The Wiesbaden Miscellany: The Deliberate Construction of a Haphazard Collection

Kees Schepers

The degree of intended coherence as well as the projected use of miscellanies—especially if their content is diverse and every indication of ownership or origin is absent—is notoriously difficult to establish. The danger of over-interpretation looms large, as scholarly analysis tends to seek coherence in whatever it investigates, even when on principle "chance" must be considered an important factor. On the other hand, if one submits to agnosticism for lack of explicit information, the significance of a variety of clues risks being overlooked. The various, mostly nebulous suggestions about origin, design and use of the Wiesbaden miscellany bring into focus this problem of the interpretability of miscellanies. I intend to identify and interpret these clues, without exceeding the limits of what can be known.

The Wiesbaden miscellany, a voluminous folio-size codex named after the place where it is currently kept, contains some 80 widely divergent Middle Dutch texts,[1] whose sole common denominator is that they qualify as "devotional literature." Within the category of miscellanies of devotional texts, the Wiesbaden collection stands out for being very early, dating from the first decades of the fifteenth century. This early date is likely a partial explanation for the fact that the collection contains so many rare and unique texts. The critical edition of this miscellany has recently been published.[2]

The codex was probably both written and owned by lay people in a Flemish city. This hypothetical origin is based on the analysis that will be

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1 Wiesbaden, Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, 3004 B 10.

2 Hans Kienhorst and Kees Schepers, *Het Wiesbadense handschrift. Hs. Wiesbaden, Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, 3004 B 10*, with contributions to the introduction by Amand Berteloot and Paul Wackers, Middeleeuwse Verzamelhandschriften uit de Nederlanden 11 (Hilversum: Verloren, 2009).

presented in this contribution. The material aspects of the codex, however, do not fit a privately owned miscellany of devotional texts. Because of this incongruity, the Wiesbaden miscellany constitutes a category of its own. Numerous other miscellanies of devotional texts in Middle Dutch exist, but the Wiesbaden codex is markedly different and has none of the material characteristics one would expect. On the other hand, there are numerous codices that are comparable in their material aspects, but they either do not contain this type of texts or they were in the possession of institutional owners, mostly monasteries.

In the following I will first present the notable aspects—both material and textual—of the codex. Its many idiosyncrasies are the defining characteristic of the manuscript. I will identify these idiosyncrasies and explain what is remarkable about them. Thus it can be shown that the codex conflicts in many ways with expectations based on knowledge of other codices.

Secondly, I will present an hypothesis about the genesis, use and provenance of the codex that helps explain the identified idiosyncrasies. The Wiesbaden miscellany might be hard to interpret, but we can be sure that the codex did not come about in a vacuum. Relations to the social and religious context did exist, and the codex must have served some purpose. I will try to read the material and textual signs that tell us implicitly what the codex fails to tell us *expressis verbis*.

1. *Idiosyncrasies of the codex*

Only after a full codicological analysis of the codex, an evaluation of its content, and an examination of the clues about its use, will its remarkable material and many textual features become apparent. Some features are not striking at first sight, and their peculiarity can only be acknowledged after the comprehensive analysis. I will put forward the results of such analysis without elaborating on the detailed work necessary to attain them.

a) Basic facts

First it is necessary to establish the basic facts about the Wiesbaden codex. The manuscript contains 153 folio-size leaves, according to the

modern foliation in black ink.[3] Several codicological units can be distinguished; they are separated by an asterisk in the following collation formula.[4]

> [**1** *is pastedown*] $\underline{1}^{12}$ (2–13) **14 15**|**16** $\underline{2}^{14}$ (17–23^26–32 **24**|**25**) $\underline{3}^{12}$ (33–44) * 45|60 $\underline{4}^{10}$ (46–55) $\underline{5}^{4}$ (56–59) **61** * $\underline{6}^{12}$ *minus 1 after* 2 (62–72) $\underline{7}^{18}$ *minus 1 after* 17 (73–89) * $\underline{8}^{4}$ (90–91^109–110 **92**) * $\underline{9}^{12}$ (93–104) $\underline{10}^{4}$ (105–108) * $\underline{11}^{10}$ (111–120) * **121** $\underline{12}^{4}$ (122–125) **126** * $\underline{13}^{4}$ (127–130) $\underline{14}^{4}$ (131 133–135 **132**) **136** * $\underline{15}^{4}$ (137–140) $\underline{16}^{8}$ (141–148) $\underline{17}^{4}$ minus 1 after 3 (149–151) **152** [**153** *is pastedown*]

The codex is written on paper, with the exception of two parchment quires (fol. 93–104 and fol. 105–108) that were inserted into the binio 90–91^109–110. Thus there are 131 paper and 22 parchment leaves. The leaves measure c. 29 x 21cm, and are written in two columns. Nine scribal hands can be distinguished. Two scribal hands wrote on the parchment quires only. Since these quires were probably obtained from elsewhere by the compilers of the codex, the persons behind the two stints in question are most likely not connected to the persons behind the other scribal hands. These seven hands all write at least part of their work on the same type of paper. More specifically, they share the same batch of paper.[5] The manuscript must have been written in the first decades of the fifteenth century, since it was partly finished in 1410, judging from a colophon on fol. 2v.[6]

The texts are written in Flemish and Brabantine regional dialects. Information about the identity of the scribes and early ownership of the manuscript is completely lacking. It is largely unknown how the book

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3 The foliation includes both pastedowns.

