

Authorial and Scribal Interventions in Medieval Accounts of the Holy Land

Burchard of Mount Sion's 'Descriptio Terre Sancte' as a Test Case

Abstract Burchard of Mount Sion's 'Descriptio Terre Sancte' is a Latin account of the Holy Land composed in the 1280s. Its detailed nature as well as its carefully crafted structure made it popular in late medieval and early modern times. The 'Descriptio' was not only widely read and cited, it was also constantly re-edited, first by its author and later by generations of scribes and editors. Following a recent study which resulted in the production of a *stemma codicum* of the so-called 'long version' of the 'Descriptio', the present paper further investigates such editorial processes, aiming to provide new insights into both the nature of Burchard's own efforts to revise his work, and the ways in which, intentionally and unintentionally, later scribes brought about changes in this popular treatise. Inter alia, this study traces the ways in which the cultural gap between Burchard and some of these scribes – for example with regard to their acquaintance with the Holy Land's geography – shaped the development of the 'Descriptio' and its reading from the time of its original composition until the present.

Zusammenfassung Die ‚Descriptio Terre Sancte‘ Burchards von Monte Sion ist eine lateinische Beschreibung des Heiligen Landes aus den 1280er Jahren. Aufgrund ihrer Detailtreue und ihrer sorgfältig ausgearbeiteten Struktur fand sie im späten Mittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit weite Verbreitung. Die ‚Descriptio‘ wurde nicht nur viel gelesen und zitiert, sie wurde auch ständig in neuen Versionen und Redaktionen überarbeitet, zunächst von ihrem Autor, danach durch Generationen von Schreibern und Herausgebern. In Anlehnung an eine kürzlich durchgeführte Studie, die zur

Contact

Prof. Jonathan Rubin,
The Martin (Szusz) Department of
Land of Israel Studies and Archaeology,
Bar Ilan University, Israel,
jonathan.rubin5775@gmail.com
 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4423-7013>

Erstellung eines *stemma codicum* der sogenannten ‚Langversion‘ der ‚Descriptio‘ führte, untersucht der vorliegende Beitrag diese redaktionellen Prozesse mit dem Ziel, neue Einblicke in Burchards eigene Revision seines Werkes zu geben und näher zu beleuchten, wie spätere Schreiber diesen populären Text absichtlich und unabsichtlich bearbeiteten. Unter anderem wird in dieser Untersuchung nachgezeichnet, wie die kulturellen Unterschiede zwischen Burchard und einigen dieser Schreiber – etwa im Hinblick auf die Kenntnis der Geografie des Heiligen Landes – die Entwicklung der ‚Descriptio‘ und ihre Lektüre seit ihrer Entstehung bis heute prägten.

1 Introduction

While Latin accounts of the Crusader-period Holy Land form a corpus that is well known and often studied, very little has been done to investigate the ways in which authors and later scribes/ editors intervened with these accounts after their composition.¹ This is an important subject for two main reasons. First, such an analysis can bring us much closer than is otherwise possible to the experiences and intentions of the authors of such texts. Most importantly, perhaps, it can reveal in what ways authors’ knowledge and views changed over time. Second, it can tell us much about the manner in which such works were received and enable us to pursue questions such as what parts of the texts were considered redundant by later authors or how knowledge gained by later editors was integrated into an existing text.

In order to study these questions, one should ideally have a large manuscript tradition, which has been reasonably well analysed, so that the relationships between its different redactions would be at least tentatively known. With such knowledge, one could proceed and investigate the changes which took place in various stages in the development of the text under consideration. The so-called long version of Burchard’s ‘Descriptio Terre Sancte’ provides just such a case. The manuscript tradition of this text, which is extant in around 60 manuscripts, has recently received considerable attention. As a result, five families of manuscripts have now been identified and the relationships between them have been analysed.² The tentative *stemma* of the long version of Burchard’s ‘Descriptio’ looks like this:

1 This research was supported by the Israel Science Foundation (grant no. 1443/17).

2 For a complete list of the witnesses of the long version of the ‘Descriptio’, for their division into families and for the relationships between them see Jonathan RUBIN, The Manuscript Tradition of Burchard of Mount Sion’s *Descriptio Terre Sancte*, in: The Journal of Medieval Latin 30 (2020), pp. 257–286. The distinction, within the ‘Descriptio’s’ textual tradition, between the long and short

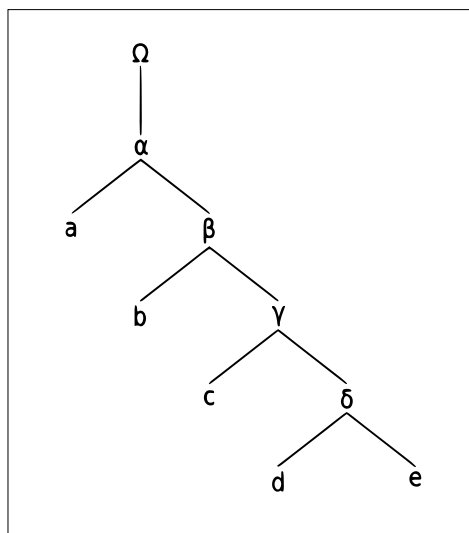


Fig. 1 | Stemma of the long version of Burchard's 'Descriptio Terre Sancte'

A few words of clarification are in order regarding the *stemma*. Family *c* is the one on which LAURENT based his edition, while in his very recent edition BARTLETT chose to follow a manuscript from the *e* family.³ Families *a* and *b* also deserve a word of introduction: in recent years two papers have been published on the 'Descriptio' using manuscripts which provide a text considerably longer than that published by either LAURENT or BARTLETT.⁴ In both of these manuscripts the 'Descriptio' does not end, as does LAURENT's text, with Burchard entering Egypt, or with an abbreviated account of Egypt, as in BARTLETT's edition.⁵ Rather it includes a detailed account of Egypt, followed by a description of Burchard's journey to Bologna. These manuscripts are London, British Library, Additamentum 18929 and Zwickau Ratsschulbibliothek, MS I XII 5 (referred to below as London and Zwickau respectively). While the former also includes an account of Burchard's journey back to the East, the latter ends abruptly with his impressions of Lucca. Our analysis shows that the Zwickau manuscript belongs to *a* and London to *b*. Both families include additional manuscripts, but

versions goes back to LAURENT, who published an edition of this text in the late 19th century (see next note). In recent years there developed a consensus among scholars that the so-called long version is closer to Burchard's original, though the relationships between them require further study.

