterparts in many other late medieval towns, as worthy of divine reward.