4 Quires are numbered and underlined. Superscript figures indicate the number of leaves in each quire; missing leaves are mentioned in italics. For example, the number 12 indicates that the quire consists of 6 conjugate leaves (12 manuscript leaves). Modern foliation is added between brackets. Single, inserted leaves are indicated in bold. Pairs of conjugate leaves are separated by a vertical line (|).

5 The watermark in this prevalent type of paper, used by all the scribes, is a unicorn, and can be identified with Gerhard Piccard, *Die Wasserzeichenkartei Piccard im Hauptstaatsarchiv Stuttgart, Findbuch 10* (*Fabeltiere*) (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1980), Abt. III, *Einhorn, Grossformate*, fig. 2480; cf. Kienhorst and Schepers, *Het Wiesbadense handschrift*, 24–27.

6 *Anno domini* MCCCC *ende x jaer. Ende hi hout* CLXI *bladeren. Nota.* ("In the year of the Lord 1410. And it contains 161 leaves. Nota.") Some leaves (perhaps a quire) have gone missing since this note was written but there is no apparent loss of text.

ended up in Wiesbaden.[7]

The manuscript is bound in a contemporaneous binding; the boards are covered with leather, decorated with simple linear motifs. Parts of the locks have been preserved. In a recent restoration the text block was reconnected to the binding.

What makes the codex truly unique is the presence of a large collection of pre-Eyckian drawings, either glued onto leaves of the manuscript itself or pasted onto separate leaves that were inserted into the codex.[8]

The following table shows the structure of the codex and the position of the inserted leaves in relation to the texts and the distribution of scribal hands.

Table 1: Codicological structure, texts and scribal hands

Quires	Leaves	Texts and Drawings	Hands
[+1]		**[1: leaf with drawing on the inside of the upper cover]**	
1^{12}	2–13	2: o.a. table of contents *Wech van salicheit* (*Way of Salvation*)	1
		[2vb: tipped-in drawing]	
		3–13: *Way of Salvation*	1
[+ 3]		**[14, 15, 16: inserted leaves with drawings]**	
2^{14}	17–23^26^32	17–23: *Way of Salvation*	1
[+ 2]		**[24, 25: inserted leaves with drawings on fol. 24]**	
		26–32: *Way of Salvation*	1
3^{12}	33–44	33–44: *Way of Salvation*	1
4^{10}	45, 46–55	**[45r: tipped-in drawing]**	
		45va–50vb: a.o. Jean Gerson, *Miroir de l'ame*	1
		51vb: Augustijnken, Commentary on the Gospel of John	2

7 The manuscript was at one time in the possession of the Premonstratensian abbey of Arnstein an der Lahn, south-east of Koblenz, until its dissolution in the secularizing movement of 1802. Cf. Bruno Krings, *Das Prämonstratenserstift Arnstein a.d. Lahn im Mittelalter (1139–1527)*, Veröffentlichungen der Historischen Kommission für Nassau 48 (Wiesbaden: Selbstverlag der Historischen Kommission für Nassau, 1990), 269–70; cf. Kienhorst and Schepers, *Het Wiesbadense handschrift*, 77.

8 For a detailed study of the entire collection see Marta [redacted]. Renger, "The Wiesbaden codex B 10 and Netherlandish art around 1410," (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1985).

5^4	56–59, 60	56ra–58rb: Augustijnken, Commentary on the Gospel of John	2
		58va–59rb: *Vanden vier vingheren ende vanden dume*	3
		59va–60rb: o.a. *Beswaringhe des lidens*, 60v: blank	3
[+ 1]		**[61: inserted leaf with drawings]**	
6^{12-1}	62–72	62–72: Beda, *Expositio Apocalypseos*	3
7^{18-1}	73–89	73–89: Beda, *Expositio Apocalypseos*	3
8^4	90–91 ^(109–110)	90r–91v: a.o. Praise of Mary	3
[+ 1]	92	**[92: inserted leaf with drawings]**	
9^{12}	93–104	93–104ra: Versified dialogue on the contemplative life	4
		104ra–104vb: Questions of a good, sincere person	5
10^4	105–108	105ra–108ra: Questions of a good, sincere person	5
		108rb–108vb: Exercises for a spiritual person	6
(8^4)	(90–91/) ^109–110	109r–109v: Exercises for a spiritual person and prayers	6
		110r: Prayer to John the Evangelist	7
		[110v: tipped-in drawing]	
11^{10}	111–120	111ra–113vb: Anti-hierarchical disputation	7
		114ra–116vb: Anti-hierarchical disputation	8
		116vb–118rb: a.o. *Over vier lichten*	8
		[118v: tipped-in drawing]	
		119ra–120vb: Prayers	7
		[120v: tipped-in drawing]	
[+ 1]	122–125	**[121: inserted leaf with drawings]**	
12^4		122–125vb: a.o. Spiritual ladder with thirty steps	9
[+ 1]		**[126: inserted leaf with drawings]**	
13^4	127–130	127–130va34: Palmtree-treatise	9
		130va35–vb: Sermon on John 8:59	9
14^4	131^133–135	131: Sermon on John 8:59	9
[+ 1]		**[132: inserted leaf with drawings]**	
		132–134vb: Sermon on John 8:59	9
		134vb–135vb: o.a. Limburg Sermon 46	9
[+ 1]		**[136: inserted leaf with drawings]**	
15^4	143–146	143ra–146ra: o.a. Teachings of St Paul	7
		146rb–146va: o.a. Sermon of Hendrik van Calster	7
16^8	141–142, 137–140 147–148	141ra–147ra: Devotional texts	7
		147ra–148vb: *Cordiale de quatuor novissimis*	7