- 3 Peregrinatores medii aevi quatuor, ed. by Johann C. M. LAURENT, Leipzig 1864. The 'Descriptio' is on pp. 2–100; Burchard of Mount Sion OP, *Descriptio Terrae Sanctae*, ed. and trans. by John R. BARTLETT, Oxford 2019. For the place of the manuscripts used by the two editors within the general manuscript tradition of the 'Descriptio', see RUBIN (note 2).
- 4 See Jonathan RUBIN, Burchard of Mount Sion's *Descriptio Terrae Sanctae*. A Newly Discovered Extended Version, in: *Crusades* 13 (2014), pp. 173–190; ID., A Missing Link in European Travel Literature. Burchard of Mount Sion's Description of Egypt, in: *Mediterranea* 3 (2018), pp. 55–90.
- 5 For the description of Egypt as it appears in different witnesses of the 'Descriptio', see RUBIN, A Missing Link (note 4).

unfortunately all of these other witnesses are abbreviated in one way or another. The fact that London and Zwickau are located in different branches is highly significant because it proves that the ‘new’ sections found only in these two manuscripts are, in all likelihood, authentic, and it suggests that any new edition of the ‘Descriptio’ should be based first and foremost on the consensus between them.

In any case, the stemma presented above (which is based on a comparison of all available witnesses, and on the notion of common errors) can now help us to look at the changes which the ‘Descriptio’ underwent both when it was still in Burchard’s hands and in those of the scribe with whom he worked, and later, when it was subject to the interventions of subsequent scribes/editors. Hopefully, insights resulting from such an analysis will also shed light on problems relevant to the transmission of other, similar, texts, which probably underwent comparable processes, but whose history is not well understood.

In section 2 of this paper, we shall look at problems related to the archetype of the ‘Descriptio’ and suggest that the available evidence shows that Burchard himself placed marginal notes in the manuscript he prepared. We will also argue that it is possible to identify traces of the intervention in the text of a scribe working for Burchard. In sections 3–5 we examine three categories of textual changes which are attributable to later scribes/editors. Each of these categories will be illustrated by comparisons between manuscripts representing different branches within the textual tradition of the ‘Descriptio’.

2 The Archetype

In our attempts to explore the archetype of the ‘Descriptio’, two characteristics of its manuscript tradition are of particular importance. One is the existence of common errors, which are unlikely to have been introduced by Burchard, in all of the extant families. Here is one example, as it appears in LAURENT’s edition and with very minor differences in BARTLETT’s (the brackets are LAURENT’s):

*Et dicitur Decapolis a X civitatibus principalibus in ea sitis. Que sunt: Tiberias, Sephet, Cedes Neptalim, Asor, Cesarea Philippi, **Capharnaum** [quam Iosephus Iuliam appellat], Iotapata, Bethsayda, Corrozaym, Bethsan, que etiam Scythopolis dicebatur.*

Decapolis is named from the ten major cities located in it. They are: Tiberias, Safad, Kedesh Naphtali, Hazor, Caesarea Philippi, Capernaum (which Josephus calls Julia), Jotapata, Beth-saida, Chorazin, Beth-shean (also called Scythopolis).⁶

6 Burchard of Mount Sion, ‘Descriptio’, ed. LAURENT (note 3), p. 46 (emphasis added). For a parallel text and the English translation, see Burchard of Mount Sion, ‘Descriptio’, ed. BARTLETT (note 3), pp. 64–65.

In this passage Burchard enumerates the ten cities to which, he thought, the name Decapolis referred. What is noteworthy for our purposes is that *Capharnaum* is followed by a comment which should actually refer to Bethsaida, hence LAURENT's brackets.⁷ Given Burchard's familiarity with Josephus' work, it is unlikely that this was his own error. Rather, as LAURENT has already suggested, it is much more likely that it was a scribe who inserted this comment in the wrong place. As this gloss appears following the toponym Capernaum in the great majority of long-version witnesses of the 'Descriptio', and across its five families, one must assume that this error was already present in the archetype (α).⁸ In other words, what seems to have happened is that Burchard added this comment on the margins of a draft which he then handed to the scribe preparing the archetype, who misunderstood the location of the comment within the text.

To this error, which probably originated with the copyist who prepared the archetype, one may add two additional errors which occurred at the same stage. The first has to do with the description of the city of Acre. Again, this error is found in witnesses belonging to all five families:

- Zwickau, fol. 115v (**a**): *Est autem munita valde milicia et castris fortissimis scilicet hospitalis, templi et arcis civitatis*.⁹
- London, fol. 4r (**b**): *Est etiam munita multa militia hospitalis, templi et domus teutonice et castris eorum et arcis civitatis*.
- Basel, Universitätsbibliothek, A.V.17, fol. 3r–v (**c**): *Est munita multa milicia hospitalis, templi et theotonie et castris eorum et arcis civitatis*.
- Florence, Biblioteca nazionale centrale, Conv. Soppr. C.VIII.2861, fol. 2v (**d**): *est etiam munita multa militia templi et hospitalis et domus theotonice et castris eorum et arcis civitatis*.
- Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Nouv. acq. lat. 288, fol. 3v (**e**): *Est etiam munita multa militia hospitalis templi et domus teothonice et castris eorum et arcis civitatis*.

The word *arcis* ("of the citadel") is likely an error for *arce*, as noted by LAURENT, who corrected this phrase.¹⁰ While some witnesses, mainly in the **e** family, include different

7 Burchard of Mount Zion, 'Descriptio', ed. LAURENT (note 3), p. 46, n. 283; cf. Burchard of Mount Zion, 'Descriptio', ed. BARTLETT (note 3), p. 64. DENYS PRINGLE, *Pilgrimage to the Holy Land, 1187–1291* (Crusade Texts in Translation), Farnham 2012, p. 269, n. 202.

