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A guidebook for the Jerusalem Pilgrimage in the late Middle Ages. A case for computer-aided textual criticism.

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Summary

During the late Middle Ages thousands and thousands of pilgrims from all over Western Europe travelled to Jerusalem. Hundreds of accounts describing that journey have come down to us. If one now reads these reports one finds that a fresh and original piece of writing on that late mediaeval Jerusalem pilgrimage is a rare thing. No matter what language the texts are written in, constantly the same holy places are described in a set order and in very much the same words.

In the past it was repeatedly suggested that the similarities came into being because masses of pilgrims relied heavily on an early travel guide, a kind of *Guide Michelin* ahead of its time which they copied more or less faithfully. This hypothesis (which dates back to 1880 and was put into words by two German scholars) has never been proven. It is the aim of this study to explain the striking similarities between the late mediaeval accounts of the Jerusalem pilgrimage, starting from the 1880 hypothesis. When it turned out quite early that such a guide must indeed have once existed, another goal came within reach: an identification of that guide by means of statistical methods.

In the first chapter the question the book seeks to answer is presented and an outline is given of relevant research that has so far been done. Subsequently, a picture is drawn of the late mediaeval Jerusalem pilgrimage. Who were the people that made that pilgrimage, why did they do so and, more importantly, in what way was it organized? Those who travelled to Jerusalem in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were taken care of by the Franciscans. These friars welcomed the pilgrims, instructed them, gave them a conducted tour and addressed them, if possible, in their mother tongues. The pilgrims were not free to do as they pleased. It is concluded that the late mediaeval Jerusalem pilgrimage was so very highly organized that, considered from that point of view, the (past) existence of a widespread source-text is very much a plausible one. Possibly the Franciscans went so far in their care that they even put written information at their guests' disposal.

In chapter 2 it is again argued that there once existed a widespread source-text, but now this is argued solely on the basis of what some hundred late mediaeval pilgrims in the accounts of their journey tell us about the use of such a source-text. At times the references are quite explicit: some pilgrims tell us in so many words that their hosts, the Franciscan friars, allowed them to copy from the books the Franciscans themselves used to inform the pilgrims. More often,

however, the use of a source-text is implicit: a small number of pilgrims is able to describe holy places which they say they were unable to visit. What is more, the words in which they do so, do not differ from the words large numbers of other pilgrims use. Even across language boundaries the similarities are so striking that they cannot be attributed to chance.

In the remainder of the study attention is focused on 18 texts that were written in five languages (Latin, English, French, German and Dutch). In chapter 3 the 18 texts are introduced and it is explained why they were chosen. Thereupon, a simple formula is used to split these 18 texts into two groups. Texts within a group share a lot of holy places, comparatively speaking. Across the boundaries of these two groups, texts share comparatively few holy places. It is then argued that there are limits to the usefulness of this procedure as it tells one which texts are alike, but cannot be used to determine what causes the similarity. Thereupon an alternative is suggested: factor analysis.

In chapter 4 it is explained what factor analysis is capable of doing. As it is a method that is hardly ever used in the study of letters, some basic concepts are introduced first. If this were not done, it would be hard to explain or understand what it is that factor analysis does. Then the data that were extracted from the 18 texts are factor analysed. Apart from this factor analysis a cluster analysis is done on a so-called inverted matrix. The results of both analyses together are interpreted. This leads to the conclusion that with one specific text we have come very close to the text the existence of which was hypothesized at the beginning of the study: the source-text for many an account of the late-mediaeval Jerusalem pilgrimage.

Chapter 5 closely examines six texts that are supposed to have once functioned as a source-text. Two of these texts belong to the group of eighteen at which a closer look was taken in chapter 4. The four others are new in this study. Again, factor analysis is done, this time, however, on these six texts. It is impossible to identify one of the six texts as "better" or "older" on the basis of textual differences alone. It is argued, however, and once again this is done on the basis of textual differences alone, that one of the six texts is a fair representative of the source-text this study aimed to find. This representative is one of the four newcomers to chapter 5.

In textual criticism the size of so-called variation-units is a point of dispute. Chapter 5 pays attention to this controversy which is of important relevance to those textual critics that have themselves be aided by computers. The book points out that instead of arguing about the size of a variation-unit, scholars had better concentrate on the size of a sample: how big must a sample be before one can expect a statement on the relations between a number of cognate texts to be sound?

Chapter 6 presents part of a guidebook for the late-mediaeval Jerusalem pilgrim. This text, to which a small number of annotations were added, is the 'fair

representative' that was chosen in chapter 5. The chapter also summarizes the findings of the study and makes recommendations for further research.

The addendum enters at length into a discussion of the method that was used, a method which in the study of letters is very much an unconventional one. The arguments that are put forward in this part of the book come from quite distinct disciplines: cognitive psychology and taxonomy. It is argued that scholars who deal with textual criticism can benefit from statistical packages and computer-aid, too. It is then explained how a classification that was made on the basis of factor analysis lies to a classification that was made in the traditional manner. The advantages and disadvantages of both types of classification are considered as well.

The appendices, finally, deal with the technique that was used (factor analysis) and present the entire body of data on which the calculations in the chapters 3 and 4 were done.