17^{4-1}	149–151	149ra–151rb13: *Cordiale de quatuor novissimis*	7
		151rb14–31: Two poems	7
		[151v: tipped-in drawing]	
[+ 1]		**[152: inserted leaf with tipped-in drawing in col. rb]**	
[+ 1]		**[153: pastedown with tipped-in drawing]**	

a) Size of paper and book

The first striking aspect of the book is its large size (29 x 21 centimeters). Being both large and voluminous, the codex has the material appearance of an institutionally owned book—be it by a monastery or a chapter—that would have been shelved with similar volumes. But this book was apparently owned by private persons (as will be shown later). Through its size and binding it has the look of a codex meant for serious study, *lectio divina*, or even for use in a liturgical context, but it does in fact contain texts that serve catechetical instruction and private devotion. The nature of many of these texts would go much better with a compact, small size book. The material model emulated by this book—irrespective of the function it was to have—seems to have been a common type of monastic book.

b) Drawing on pastedown

On opening the codex, we are amazed to find a full-page drawing glued onto the upper board. This drawing of Jesus as *Salvator Mundi*, like many others in the codex, is of a kind one does not normally find in manuscripts.[9] These drawings were not made to be part of this manuscript, and would have functioned outside of the codex[10] (Figure 22). Still, the subject matter does make sense here: Christ, who states in the banderole "I am the way, and the truth, and the life," stands as a visual motto in front of the collection of devotional texts that follows.[11]

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9 Cf. infra x.

10 All the drawings are published in color in Kienhorst and Schepers, *Het Wiesbadense handschrift*.

11 The text written in the form of a *distinctio* says: "Since I am so beautiful/ wealthy/ strong/ benevolent/ just, why do you not love/ desire/ fear/ approach me and stay away from sin?" The Latin proverb in translation: "Your death, the death of Christ, the deception of the world, the heavenly glory as well as the torments of hell are what you must keep in mind."

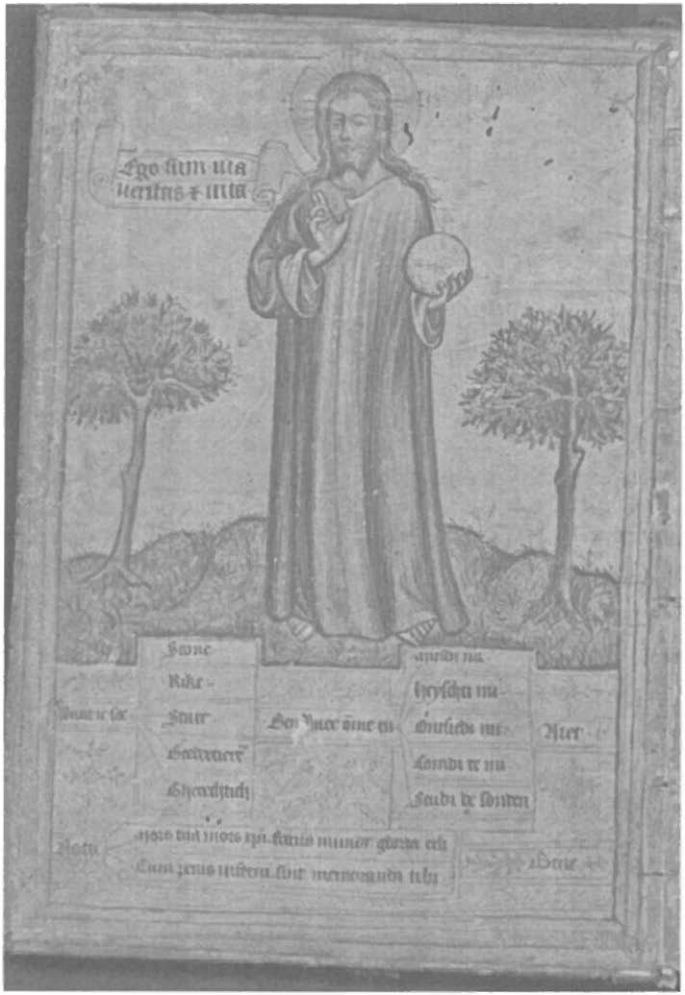

Figure 22: Wiesbaden, Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, 3004 B 10, fol. 1v: *Salvator Mundi* (copyright Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv). See also the colour plate at the end of this volume.

c) "Tables of contents"

The next page, fol. 2, the first leaf of the first quire of the codex, is for the most part quite standard: it contains the table of contents of the very large catechetical text it preceeds. This first leaf was apparently reserved

to accommodate the table that ends on fol. 2v at the top of the first column. The rest of fol. 2v, however, constitutes one of the strangest idiosyncrasies in the entire codex (Figure 23). The page contains several different elements:

A. The end of the table of contents of the *Way of Salvation*
B. "Table of contents" for the entire codex
C. Versified exposition of the "lending rule"
D. Colophon
E. Tipped-in drawing, with accompanying verses.

Figure 23: Wiesbaden, Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, 3004 B 10, fol. 2v (copyright Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv). See also the colour plate at the end of this volume.