8 For more details on the variants of this phrase in the different families of the 'Descriptio', see RUBIN (note 2), p. 279.

9 "It is very well defended by a body of soldiers as well as by extremely strong castles, that is, those of the Hospital, the Temple and of the city's citadel." Unless otherwise noted, the translations from Latin are mine.

10 Burchard of Mount Zion, 'Descriptio', ed. LAURENT (note 3), p. 23. BARTLETT also faces a difficulty here since the manuscript he chose as his base text provides *arcis*. He preferred to correct it using two witnesses which provide *arcibus*. Burchard of Mount Zion, 'Descriptio', ed. BARTLETT (note 3), p. 14.

readings (such as *arcibus*),¹¹ the fact that this error appears in numerous witnesses across all families of the tradition suggests that it originates in the common archetype and that the different readings result from attempts by scribes to correct the text.

Another error which appears across the manuscript tradition and is likely to have originated in the archetype (α) is the appearance of the form *Barach filius Achynoe* (“Barach son of Achynoe”) instead of *Barac filius Abinoem* (“Barac son of Abinoem”) as in the Vulgate (Jdg. 4.6).¹² Out of all of the extant witnesses, only three include the proper form, one instance of which is due to a reader’s correction.¹³ It is impossible to say whether this error originated with Burchard or with his scribe/copyist, but, be that as it may, it is clear that the archetype of the long version included several errors, at least some of which should be attributed to a scribe/copyist rather than to Burchard.

The second characteristic of the textual tradition of the ‘Descriptio’ which is meaningful for the reconstruction of the archetype is the different placement of a considerable number of comments in witnesses belonging to various families. To mention just one example, the note about the dates on which Burchard visited Mount Gilbo’a (discussed below) appears in different locations in the Zwickau and London manuscripts. In the former it appears at the end of the discussion of the Spring of Iezrael, while in the latter (as well as in the representatives of *cde*) this note appears just before the discussion of *Gynim* (mod. Jenin, the West Bank). This makes it likely that this comment was originally placed on the margins of the archetype, and that, struggling with the question of where exactly it should be placed, different scribes/editors arrived at different solutions. As already noted, additional examples of this phenomenon can be found in the manuscript tradition of the ‘Descriptio’.¹⁴

In other words, the archetype which stands at the basis of our tradition was complex. On the one hand, it already included within its text misplaced marginalia, as well as some other errors which would be difficult to ascribe to Burchard himself. At the same time, it also contained further authorial marginal notes. How can this be explained?

My suggestion is as follows. In the first stage, Burchard prepared a copy of his work. In the margins of this copy he added some notes. Burchard then gave this copy to a scribe. This scribe prepared a copy, into which he sometimes inserted Burchard’s marginalia in the wrong location, and in which he also made some slight grammatical errors. The manuscript was then returned to Burchard, who added in its margins further comments, some of an autobiographical nature, which would later be differently placed by various scribes. It would also seem that Burchard did not fully examine

11 For example, Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Ms. lat. qu. 466, fol. 38v; Brussels, KBR, MS 733–741, fol. 145r.

12 Some manuscripts include very corrupted forms of that name, such as *Ethinee*. See, for example, Rimini, Biblioteca Civica Gambalunga, SC-MS 71, fol. 280v.

13 Salzburg, St. Peter, Stiftsbibliothek, b IX 22, fol. 105v; Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. 9530, fol. 12v. For the reader correction, see: Hamburg, Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. Geogr. 59, p. 20.

14 For another autobiographical note which, in all likelihood, was placed in the margins of the archetype and later wrongly placed within the text, see below p. 24.

the manuscript for scribal errors, which explains why several errors of this kind are common to all of the extant families.

While this archetype did not survive, or at least has not hitherto been identified, such a witness is extant for the work of a near contemporary and fellow friar of Burchard's. The detailed study of a manuscript now in Berlin which contains Riccoldo of Monte Croce's pilgrimage account has shown that while it was produced by an unknown scribe, it also includes annotations and revisions by Riccoldo himself who, at the same time, did not completely remove errors from the copied text.¹⁵ The evidence provided above suggests that Burchard may have worked in a similar manner, and that the archetype (α) may have resembled this Berlin manuscript of Riccoldo's 'Liber peregrinationis'.

Having made some tentative comments on the nature of the archetype of the 'Descriptio', we can now move on to the question of changes inserted into it by scribes/editors. Within this context, I propose to explore here three categories of such interventions: omission of personal information (section 3), loss of geographical information (section 4), and interventions resulting from a cultural gap between Burchard and later scribes/editors working on his text (section 5). This investigation will demonstrate the importance of philological analysis not only for understanding what the author meant to convey, but also for assessing the ways in which later generations perceived and understood – or misunderstood – his work.

3 The Omission of Personal Information

The first aspect of the development of the text which becomes evident when one looks at the transmission of the 'Descriptio' is the massive omission of personal, or autobiographical, information in some manuscripts. In other words, our stemma shows that some scribes tended to omit autobiographical comments which Burchard had placed in his text.

A significant example of this occurs at a very early point in the 'Descriptio', when Burchard explains his reasons for compiling this text. Here is the text as it appears in the different families of the long version:¹⁶

- Zwickau, fol. 113v (a): *Verum, ego frater Burcardus ordinis fratrum predicatorum, videns [...] ipsam terram, quam pedibus meis pluries pertransivi*

15 PRINGLE (note 7), pp. 55–57; Riccoldo of Monte Croce, *Pérégrination en Terre Sainte et au Proche Orient: Texte latin et traduction. Lettres sur la chute de Saint-Jean d'Acre*. Traduction, ed. and tr. by René KAPPLER (Textes et traductions des classiques français du Moyen Âge 4), Paris 1997, pp. 11, 22–27. The manuscript is Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Ms. lat. qu. 466.

16 Here, as in similar cases below, I add in the footnotes references regarding the readings found in additional witnesses belonging to each of the families.

