

Some basic observations on Texttypes

The rating system was not specifically designed to analyze texttypes or find manuscripts groups. For this task one needs more extensive collations. Nevertheless with the available data one can make some basic statements.

Several Principal Component Analyses have been performed which show how the manuscripts cluster together. The main separation is (of course) between O1, B ("Alexandrian"), D plus Old Latin ("Western"), and the Byzantine Majority. The "Caesarean" manuscripts come out very clearly only in Mk, a constant in all four Gospels is Θ only. No other well separated groups could be identified. There are some mixed groups between the Byzantine and the other texttypes though.

To get a rough estimation of the quality of the texttypes we analyzed the following most characteristic members of each group:

For the Alexandrian: B only

For the Western: D/it

For the Caesarean: Θ+f13

For the Byzantine: Maj

About 1200 variants have been evaluated in the four Gospels. We are quite complete for the Byzantine versus Alexandrian. Complete means covering all translatable variants. For the Western and Caesarean type we are not fully complete.

1. The overall quality of the texttypes:

After counting all the numbers the ratio

$$\text{Percentage} = \frac{\text{Secondary readings}}{\text{All readings evaluated for this type}}$$

has been calculated as a performance figure.

2. The "Byzantinity" of the texttypes:

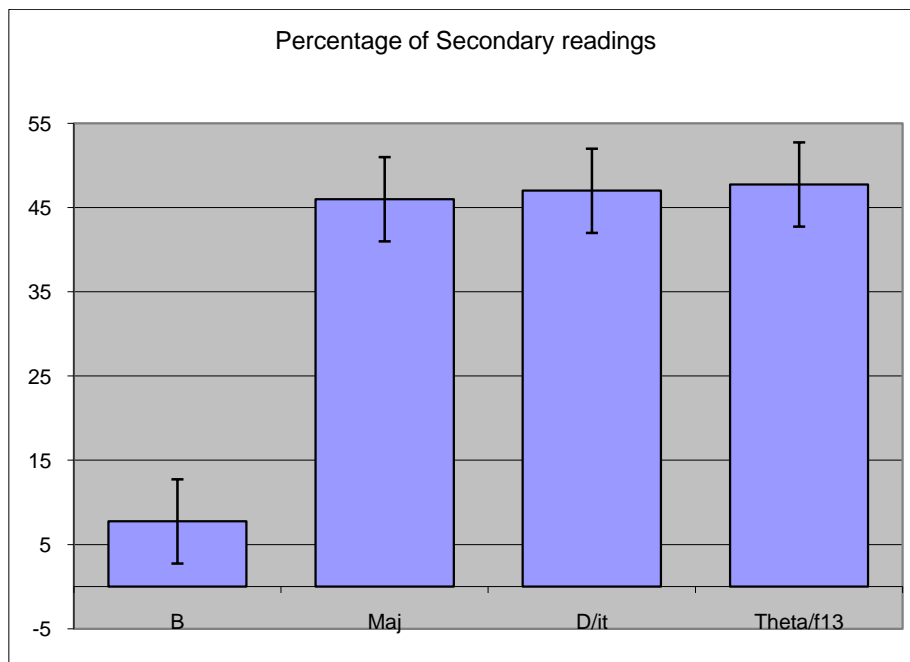
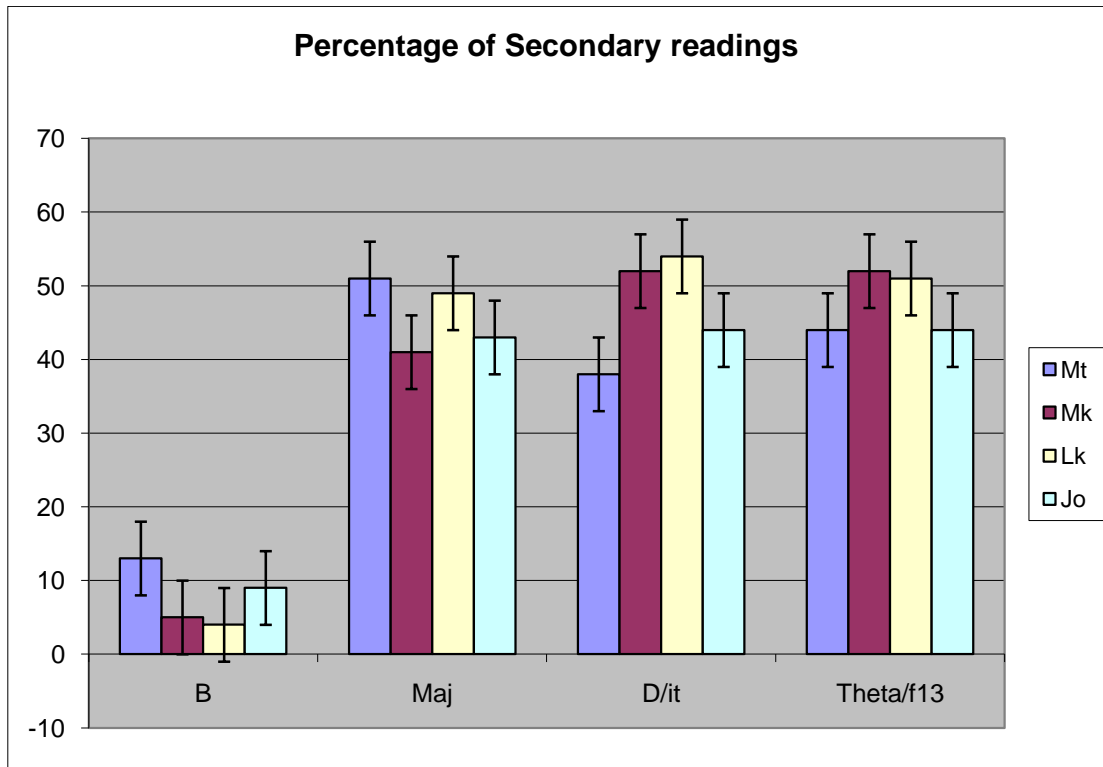
Additionally the Byzantine readings have been counted:

$$\text{Percentage} = \frac{\text{Byzantine readings}}{\text{All readings evaluated for this type}}$$

Results:

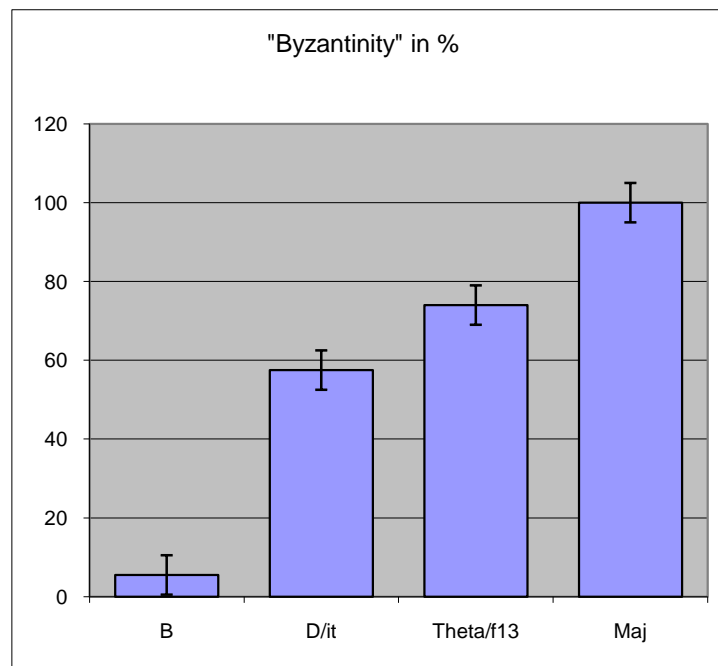
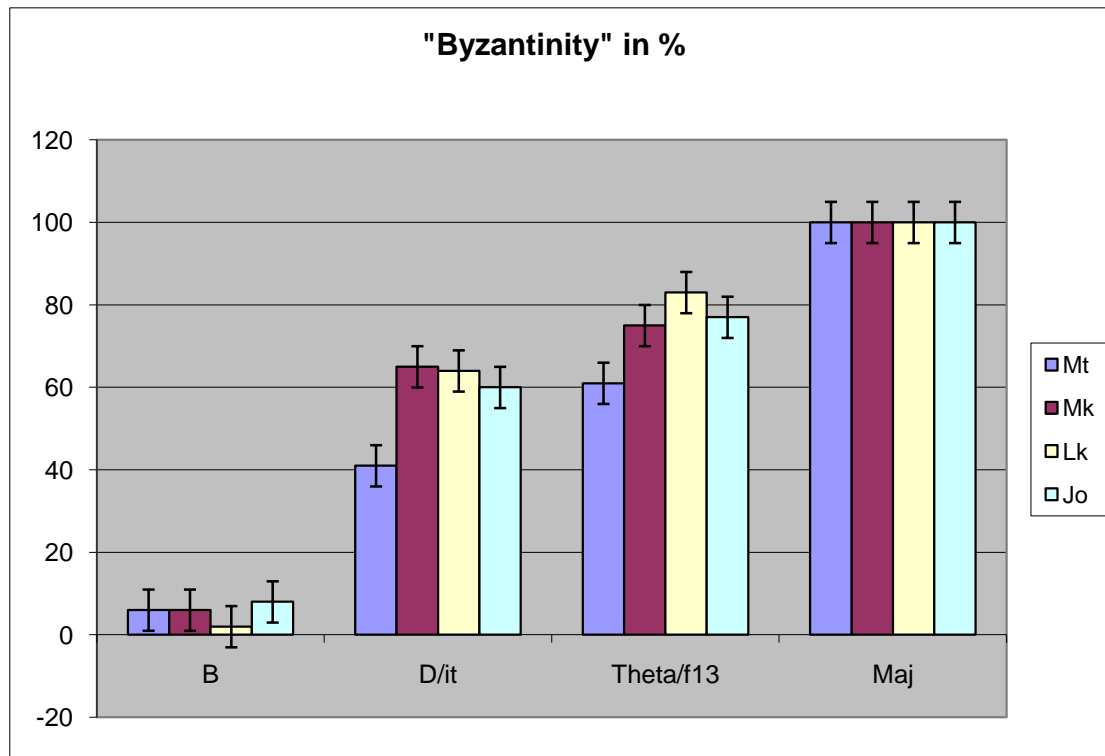
(The numbers have been calculated from the assessment given in the second edition. I have changed several ratings in the later editions, so the percentages could be slightly different now.)

1. Ratio of secondary readings:



The error bars are a rough guess (± 10 readings).

2. "Byzantinity":



When it comes to overall number of secondary readings the three texttypes Majority, Western and Caesarean are all three almost as bad. When one looks at the number of Byzantine readings though, one can see clearly that the Western text comes out much better. The Caesarean text is in an intermediate state. The bad quality of the Western and Caesarean texttypes lies in their many minority readings.

It should be noted that the Caesarean text is not well defined in Mt, Lk and Jo. Here f13 is mostly Byzantine and Θ is mixed. Additionally Θ is block mixed in Mt, being quite Byzantine up to ch. 14, but Alexandrian from 15-28. Here and especially from ch. 21 on, the definition Θ+f13 does not work well anymore. They are almost always in opposition. The above numbers for Caesarean in Mt are a mixture.

In Mk the Caesarean editing took place most heavily in the last third of the book. In ch. 1-10 the Caesarean text is much better.

Also, overall, Θ is a better manuscript compared to f13. f13 is on average 15% more Byzantine than Θ.

The worst texts are the Western and Caesarean texts of Mk and Lk. The Western text is comparatively good in Mt.

Similar to the Caesarean text, the Western text is also not very well defined: Only one Greek witness plus a fluctuating group of old Latin manuscripts. Thus a comparison can never be more than an approximation.