Part of fol. 2v contains what at first looks like a table of contents of sorts for the entire codex that was crammed into the remaining space. If one ignores all the other elements on the page, the table of contents is in fact fairly limited, both in size and in scope. What is immediately striking is

its impracticality. Chaotic, badly structured and very incomplete, it lists a mere ten texts out of almost eighty, and it gives no indication as to where they can be found in the codex.[12] The few texts mentioned are not even in the right order, which renders the list even more unusable. With these characteristics—not all the texts, no usable references—what looks like a table of contents cannot have been intended to have a referential function. It is more of a sample list, mentioning the texts that the scribes who wrote the entries thought worthy of note. Prominent among these almost randomly listed titles are those added by scribe 7, a person whose activity can be observed all through the codex and who will be discussed in more detail below. Particularly strange are the two entries in the second column, that both refer to very short texts. Here the list conspicuously fails to mention some much longer texts that occur in the same section. In short, the list falls into the category of tables of contents, but because of its special features it is different from normal examples.

d) "Lending rule"

On the same page, between the two parts of the table, we come across a versified formulation of a very basic lending rule, instructing the reader to return the book when finished. The rule betrays nothing, unfortunately, about the owner of the book nor of the collection it belonged to.

Alse desen boec ghelesen es, soe gheeften weder dies hi es, soe sal menne u ten anderen male gherne leenen, dat weet ic wale. Waermen des oec nieten dade ende menne anderwerven bade, hi soude wesen onghereet; dat seghet de ghene diet wel weet.	When you have finished reading this book, you should give it back to whom it belongs, so it will readily again be lent to you, of that I am sure. In case one did not do that and one would ask for it again, it would not be available; thus says the person who knows well.

This is essentially an admonition to bring back the book after borrowing, with the warning that otherwise any further request to borrow it would be rejected. The phrasing does not seem well considered, because the message contains an inherent contradiction if taken literally: it is obviously impossible to borrow the book a second time if one did not return it the first time. We must assume that the rule refers to a situation when

12 The texts listed are: 6, 12, 26, 32/3, 34, 42, 28, 17, 41, 47.

the book was not returned at the proper time, but eventually did end up with the owner again. But if we ignore the logical anomaly, we may understand the rule to simply deliver the message: "Be sure to return the book." The rule would also make sense if we interpret it to mean that the second request to borrow the book would come from someone else; in that case the book would obviously not be available.

This versified, moralistic lending rule seems to suggest a library; but that would be jumping to conclusions. If we look at the literal meaning, then it simply states that this particular book can be borrowed from the person who possesses it. That is what the second line says: "one should give it back to whom it belongs." The library we tend to imagine might therefore consist of just this one book.

But we can take the speculation one step further, to arrive at a different sort of "library." Obviously, the concept of lending books only makes sense if there is more than one book to lend out. With numerous possible borrowers and just one book, the requested book would be unavailable most of the time. In order for the rule to serve a purpose, there must be more books. It is certainly conceivable that other, likeminded persons, who together formed an informal group, also owned one or two similar books and that the members of the group had agreed to lend these books to each other. In that case the book would indeed be part of a library, albeit a decentralized one and the rule would make sense.

The rule suggests that there are several prospective readers of the codex who are members of an unidentified and undefined group. The separate books they would lend and borrow constitute a communal library. And if this communal library did not (yet) exist, then there certainly seems to have been the desire to start one. This presumed objective presupposes some communality, some shared cause between the members of the group that would set them apart from other parts of society. In the urban environment of a Flemish or Brabantine city one can easily imagine such a group of individuals living apart but with a shared, communal identity.

e) Anachronistic initial

The first real text in the codex, which is also the longest, starts on fol. 3r. It is entitled *Wech van salicheit* (*'The Way of Salvation'*) and deals in forty-five leaves with everything that is needed for a person's salvation and the avoidance of his or her downfall. Within the genre of catechetical

texts in Middle Dutch, this is one of the clearest and best organized treatises.[13] It is found in two more manuscripts, and was printed in 1479 and 1480, perhaps because of its lucid and ingenious composition.[14] The text is written in an unremarkable early-fifteenth-century script. There is, however, one extraordinary element that strongly signals that this is not a run-of-the-mill manuscript. The initial the text opens with is anachronistic (Figure 24). Nothing remotely comparable can be found in manuscripts of the early fifteenth century, but close resemblance exists with initials from the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The initial seems to have been used to give the text a grand and ancient look, and thus attempts to inject it with respectability. The motif resembles that of Celtic knots and is combined with the equally ancient motif of serrated leaves.

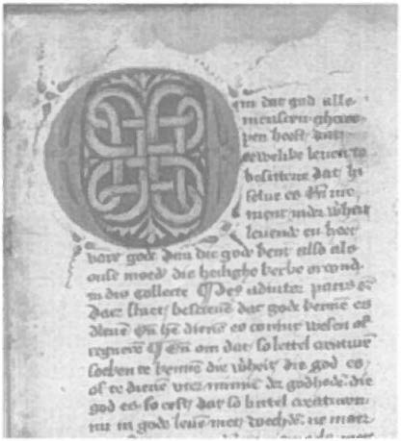

Figure 24: Wiesbaden, Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, 3004 B 10, fol. 3r (copyright Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv). See also the colour plate at the end of this volume.

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13 On *Wech van Salicheit*, see Schepers, *Wech van salicheit. Een catechetische summa als centrale tekst in verzamelhandschrift Wiesbaden 3004 B 10* (The way of salvation. A catechetical summa as central text in the miscellany Wiesbaden 3004 B 10), forthcoming.