*et [quam] per x annos, quibus frater provincie illius fui, quantum potui consideravi diligenter, et notavi et studiose descripsi.*¹⁷

- London, fol. 2r (**b**): *verum ego Burchardus ordinis predicatorum, videns [...] terram ipsam quam pedibus meis pluries pertransivi quantum potui consideravi et notavi diligenter et studiose descripsi.*
- Lilienfeld, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 145, fol. 174r (**c**): *verum videns [...] terram ipsam quam pedibus meis pluries pertransivi quantum potui consideravi et notavi diligenter et studiose descripsi.*¹⁸
- London, British Library, Harley 3995, fol. 141r (**d**): *verum ego frater Broccardus ordinis fratrum predicatorum videns [...] terram ipsam quam pedibus meis pluries pertransivi et quantum potui consideravi et notavi diligenter et studiose descripsi.*¹⁹
- Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Nouv. acq. lat. 288, fol. 2r (**e**): *verum videns [...] terram ipsam pedibus meis pluries pertransivi quantum potui consideravi et notavi diligenter et studiose conscripsi.*²⁰

Clearly, the Zwickau manuscript provides the most complete picture with regard to Burchard's identity, noting not only his name and his organizational identity but also the fact that he spent ten years in the Dominican province of the Holy Land. The London manuscript (**b**) and the representatives of **d** do not include the reference to the time Burchard spent in the East but do provide his name and affiliation. The manuscripts checked from families **ce**, however, omit these basic details (with the exception of Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Ms. lat. fol. 464).²¹

Another example of the omission of details regarding Burchard and his actual journeys occurs in his discussion of Mount Gilbo'a. In this often-cited passage, Burchard argues that although the biblical text says that "mountains of Gilbo'a, let there be no dew nor rain upon you" (Sam. 2, 1.21) this is not in fact a dry region. In support of his argument Burchard shares his own experiences of the mountain:

17 "Truly, I, Brother Burchard of the Order of Preachers, seeing [...] have both recorded and studiously described that land through which I have frequently passed on foot and which I have diligently inspected in so far as I have been able during the ten years in which I was a brother of that province."

18 Basel, Universitätsbibliothek, A I 28, fol. 196r, and Rimini, Biblioteca Civica Gambalunga, SC-MS 71, fol. 271r (both belonging to **c**) provide very similar texts.

19 Nancy, Bibliothèque municipale, 1082 (250), fol. 91r–v and El Escorial, Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo, O.III.34, fol. 32v (both belonging to **d**) provide very similar texts.

20 Brussels, KBR, MS 733–741, fol. 123v, Klosterneuburg, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 722 A, fol. 1v, and Milan, Veneranda Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Trotti 500, fol. 89v (all belonging to **e**) provide a very similar text. Interestingly, Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Ms. lat. fol. 464, which belongs to the same family, does provide Burchard's name and affiliation (46r–v): *ipsam quam pluries ego frater Broccardus ordinis fratrum predicatorum pertransivi pedibus meis eiusque statum notavi diligenter et in hoc libello [?] studiose descripsi.* This is likely to be a result of contamination or the use of information coming from a colophon.

21 For the Berlin manuscript, see previous note.

- Zwickau, fol. 124v (**a**): *quia cum essem in mo[n]te hoc anno d. mclclxx4 [sic] in die beati Martini venit super me pluvia ita quod fui usque ad carnem penitus madefactus [...] alia insuper vice s. anno domini mclclxxxiii in festo omnium sanctorum sub divo dormiens in eodem monte cum aliis multis fui cum ipsius rore penitus infusus nocte illa.*²²
- London, Add., fol. 17v (**b**): *quia cum in die beati Martini ibi essem, venit super me pluvia ita quod usque ad carnem fui madefactus [...] alia etiam vice per noctem dormivi in eodem monte sub divo cum aliis multis et fuimus omnes infusi rore supra modum. Hoc fuit anno domini 1283.*²³
- Lilienfeld, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 145, fol. 180v (**c**): *quia cum in die sancti Martini essem ibi venit super me pluvia ita quod usque ad carnem fui madefactus.*²⁴
- London, British Library, Harley 3995, fol. 147r (**d**): *quia cum in die beati Martini essem ibi venit super me pluvia ita quod usque ad carnem fui madefactus.*²⁵
- Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Nouv. acq. lat. 288, fol. 16r (**e**): *quia cum in die beati Martini essem ibi venit super me pluvia ita quod usque ad carnem fui madefa[c]tus [...] alia insuper vice dormivi per noctem in eodem monte sub divo cum aliis multis et fuimus omnes infusi rore supra modum. Istud accidit anno domini mclclxxxiii in festo omnium sanctorum.*²⁶

As can be seen, in the Zwickau manuscript Burchard mentions two instances in which he got wet on the Gilbo'a, providing the precise dates: St Martin's day (11 November) 1274, and the Feast of All Saints (1 November) 1283. London provides a very close text but omits the year of the first incident and the day of the second. Representatives from the *e* family provide information which is quite close to that included in Zwickau and London but those from *cd* omit most of the information we saw, leaving only the mention of St Martin's day, without noting the specific year to which it relates. A similar omission occurred within the *a* family, as is attested to by a manuscript (now in Leiden) whose text is very close to Zwickau in terms of common errors, but which provides this reading:

22 "Since when I visited that mountain in the year of the Lord 1274, on St Martin's day, it rained so heavily on me that I was completely soaked to the flesh [...] Moreover, on another occasion, that is in the year of the Lord 1283, on the Feast of All Saints, sleeping on the same mountain, under the open sky, with many others I was completely soaked with them by dew that night."

23 Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, MS 525, fol. 65v (also belonging to *b*) provides a very similar text.

24 Klagenfurt, Universitätsbibliothek, Pap.-Hs. 152, fol. 27r–v (also belonging to *c*) provides a very similar text.

25 El Escorial, Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo, O.III.34, fol. 41v (also belonging to *d*) provides a very similar text.

26 Brussels, KBR, MS 733–741, fol. 154v (also belonging to *e*) provides a very similar text.

*quia cum in die Martini essem in valle Iesrahel vidi pluuiam valde magnam in eodem monte, cuius eciam reliquie ad nos descenderunt.*²⁷

because when I visited the Valley of Jezreel on Martin's Day I saw very heavy rain in that mountain, remains of which descended to us.

The omission of the dates of Burchard's visit to the Gilbo'a thus occurred several times, suggesting that the notion that such details had no place in an account of the Holy Land was not limited to the quirks of one particular scribe.

