

The Travel Diary of Giovanni da San Foca: Semi-Automatic Analysis of Textual Data

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Abstract

Fifty years after the publication of the “Itinerario per la terraferma veneziana”, in which Marin Sanudo gave an account of the tour he undertook in 1483 as a member of the retinue of the Sindaci inquisitori di Terraferma Giovanni da San Foca kept a travel diary of the places he visited with another group of Venetian officials, in 1536. This invaluable source of direct information about ongoing transformation processes inside and outside the Stato da terra (Ferrara, Bologna, Mantua, Milan) contains material concerning public and private buildings and spaces, so, generally speaking, it offers vivid descriptions of the landscapes visited. The diary was written during the economic and social revival of the Venetian state, and (therefore) it provides numerous wide-ranging overviews, offering fundamental insights into several operations of urban and territorial reorganization. The goal of this work is to analyze the manuscript, searching for specific terms or topics that will allow us to understand how the priest Giovanni da San Foca saw the world around him in 1536 and what vocabulary he used to describe it.

Keywords: textual analysis, manuscript, urban history, landscape.