14 [The Netherlands: Printer of "Wech der sielen salicheit," before 5 May 1479] (ILC 2205, IDL 4708, CA 1776). Experts agree that this is a book printed in Flanders. It has been attributed without certainty to both Ghent and Oudenaarde. Other editions are: [Utrecht: Printer with the Monogram, before 5 May 1479] (ILC 2206, IDL 4709, CA 1777); Utrecht: [Printer with the Monogram], 13 Jan. 1480 (ILC 2207, IDL 4710; CA 1775).

Again, like the size of the book, this initial suggests that the Wiesbaden codex was modeled after "classic" monastic books. Even though the volume was never part of a clerical, monastic milieu, its time-honoured book culture seems to have been the measure of all things in the construction of the Wiesbaden codex.

f) Script

There is a conspicuous development in the types of script used in the codex, from traditional, unassuming and impersonal with the first scribal hand to untraditional, impetuous, individual, and—one is tempted to say—incompetent with the last scribe.[15] This transition in script mirrors the general shift in the character of the entire collection from serene, composed and focused in the beginning to agitated and fervent towards the end. The difference, in particular, between the script of scribes 1 and 7 is telling. It reflects the different roles these scribes had. Scribe 1 writes two large texts, and three small ones. This is all done in a very orderly fashion in the most professional looking script in the codex. Scribe 7, on the other hand, not only wrote a host of small texts, he also took care of the final "editing" process of the codex, which entailed adding small decorations and inserting little texts, wherever he found available space.

One might be tempted to think that the person of script 1 was not really part of the project, and that his work was simply integrated into what others wrote and assembled later—comparable to the inclusion of the parchment quires. We must, however, discard this option since scribe 1 wrote on the same type of paper used by all the other scribes. This shared material makes scribe 1 by necessity part of the group of contributors to the codex.

g) Interruption of the work of scribe 3 by scribe 7

The work of the scribes, moreover, is not purely sequential (which might have allowed for the possibility that they did not engage in a collaborative effort and might not even have known each other). The possibility of non-cooperation and mere sequentiality is unlikely, again, because of the fact that they all use the same batch of paper. But stronger and even conclusive evidence of collaboration between the scribes of this codex exists. Scribe number 7—the eventual editor of the codex—interrupts the work

[15] Specimina of all scripts are published in Kienhorst and Schepers, *Het Wiesbadense handschrift.*

of another scribe in the middle of a column. On fol. 78vb we find that he suddenly takes over the work of scribe 3 for a very short while.[16] He ends his addition two lines into fol. 79ra. Scribe 7, therefore, must actually have interacted with scribe 3. This one column proves that at least some of the scribes knew each other and that they worked in close coordination.

h) Drawings—murals

A unique feature of the miscellany is that it contains an incomparable collection of so-called pre-Eyckian drawings, that is to say, predating the work of the brothers Van Eyck.[17] Most of the drawings were glued onto the recto and/or verso of separate leaves that were then inserted into the codex. Some drawings were glued onto the very paper that the scribes used. With scribe 7 drawings were inserted in the middle of his stint, which implies that he himself had access to them. Quite often there is more than one drawing on an inserted page, and in some instances clippings from several drawings were used to construct a new composition. In total there are 37 extant drawings, and there are traces of 8 lost ones. These drawings were never intended to have anything to do with this or any other manuscript. Their original function is uncertain, but it is assumed that they were models, possibly used by mural painters.[18] Many of the drawings are damaged, indicating frequent handling before they found a sheltered home in the codex.

One can find many of the subjects painted on walls. The *Salvator Mundi* from fol. 1, for example, is similar to a *Salvator Mundi* painted on the vault of the Saint Nicholas Church in Kalkar in the Rhineland.[19] Both

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16 Fol. 78vb9–79ra4.

17 The earliest study of these drawings is Dittmar Heubach, *Aus einer Niederländischen Bilderhandschrift vom Jahre 1410; Grisaillen und Federzeichnungen der altflämischen Schule* (Strasbourg: Heitz, 1925). See also the aforementioned study Renger, "The Wiesbaden codex B 10." One of the drawings was also published and discussed in Erwin Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting: Its Origins and Character* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), vol. 1, p. 107; vol. 2, fig. 139.

18 Renger, "The Wiesbaden codex B 10," considers the drawings to have been models, without specifying their particular function. Schepers and Kienhorst have argued more specifically for murals, while not excluding their use as models for other monumental, perhaps three-dimensional artworks; cf. Kienhorst and Schepers, *Het Wiesbadense handschrift*, 92–99.

19 Guido de Werd, *St. Nikolaikirche Kalkar*, with introduction by M. Jeiter (Munich: Kunstverlag, 2002).

images have the same banderole, with the same text written in the same type of script. Another mural from the Saint Nicholas Church—a church with an exceptionally well-preserved interior from the late-fifteenth, early-sixteenth-century—shows Christ passing judgement on those risen from the dead at Judgement Day.[20] Again, the similarity with the drawing is striking. The manuscript composition originally only had the upper half of the scene, but a skilled artist added the lower half to complete the image.

Another page once featured a drawing of Saint Christopher; the accompanying texts on banderoles written on the page to which it had been glued are still extant. One would find the image of Saint Christopher on a wall near the entrance in many medieval churches. It was supposed to protect against sudden death if one said the prayer that also appears in the miscellany.[21] Quite a few drawings portray saints, depicted from a frontal view with the same monumental simplicity as one finds when they are painted on pillars in churches.