That the omission of dates was not unusual for scribes/editors can be further demonstrated by an additional case in which, to the best of my knowledge, only the Zwickau manuscript provides a date. This appears in the context of Burchard's comments on the balsam garden that he visited in Egypt, comments that appear as he describes Ein-Gedi. Notably, in the Zwickau manuscript we read:

*Ortum istum balsami in Babiloniam translatum cum essem in Egipto anno domini 1248 [sic] oculis meis vidi. Mandavit enim me soldanus ...*²⁸

I saw that balsam garden which had been transferred to Babilonia with my own eyes when I was in Egypt in the year of the Lord 1248. The sultan ordered that I ...

It is noteworthy that this comment is clearly misplaced in the Zwickau manuscript, appearing between the accounts of Bethany and Bethphage. This implies that, as in the case of the comments concerning the Gilbo'a, this too was originally a marginal comment that was mis-inserted by a scribe.

The decision by medieval scribes/editors to omit biographical information concerning Burchard probably reflects wider tendencies in the learned culture of the Late Middle Ages. Given the Holy Land's special significance for Latin Christendom, accounts of the land were deemed important for the information they provided regarding this territory. The biographic information they included, on the other hand, probably seemed redundant to many readers and thus also to some scribes/editors. Indeed, if such texts were intended to be used as handbooks, personal comments may have even been perceived as a sort of interruption. Additionally, such details may have been omitted in order to make narratives repeatable and therefore timeless. While these attitudes are very far removed from those of modern historians, they had considerable consequences for recent scholarship. For example,

²⁷ Leiden, Universitaire Bibliotheken, BPL 69, fol. 105v. A very similar text appears in Bern, Burgerbibliothek, Cod. 46, fol. 13r and Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 41 Weiss., fol. 186r, both of which belong to the same family.

²⁸ Zwickau, fol. 128v. The date of 1248 is clearly an error for 1284, which fits very well with the other dates noted in the text. See RUBIN, Burchard of Mount Sion's *Descriptio* (note 4), p. 181.

while several historians have raised the possibility that Burchard was a Dominican, they were only able to support this by evidence from rubrics and colophons.²⁹ As we have noted, there are in fact numerous manuscripts which explicitly mention Burchard as a Dominican, but given LAURENT'S limited selection of manuscripts on the one hand, and the dominance of his edition on the other, scholars remained unaware of this for as long as his edition served as the sole basis for the study of the 'Descriptio'.

4 The Loss of Geographical Information

The second phenomenon which clearly emerges when one compares the manuscripts closest to the probable archetype with others further removed from it is the manner in which geographical information concerning the Holy Land was lost, or became vague and inaccurate. This is particularly relevant to sites which lack a biblical past. Clearly, it was much easier for scribes to handle place names which they knew from the scriptures, even when those were difficult to read, than to transcribe, for example, an Arabic toponym they had never before encountered.

An interesting example has to do with a Templar site known during the Frankish period as *Casel Destreiz*, *le Destroit*, *Districtum* or *Petra Incisa*.³⁰ This site is referred to by Burchard as he discusses the division of Greater Syria into several smaller 'Syrias'. The third of these, Burchard says:

- Zwickau, fol. 114r (a): *incipit a predicto a fluvio [sic] Valanie ab aquilone et extenditur versus austrum usque ad Petram Incisam sive **Districtum** sub monte Carmali [sic]. Qui locus hodie Castrum Peregrinorum dicitur et est milicie templi.*³¹
- London, fol. 2v (b): *incipit a predicto fluvio Valamie [sic] ab aquilone et extenditur versus austrum usque ad Petram Incisam sive **Districtum** sub monte Carmelo. Qui locus hodie Castrum Peregrinorum dicitur et est militie templum [sic].*³²
- Lilienfeld, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 145, fol. 174v (c): *incipit a predicto fluvio Valanye et protenditur usque ad austrum usque ad Petram Incisam sive **Dis-***

29 PRINGLE (note 7), p. 47; Paul D. A. HARVEY, *Medieval Maps of the Holy Land*, London 2012, p. 94; Ingrid BAUMGÄRTNER, Burchard of Mount Sion and the Holy Land, in: *Peregrinations: Journal of Medieval Art and Architecture* 4.1 (2013), pp. 5–41, here p. 12.

30 Denys PRINGLE, *Secular Buildings in the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem. An Archaeological Gazetteer*, Cambridge 1997, pp. 47–48.

31 "[B]egins from the said river of Valanie in the north and extends south as far as Petra Incisa or Districtum below Mount Carmel. This place is called today Pilgrims' Castle and belongs to the Order of the Temple." The other manuscripts belonging to this family omit this discussion.

32 Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, MS 525, fol. 60v (belonging to the same family) provides an almost identical text.

*trictam sub monte Carmeli. Qui locus hodie Castrum Peregrinorum dicitur et est milicia templi.*³³

- Brussels, KBR, MS 9176–9177, fol. 25r (*d*): *incipit a predicto fluvio Valanie ab aquilone et extenditur adversus Castrum Peregrinorum quod est milicie templi.*³⁴
- Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Nouv. acq. lat. 288, fol. 2v (*e*): *incipit a predicto fluvio Valanie ab aquilone et extenditur versus austrum versus ad Portam Incisam sive **Distictam** [sic] sub monte Carmeli. Qui locus hodie Castrum Peregrinorum dicitur et est militie templi.*³⁵

That the toponym which should have been referred to here is *Districtum* is made clear not only by the above-noted reference to PRINGLE’s “Secular Buildings”, but also by what seems to have been the source for Burchard’s comment. Both William of Tyre and Jacques de Vitry refer to *Districtum* in a very similar context and Burchard may have taken his information from either of the two, although the latter is more likely to have served as his source in this case.³⁶

Clearly, then, the scribes of the London and Zwickau manuscripts were accurate in copying the proper toponym, which was well known in the Frankish period. The manuscripts representing *ce* seem to indicate that *Districtum* was understood by at least some scribes not as a place name but rather as an erroneous form of an adjective of *Petram*. Hence, they modified the word from *Districtum* to *Distictam*. The representatives of the *d* family can attest to one of two developments. Either the scribe/editor whose work stands at the foundation of this part of the tradition skipped from *austrum* to *castrum*, thus missing the word *Districtum*, or he intentionally avoided the toponym which made little sense to him. In any case, this example shows what sometimes happened when scribes/editors who were not well acquainted with the actual Frankish-period Holy Land struggled with toponyms which were easily identifiable to those who had first-hand experience of it.