The style of the drawings points to Flanders and Northern France at the end of the fourteenth century. Panofsky even confidently places them in Bruges.[22] The availability of these contemporaneous drawings to the makers of the miscellany suggests that they were in some way close to the owners or producers of these drawings. Possibly the artists and scribes were even members of overlapping groups.

i) Amateurish: decorations, collage-technique

At this point it is appropriate to discuss the pervasive activity of scribe 7 throughout the codex. This probably took place once the manuscript was finished—if one can say that about a miscellany, which is, of course, always open-ended. We have already considered the table of contents, where we find some chaotic and unusable additions to an earlier version of the list of works. These imprecise additions are partly the work of hand 7, who wrote the latter part of the codex. But he not only worked as a scribe. At some point the codex must have come into his possession, or at least under his control. From then on he could do whatever he deemed useful to enhance its esthetic appeal and textual organization. And he

20 Fol. 15v.

21 Fol. 16r. The most common of those texts is a Latin saying: *Christofori sancti speciem quicumque tuetur, illo nempe die non morte mala morietur* ("Whoever looks at the image of saint Christopher, will not die a sudden death that day").

22 Panofsky, *Early Netherlandish Painting*, vol. 1, 107.

used this liberty in a very amateurish manner. His decorations are far removed from the refinement and quality for which scriptoria in Flanders were famous; the faintest echo of what professional artists produced. With every intervention of hand 7 the codex is removed further from the well-organized, high-quality monastic book that was the initial model. Hand 7 added decorations throughout the codex and inserted drawings that he first glued onto separate leaves.

These included some compositions that had already been assembled by a previous owner. They were constructed by cutting up drawings and assembling the cuttings in a collage technique. One of the most peculiar examples of this procedure is *The Adoration of the Magi* (Figure 25) composed of cuttings from four different drawings.

Figure 25: Wiesbaden, Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, 3004 B 10, fol. 24v, *The Adoration of the Magi* (copyright Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv). See also the colour plate at the end of this volume.

j) *The texts 1: versified commentary to the Gospel of John and Bede's Apocalypse commentary*

From the total of some 80 texts, I will mention only those that seem to be

enlightening with regard to the questions of the genesis, ownership and use of the codex. The first lengthy texts in the codex are basic instructional ones—*The Way of Salvation* and Jean Gerson's Commentary on the Ten Commandments.[23] As explicitly declared by their original authors, they are aimed at simple and uneducated people. Therefore it is surprising to find that the next two lengthy texts are much more complex and intellectual. The first of these is a versified commentary on the first chapter of the Gospel of John, one of the most profound chapters in the New Testament. The versified commentary tries to do justice to the profundity of John's chapter and provides extensive exegesis for each verse. The result is a text that is anything but easy.

The second is a Middle Dutch translation of the commentary on the Apocalypse by the Venerable Bede. In this case we can be certain that the text as it is found in this miscellany could hardly have been accessible to its readers. Proper understanding of Bede's commentary requires familiarity with the exegetical tradition regarding the Apocalypse, which we know to have been absent in the vernacular.[24] But apart from this obstacle, understanding of the text is severely impeded by the way it is here presented. Bede's commentary excells in conciseness. There is a complex interweaving of biblical text and commentary, which requires a careful distinguishing between lemma and exposition. In the layout of the Wiesbaden text these elements are often inadequately distinguished. Moreover, the translation of Bede's text is so literal that one needs the Latin at hand to understand the Dutch; it is also necessary to have access to the Latin text of the Apocalypse. This text could only function in an environment with other such resources; here by itself it is unusable.

k) The texts 2: independent, anti-clerical thinking

After the two instructive and two challenging texts, the next long ones are remarkable because of their anti-clerical nature. The first is entitled: "Questions of a good, sincere person."[25] The text comprises 38 questions

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23 Kees Schepers, "Het *Opus tripartitum* van Jean Gerson in het Middelnederlands" (The *Opus tripartitum* of Jean Gerson in Middle Dutch), *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 79 (2008): 146–88.

24 Kees Schepers, "Kortsluiting tussen Wearmouth-Jarrow en Vlaanderen. De *Apocalyps* in het Middelnederlands," (Discontinuity between Wearmouth-Jarrow and Flanders. The *Apocalypse* in Middle Dutch) *Queeste* 15 (2008): 97–119.

25 Fol. 104ra9–108ra: *Questien van eenen goeden simpelen mensche*; cf. Robrecht Lievens, "*Questien van eenen goeden simpelen mensche*" (Questions of a Good,

that are answered by an unidentified 'I'. This 'I' is not a priest or a cleric, but apparently an inner voice. All the questions asked are relevant for an individual who wants to lead a sincere religious life without the formal guidance of the church or a priest. The second text has no title but it has been labelled "an anti-hierarchical disputation," though "anti-clerical disputation" would be a more appropriate title.[26] More combative in tone, it comprises a dialogue between a priest and a young woman. This allegedly naive but surprisingly self-confident and well-informed woman puts the priest on the defensive over the immoral behavior of the clergy. She also makes it clear that if she had to choose between truth and justice on the one hand and the authority of the church on the other, she would certainly choose justice.

Since these texts share and articulate the same very specific view of religious life, it is likely that the intended readers of the manuscript were close to this ideology.[27]

m) Interspersion of texts by scribe 7

When it comes to texts expressing independent and critical thinking, it is again scribe 7 who makes the strongest mark. When the other scribes had finished their work, and the miscellany was in his possession, this hand added small texts in every available space. Three of these texts, some of the shortest in the codex, are the most virulent in tone.[28] In one

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Common Person) in *Hulde-album Dr. F. Van Vinckenroye*, ed. Theo Coun et al. (Hasselt: Provinciaal Hoger Handelsinst., 1985), 187–208.