This confusion on the part of medieval scribes/editors uninformed about the Crusader-period Holy Land continues to leave its mark on modern scholarship.

33 Basel, Universitätsbibliothek, A.I.28, fol. 197r, belonging to the same family, provides a slightly different text: *incipit a predicto fluvio Valanie ab aquilone et extenditur versus austrum usque ad Petram Incisam sive Distictam sub monte Carmeli. Qui locus hodie Castrum Peregrinorum dicitur et est milicie templi.*

34 Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Plut. 76.56, fol. 94r (belonging to the same family) provides the same text.

35 Klosterneuburg, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 722 A, fol. 2v (belonging to the same family) provides a slightly different text: *versus austrum usque ad petram incisam.*

36 [a]b austro vero Phenicis statim coniungitur, inter partes eius precipua [...] nunc autem in duas divisa est. Quarum prima Maritima dicitur [...] a rivo Valanie [...] habens initium, finem autem ad Lapidem Incisum, qui hodie dicitur Districtum. Willelmus Tyrensis, *Chronicon*, ed. by Robert B. C. HUYGENS (CCCM 63–63A), Turnhout 1986, vol. 1, p. 587. *Tertia autem pars Syrie, Syria maritima et Syria Phenicis nominatur [...] habens initium a predicto rivo [rivus Valenie], finem vero ad Lapidem Incisum qui dicitur Districtum, hodie vero Castrum Peregrinum [sic] nominatur.* Jacques de Vitry, *Histoire orientale*, ed. and trans. by Jean DONNADIEU, Turnhout 2008, p. 442.

LAURENT provided the following text: *incipit a predicto fluuio Ualanie ab aquilone, et extenditur uersus austrum usque ad Petram incisam siue desertam*.³⁷ In his recent edition, BARTLETT provides an alternative reading which also does not include the actual Frankish name of the site:

incipit a predicto fluuio Valanie ab aquilone, et extenditur uersus austrum usque ad Petram incisam siue districtam sub monte Carmeli, qui locus hodie Castrum peregrinorum dicitur, et est militie templi.³⁸

Another example of the same kind of difficulties occurs in Burchard's account of a site known as *Maldoim* or *Castrum Dumi*, located to the north-east of Jerusalem. Here is the reference as it appears in representatives of the different groups:³⁹

- Zwickau, fol. 128v (**a**): *et effusione frequenti sanguinis locus idem Rodeburg appellatur*.⁴⁰
- London, fol. 22r (**b**): *ab effusione frequenti sanguinis locus ille nomen accepit*.⁴¹
- Basel, Universitätsbibliothek, A.V.17, fol. 11v–12r (**c**): *ab effusione frequenti sanguinis locus ille nomen accepit*.⁴²
- El Escorial, Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo, O.III.34, fol. 45r (**d**): *ab effusione frequenti sanguinis locus iste nomen accepit*.⁴³
- Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Nouv. acq. lat. 288, fol. 20v (**e**): *ab effusione frequenti sanguinis locus ille nomen accepit*.⁴⁴

What we see here is the omission of a German toponym probably used by at least some of Burchard's contemporaries in the Holy Land, but, in all likelihood, unknown to scribes working in the West, and consequently omitted by the common ancestor of *bcd*.⁴⁵

37 Burchard of Mount Zion, 'Descriptio', ed. LAURENT (note 3), p. 21.

38 Burchard of Mount Zion, 'Descriptio', ed. BARTLETT (note 3), p. 10. While BARTLETT does inform his readers that Jacques identifies Pilgrims' Castle with a site known as *Districtum* (n. 19), he does not mention in the apparatus that London in fact provides this form.

39 This passage is also studied by FERRO and SCHONHARDT in the present volume, pp. 62–63.

40 "And on account of the frequent shedding of blood that place is called Rodeburg." Leiden, Universitaire Bibliotheken, BPL 69, fol. 108r (from the same family) provides a very similar reading.

41 Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, MS 525, fol. 68r (from the same family) provides a very similar reading.

42 Lilienfeld, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 145, fol. 182v (from the same family) provides a very similar reading.

43 Brussels, KBR, MS 9176–9177, fol. 33r (belonging to the same family) provides a slightly different text: *ab effusione sanguinis frequenti locus ille nomen* [sic].

44 Brussels, KBR, MS 733–741, fol. 158v (from the same family) provides a very similar text.

45 One may argue against this that the phrase provided by *bcd* refers to the name *castrum/casale Adumim* (meaning 'red' in Hebrew) which appears several lines earlier in the text. This, however,

An additional example of the corruption of geographical information in witnesses more distant from the archetype has to do with a village in the Bethlehem area. In the **a** family we read:

*de Bethleem ad ½ leucam contra occidentem est Bezeel villa.*⁴⁶

From Bethlehem half a league to the west is the village of Bezeel.

This phrase almost certainly refers to the village of Bayt Jālā, which still exists today,⁴⁷ but all of the other witnesses of the ‘Descriptio’ provide forms that are further removed from the village’s name like: *Bezek*, *Boreth* (which is unique to the **b** family), *Berech* and so on.⁴⁸ In that sense, this case is similar to that which we have just seen with regard to *Districtum*, where concrete geographical information became corrupted under the hands of copyists.

What makes this case even more intriguing is the fact that almost all witnesses belonging to **bcde** add, at the end of the discussion of this village several lines later, the following phrase, which is not in **a**:⁴⁹

In hac villa captus est Adonibezech cesis summitatibus manuum eius et pedum.

In this village Adonibezech was captured, his thumbs and big toes having been cut off.

This phrase is a clear reference to Jdg. 1.5–6, where we read:

Inveneruntque Adonibezec in Bezek, et pugnaverunt contra eum, ac percusserunt Chananeum et Ferezeum. Fugit autem Adonibezec: quem secuti comprehenderunt, caesis summitatibus manuum eius ac pedum.

And they found Adonibezek in Bezek: and they fought against him, and they slew the Canaanites and the Perizzites. But Adonibezek fled; and

seems improbable as Burchard is unlikely to have expected his readers to know that *adumim* is the Hebrew word for red.

46 Zwickau, fol. 133r. Bern, Burgerbibliothek, Cod. 46, fol. 27r has precisely the same text. Leiden, Universitaire Bibliotheken, BPL 69, fol. 113r and Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 41 Weiss., fol. 193r have the same text except that they say *orientem* for *occidentem*.

47 PRINGLE (note 7), p. 304, n. 413.

48 See, for example, *Borech* (London, fol. 32v), *Bezek* (Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Ms. lat. oct. 293, fol. 88v), and *Berech* (Oxford, Magdalen College, MS Lat. 43, fol. 38r).

49 See, for example, London, fol. 32v (**b**); Hamburg, Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Cod. Geogr. 59, p. 50 (**c**); Florence, Biblioteca nazionale centrale, Conv. Soppr. C.VIII.2861, fol. 20r (**d**); Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Ms. lat. qu. 466, fol. 55r (**e**).

they pursued after him, and caught him, and cut off his thumbs and his great toes. (KJV)

The additional phrase that appears in *bcde* thus refers to biblical *Bezek*, rather than to 13th-century *Bezeel*, and cannot in any manner be tied to the site that Burchard had in mind. To this one may add that *Bezek*, as the biblical context makes clear, should be sought to the north of Jerusalem, and is identified today to the north of Nablus, while the context makes it clear that the site discussed by Burchard was situated near Bethlehem, to the south of Jerusalem.

It would thus seem that the addition of this phrase should be explained in the following manner. The original toponym, which was *Bezeel* or a closely related form of that name, was substituted in some manuscripts with *Bezek*, probably because the latter was better known in the West on account of its biblical background. This quite naturally led a certain scribe to add a biblical quote related to *Bezek* to his text. Later scribes generally saw no reason to omit this comment. This example seems to reveal the influence of a scribe/editor who, without concrete familiarity with the actual 13th-century Holy Land, intervened in the 'Descriptio' at a rather early stage in its textual tradition.

Again, this erroneous reading obviously posed difficulties for modern editors and translators of the 'Descriptio', but, notably, both PRINGLE and BARTLETT realized that Burchard was referring here to Bayt Jālā. On the other hand, both scholars were understandably unable to explain the presence of the reference to Adonibezek in this location.⁵⁰

The cases of *Districtum*, Rodeburg, and *Bezeel/Bezek* are telling in regard to the gap between Burchard's acquaintance with the geography of the Holy Land and that of many of his readers. While Burchard was certainly interested in the Holy Land first and foremost as the arena in which most of what is described in the Bible took place, he was also attentive to the land as he actually encountered it. For that reason, he included in the 'Descriptio' information concerning, for example, military positions of both the Franks and the Mamluks or references to settlements which had no biblical past. Many Western users of his text, however, were probably less interested in such aspects of his work and less able to correctly understand them. Some of them therefore omitted such references or adapted them, while others were unable to be critical of such interventions. Finally, we also saw that, in some cases, the dominance of the biblical training of scribes/editors could have led them to expand the text they had before them beyond the intentions of its original author.

50 PRINGLE (note 7), p. 304; BARTLETT (note 3), pp. 158–159 and n. 583.

5 The Cultural Gap between Burchard and Later Scribes/ Editors Working on His Text

The cultural gap between Burchard and the scribes/editors working on the ‘Descriptio’ later on can be shown not only with regard to the geographical acquaintance with the 13th-century Holy Land, but also in other areas, for example acquaintance with Islam. Here are some of Burchard’s most significant comments on Islam as provided by the **ab** families:

Sarraceni Mahumetem predicant et legem eius servant. Dominum [abbreviation slightly corrupted] Ihesum Christum maximum prophetarum dicunt et eum [Zwickau: eundem] de spiritu sancto conceptum et de virgine natum, sed negant passum. Sed cum ei [Zwickau: eis] placuit [Zwickau: placuerit] dicunt eum [Zwickau add.: in celum] ascendisse et sedere ad dexteram Dei, Maumetem vero ad sinistram.⁵¹

The Saracens preach Muhammad and keep his law. They say that the Lord Jesus Christ is the greatest of the prophets, and that he was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin, but they deny that he suffered. But they say that when it pleased him he ascended and he sits at the right of God, Muhammad at his left.

What is noteworthy for our present discussion is that quite early on in the tradition of the ‘Descriptio’, a scribe/editor inserted into this passage a comment which is not found in **ab**. The result can be seen when one looks at the parallel text as provided by a manuscript today in Oxford, belonging to family **e**:

*Sunt autem [...] Saraceni qui Machometum predicant et legem eius servant. Dominum nostrum Ihesum Christum maximum prophetam dicunt, etiam eum de spiritu sancto conceptum de virgine natum fatentur. Negant tamen passum et mortuum, sed quando ei placuit dicunt eum ascendisse in celum et ad dexteram patris sedere **quia filium dei confitentur**. Machometum vero dicunt sedere ad sinistram dei.⁵²*

As can be seen, while the text generally follows that provided by London and Zwickau, we have here (marked in bold letters) a statement not found in those manuscripts, namely that the Muslims agree with Christianity that Christ is God’s son. While there

⁵¹ The text here is from London, fol. 37r with variants from Zwickau, fol. 137r.

⁵² Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Lat. Hist. e. 1, fol. 27r.

are some variations among the witnesses I checked for this passage, representatives of *cde* do include these words (sometimes with the addition of *eum*).⁵³

That this erroneous statement should not be attributed to Burchard is made clear not only by the stemma, but also by its location, which interrupts the structure of the sentence. Furthermore, on the basis of other pieces of evidence from the ‘Descriptio’, and his affiliation to the Dominicans of the Holy Land, Burchard is likely to have been rather well informed about Islam, so that it is improbable that he would make such an error.⁵⁴ The development of this passage thus bears witness to the insertion of a mistaken statement concerning the Islamic understanding of Christ by the editor who shaped the common ancestor of *cde*.