26 Fol. 111ra-116vb32: *Antihiërarchische disputatie*; cf. Robrecht Lievens, "Een antihiërarchische disputatie uit de veertiende eeuw," (An anti-hierarchal disputation from the fourteenth century), in *Album amicorum Nicolas-N. Huyghebaert o.s.b.*, a special issue of *Sacris Erudiri* 25 (1982): 167–201.

27 Lievens, "*Questien van eenen goeden simpelen mensche*," 192, argues strongly for beghards as the intended audience for these texts.

28 Text 45: *Onse heere seget: Soe waer si v selen wesen in een huys, daer selen die drie sijn jegen die twee ende die II jegen die III. Nu merct hoe sorgelijc het hier mede staet in al die kerstenheit, in kerken, in cloesters, in canesien, in steden, inder vierscaren, in rade, in lande, in dorpen, in gebuerten, in gesinde des huys, in convente, in huwelike. In al desen vint men grote oneendrachticheit. Maer die meeste eendrachticheit die nu is, die hebben si die een gespan maken in sonden, in keefsdomme, in overspele, in woekere, in voercope ende in anderen boosen werken. Hier in vintmen grote eendrachticheit.* ("Our Lord says: Wherever there shall be five people in a house, there will be three opposed to the two, and those two against three. Now note how worrisome the situation is, in churches, in monasteries, in chapters, in cities, in courthouses, in councils, across the country, in

of them the people who follow priests are contrasted with those who follow God.[29]

Die papen, alsic versta, *en volghen der heligher scriften niet na;* *noch helighe lieden, wats ghesciet,* *en volghen oec den papen niet,* *maer si volghen den woerde ons heeren,* *dat si ons predeken ende leeren.* *Hoer ghelike, hoer meysniede* *volghen hem ende sijn hoer liede;* *die gode minnen volghen gode* *ende doen gaerne sine ghebode.* *Nota bene.*	The priests, as far as I know, do not follow Holy Scripture; Nor do holy persons, whatever may be the case, follow the priests, but they follow the words of our Lord that they preach and teach us. Their equals, their companions, follow them and belong to them; those who love God, follow God, And like to follow his commands. Nota bene.

In another it is stated that religious works and actions are meaningless when committed by people living in sin. Above all, it is sin that must be avoided.[30]

Sente Augustijn seghet: Niet te meer dan gode es bequame dat bassen vanden honden of dat brieschen vanden coeyen of dat ghilen vanden swinen, soe en es hem oec niet bequamelijc dat singen ende dat lesen ende den dienst vanden papen ende vanden clerken die met oncuyscheiden omme gaen, ende oec van alle den ghenen die met oncuyscheden omme gaen ende in dootsonden leven. Nota.	Saint Augustine says: no more agreeable to God than the barking of dogs or the mooing of cows or the screaming of pigs is the singing and reading and the mass read by priests and clergy that engage in sin, nor of all those who engage in sin and live in mortal sin. Nota bene.

2. *Hypothesis: an explanation for the idiosyncrasies*

Any hypothesis regarding the genesis of the codex would need to account for all the disparate phenomena that we have just noted. One the-

villages, in hamlets, in families, in convents, in marriages. In all of these one finds great discord. But the greatest agreement these days is found among those who team up in sin, in adultery, in usury, in speculation and in other malicious deeds.")

29 Fol. 60rb, text 25: anti-clerical poem.

30 Fol. 118rb, text 46: complaint.

ory that emanates naturally from the observable facts would be that from the very first leaf there was the plan to write a large book which would serve the interests and be at the disposal of the group of people that participated in making it. The group seems to have had little or no prior experience in assembling a collection of texts. The objective was largely achieved by the time the codex came to be at the disposal of scribe 7. He then seems to have continued collecting texts, and he organized the final state of the codex. Eventually he may have been its sole owner.

What is the basis for this hypothesis? It is the size of the paper. This basic insight can be expanded into three related propositions.

a) *Large size paper implies a voluminous book.* If one starts writing on the type of paper used in the Wiesbaden miscellany, one necessarily envisages a big, voluminous book. It would not be practical to have a book of only a few quires of this size of paper. It would be difficult to handle and easily damaged.

b) *A big, voluminous book implies a collection* (i.e. a library). This is not as much a logical necessity as the first proposition, but rather an observable fact. Only very few one-book libraries seem to have existed (such as the book discussed by Eva Nyström in her contribution to this volume).[31] Normally, a big book, especially if it has a robust binding, is meant to be handled frequently and not damaged easily. The frequent handling of a book happens only with books from a collection that are read by different people. To support the thesis of a collection in the case of the Wiesbaden miscellany, there obviously is the lending rule that explicitly states the objective of lending the book to different people. A one-book library, moreover, would not make sense if there were several potential readers, since the book would not be available most of the time.

c) *A collection of books implies a group or a wealthy individual as owners.* Since there is clearly no wealthy individual involved in the Wiesbaden miscellany (professional scribes and illuminators would have been employed), the intended book collection must have been the shared objective of a group of people. Since this is not a monastic book, we must

[31] Another example is the anthology in the Vernon manuscript (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Eng. Poet. A. 1).

postulate an undefined group of lay people.