Another noteworthy example which reveals the discrepancies between Burchard’s cultural world and that of his scribes/editors occurs at the beginning of Burchard’s discussion of the various religious groups found in the Holy Land. Following LAURENT’s edition, the opening words of this chapter are known to scholars in the manner presented by *cde*, all of which provide the following text with slight variations:

*Sunt in ea habitatores ex [de d] omni natione que sub celo est et vivit quilibet secundum ritum suum et ut veritatem dicam peiores sunt nostri Latini [...].*⁵⁵

There are in it inhabitants from every nation under heaven and each lives according to its own rite and to tell the truth our Latins are worse [...].

In other words, in the text provided by these families, Burchard begins his survey of the population of the Holy Land with the Latins, and, specifically, with the declaration that they are the worst of all. Notably, however, the Zwickau and London manuscripts, representing *a* and *b* respectively, provide a completely different text:

*Sunt in ea habitatores ex omni natione [Zwickau add. ut credo] que sub celo est et vivit quilibet secundum ritum suum. Sarraceni Mahumetem predicant.*⁵⁶

53 See, for example, Lilienfeld, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 145, fol. 191v (*c*), El Escorial, Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo, O.III.34, fol. 57v (*d*) (which, however, adds immediately *deum autem esse negant*), and Philadelphia, UPenn Ms. Codex 60, fol. 36v (*e*).

54 Burchard of Mount Sion, ‘Descriptio’, ed. LAURENT (note 3), p. 53; Burchard of Mount Sion, ‘Descriptio’, ed. BARTLETT (note 3), p. 82 (though note that the comment “Hoc ego legi in alcorano” does not appear in Zwickau). For Burchard’s connection to the Dominicans of the Holy Land, see RUBIN 2018 (note 4), pp. 56, 58, 66–67. For the study of Islam by the Dominicans of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, see Jonathan RUBIN, *Learning in a Crusader City. Intellectual Activity and Intercultural Exchanges in Acre, 1191–1291* (Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought, Fourth Series), Cambridge 2018, pp. 114–138.

55 Burchard of Mount Sion, ‘Descriptio’, ed. LAURENT (note 3), p. 88; Burchard of Mount Sion, ‘Descriptio’, ed. BARTLETT (note 3), p. 190. See also Basel, Universitätsbibliothek, A.I.28, fol. 228v (*c*), Brussels, KBR, MS 9176–9177, fol. 41r (*d*) and Brussels, KBR, MS 733–741, fol. 170r–v (*e*).

56 London, fol. 37r; Zwickau, fol. 137r.

As can be seen, in these witnesses, the survey begins with the Muslims. This is very significant, as until now it would have seemed that Burchard dramatically opened his discussion of the great variety of religious groups in the Holy Land with the Franks, whom he perceived as the worst of all. While the manuscripts of families *ab* also present very harsh comments concerning the Latins of the Holy Land, these comments do not open this section. It is therefore possible to conclude that the common ancestor of *cde* included significant changes to this part of the text. This may perhaps be explained by post-1291 trends in the West. At the time, a strong emphasis on the thoroughly negative portrayal of the Franks of *Outremer* would have made it easier to explain why God did not lend support to the Kingdom of Jerusalem and enabled the Mamluks to capture and destroy it. Additionally, for the Latin readership in the West, the account of Islam may have become less significant than it was for Latin residents of, or travellers to, *Outremer* and could therefore be moved down in the text.

6 Conclusion

To conclude, a stemma describing the relationships between the various families of the long-version witnesses is a necessary step if we are to reconstruct the text of the ‘*Descriptio*’ as closely as possible to that of the archetype. But the stemma also enables us to trace specific kinds of changes made in the text, both when it was still in the hands of Burchard (and of a scribe working with him) and later, through the intervention of various scribes / editors. We have thus seen, for example, that Burchard added marginal notes to his text both before and after his scribe made a copy of it, and that some of these were of an autobiographical nature. We have also seen how personal information tended to be omitted by later scribes / editors. Furthermore, the investigation of the textual development of the ‘*Descriptio*’ enables us to reveal the gap between Burchard and later users of his work in terms of their knowledge of such topics as non-biblical sites in the Holy Land and the basic tenets of Islam.

These findings demonstrate the importance of philological work for the reconstruction of the archetype, as well as for a better grasp of the ways in which authors such as Burchard worked. Furthermore, they show that this approach is necessary if we are to study the ways in which generations of scribes / editors engaged with a text such as Burchard’s ‘*Descriptio*’. Moving outside the discussion of this important work, it is likely that some of the processes traced above occurred in other Latin accounts of the Holy Land. We have already seen that the development of Riccoldo’s pilgrimage account shares some characteristics with the ‘*Descriptio*’ in terms of the relationship between the work of the author and that of a copyist working with him. Furthermore, evidence for the omission, by scribes / editors, of personal information relating to the original author has been identified in the textual

tradition of Thietmar's 'Peregrinatio'. According to Philip BOOTH, a manuscript now in Wolfenbüttel presents "the removal of all elements of the text's prologue which communicates anything of the individuality of the text."⁵⁷ BOOTH also identified an extreme case in which an anonymous scribe/editor attempted to "pull from Thietmar the bare bones of a standard pilgrimage itinerary."⁵⁸ Christine GADRAT's work on Ludolf of Sudheim's 'De itinere Terre Sancte' raises similar issues. Most notably, she argues that different versions of this text provide varying amounts of biographical information concerning Ludolf.⁵⁹ Much additional work is required in order to reach clearer conclusions with regard to these and other texts, but such findings suggest that a careful study of the manuscript traditions of Latin accounts of the Holy Land is a promising undertaking, likely to shed light on the practices and cultural worlds of both their authors and readers.

57 Philip BOOTH, Thietmar. Person, Place and Text in Thirteenth-Century Holy Land Pilgrimage, Ph.D. Diss. University of Lancaster, 2017, p. 46.

58 Ibid., p. 56.

59 Christine GADRAT, The Authority of Written and Oral Sources of Knowledge in Ludolf of Sudheim's *De itinere Terre Sancte*, in: *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 51,1 (2021), pp. 37–48, here p. 38.