These three premises can be the point of departure for understanding the idiosyncrasies of the entire codex. But before anything can be said about the intended organization of the codex, we must be certain that the inferences drawn from specific elements are relevant for the codex as a whole—in other words that there is an overarching coherence in the miscellany. The strongest piece of evidence that the codex is coherent from beginning to end is that all the scribes write on the same batch of exceptionally large, unusual paper.[32] A second part is the fact that scribe 7 appeared amid the work of scribe 3, thus providing evidence for actual cooperation during the working process.

The anachronistic *initial* on fol. 3r is a first expression of the desire to emulate classic monastic books, while at the same time it attests to the amateurish character of the work and the lack of experience in book production of the group involved. The flawed imitation of the model can be seen by the addition of a *table of contents (or sample list)*, that hints at the desire to create a grand book but cannot be used as a reference tool. The *lending rule* quite clearly points to a group of people, undetermined as to its membership and not restricted to a particular location. In imagining such a loosely defined group, the members of which were not living together in one building, one necessarily thinks of an urban environment where kindred spirits can be loosely associated while living in separate locations. The number of scribes involved points to a group enterprise. An urban environment (and a possible overlap between different groups) can be deduced from the availability of the *drawings*, which in themselves suggest artists in a city. At least one of the group members must have had connections to the milieu of artists or craftsmen.

There are some spheres of interest that seem to guide the choice of texts. Initially the selection seems to have been governed by the desire to have clear, accessible, informative texts. The *Way of Salvation* and Jean Gerson's *Commentary on the Ten Commandments* provide basic instruction. In a second phase some texts were added, possibly acquired at random, that might have been beyond the intellectual grasp of the group, but still answered to some need. Bede's commentary on the Apocalypse is with certainty incomprehensible within the context of this manuscript. But what does connect the *Way of Salvation*, Gerson's text and Bede's

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32 With the exception of the two scribes who write on parchment and must be excluded from the group.

commentary is that they each devote attention to the Last Things. These texts seem to reflect a strong interest in apocalypticism that can be identified in Flanders around 1400.[33]

In a third phase two large and important texts give expression to a self-confident lay spirituality that probably reflects the spiritual connection between group members. The "Questions of a good, sincere person" and the "Anti-hierarchical disputation" might therefore be labelled the signature texts of this codex pointing to lay people who were intent on living a sincere religious life, willing to bypass ecclesiastical authority if it would hinder the unfettered pursuit of their spiritual ideals.

Finally, under the control of scribe 7, the choice of texts became increasingly random. He seems to have collected whatever he could lay his hands on. It might well be that by this point the project of assembling texts that were meaningful to a group was derailed.

3. Historical context

If we seek to link the codex to a historical context, we must look for groups of ardently devout lay people with a penchant towards the anticlerical. Two groups come to mind. The first group is the beghards, the male counterpart of the beguines. Little is known about them. As we have seen, Lievens has already tried to connect the *Questions*-text with the beghards. He deduced that such a text would have emerged from, and been aimed at, a group of simple, unlearned, mystical men, living in a community and wearing a typical vestment. Lievens then notes that this profile conforms with that of the so-called beghards.[34]

Tempting as this identification may be, there are other equally good candidates, such as the so-called *homines intelligentiae* in Brussels, who are known from inquisitorial proceedings from 1410–11.[35] They are considered to be doctrinally related to Brethren of the Free Spirit.[36] Notwithstanding widely diverging views, they seem to have shared unorthodox opinions, as well as a tendency to discredit the validity of the

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33 Cf. Schepers, "Kortsluiting tussen Wearmouth-Jarrow en Vlaanderen."

34 Cf. Lievens, "*Questien van eenen goeden simpelen mensche*," 192.

35 Paul Fredericq, ed., *Corpus documentorum inquisitionis Neerlandicae* 1 (Gent: Vuylsteke, 1889), 267–79.

36 Cf. Robert E. Lerner, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit in the Later Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972).

church. Other contenders would be the flagellants who had fanned out over Northern Europe after the plague of 1348; as they grew in numbers they developed into a sect with its own views and practices.[37]

Finally, there are the beguines.[38] Simons notes that among beguines books were private property and that beguinages did not have collective libraries. Some wills even attest to the practice of lending books to others.[39] Because of the many uncertainties, it would be rash to favour a particular group as the putative producer of the Wiesbaden codex.

Thus, from the detailed analysis of codicological and textual aspects of the Wiesbaden miscellany arises the faint but distinct image of a group of urban religious people as both the makers and users of this codex. There are several unconventional groups that would fit the profile of producers of the Wiesbaden miscellany, but for the moment it is impossible to identify one in particular.

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37 As late as the Council of Constance (1414–18) Jean Gerson wrote a treatise to denounce them. Jean Gerson, *Contra sectam Flagellantium*, in *Jean Gerson, Oeuvres complètes* 10, ed. Palémon Glorieux 10 (Paris: Desclée & Cie, 1973), 46–51.

38 Walter Simons, "'Staining the Speech of Things Divine': The Uses of Literacy in Medieval Beguine Communities," in *The Voice of Silence. Women's Literacy in a Men's Church*, ed. Thérèse de Hemptinne, Maria Eugenia Góngora (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 85–110, esp. 100–04.

39 Simons, "Staining the Speech of Things Divine," 104.

Medieval Manuscript Miscellanies:
Composition, Authorship, Use

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SONDERBAND XXXI

Medieval Manuscript Miscellanies: Composition, Authorship, Use

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Lucie Doležalová and Kimberly Rivers

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