N.B.: This evaluation only shows the quality of the texttypes in a SELECTION of readings. It is not based on complete collations. For the Byzantine text I tried to collect all translatable variants. For the Western and Caesarean readings I was not completely exhaustive. This only gives a rough outline. Don't take the numbers too serious.

Conclusion:

The above figures are based on my own judgment. You will not agree with my judgment here and there, but overall the assessment will probably not change dramatically. So I think it is safe to say that the Byzantine text and the Caesarean group (defined as Θ+f13) are the worst texts. The Western text in the definition as D plus the Old Latin is somewhat better and the Alexandrian (as B) is the best. B as the best individual manuscript goes back within a 10% error to the autograph of the accessible tradition. This tradition has been edited from early on. If these were full-fledged recensions or several smaller editing steps, we don't know, maybe both. When the Byzantine text gained dominance in Constantine's empire it influenced all later copies.

Several questions remain:

1. Is the Θ-group a texttype? In a strict sense probably not. But it represents at least in part a quite old tradition that goes back to Origen. The main concern of its editor was to harmonize. This explains the heavy editing in Mk. Unfortunately all witnesses of the group underwent subsequent Byzantine correction to a different degree. We have no pure witness. Θ is the best we have. Full collations of all remotely Caesarean witnesses might be in order to clear up the kinship.

What is its relation to the text of Origen? Is it possible that f1 and f1739 are one and the same group? Difficult to test. Are there manuscripts which contain both parts and show agreements in both? Probably not. Is this question of relevance at all? Well, at least one could say that the so called "Caesarean" group exists in all NT parts.

The main question is if the base of the Caesarean text represents an old tradition, which is independent of the other texttypes and therefore gives us independent evidence of old readings.

f1 has the most Alexandrian text of all "Caesareans" in all Gospels. Possibly [f1-f1739] is a group and [Θ+f13] is another group.

2. Is D a singular idiosyncrasy? If "D/it" ever was a **Greek** texttype is questionable. Do all or most of the Old Latin witnesses go back to one single translation? The "Western" text is the real "thorn in the flesh" of NT textual criticism. To know its origin, influence and history would be of great help.

3. Is the B-text a purely Egyptian thing? Is it Egyptian at all? This has never been really proven, but it is the most probable hypothesis at the moment. Are all manuscripts labeled "Alexandrian" really from Egypt?

One could debate of course if B is the best representative of the "Alexandrian" text, it is a question of definition. WH defined the Alexandrian text as a group of later manuscripts, like 33, 579, 892, 1241. These are normally considered "mixed" today. Perhaps one should use the Coptic as "Alexandrian" base?

4. What is the substructure of the Byzantine type? Is Von Soden correct on everything? The analysis should be repeated. What agreements can be found in the early subgroups? What are the Byzantine agreements of the Western text with the Byzantine text? D is about 50% Byzantine. Is it an intermediate state?

5. Some people have suggested taking texttypes into the evaluation of the external evidence. I quote from Robert W. Waltz' TC encyclopedia:

"That reading found in the majority of early text-types is best. OK, a personal opinion here: This is the rule. The whole story. If you have three early text-types (call them "Ptolemaic," "Romanesque," and "Cilician,") and two of them attest to a particular reading, doesn't it stand to

reason that the majority of the text-types -- all of which go back to the original -- is more likely to be right unless there is some other explanation for how they came to be corrupted? Curiously, no one seems to have applied this rule on a consistent basis. The problem, of course, lies in determining *what* is a text-type and which of them are early. This is an area that doesn't get nearly enough attention -- which in turn means that this most basic and obvious and objective of rules is not stated, and rarely applied; no one is willing to do the work to apply it!"

So, at present we are not able to apply this rule. The problem is that for the Gospels nothing is clear. Has there ever been a Greek Western text of the Gospels? Are these not only Latin peculiarities? What is the "Caesarean" text? Is it a texttype at all? We know next to nothing of the early history of these texts. What means "early"? Even if we allow for a real "Western" and "Caesarean" texttype, what does it mean when Byzantine, Western and Caesarean texttype agree against Alexandrian? Is not the Alexandrian text much better? Is it not possible that the other types are recensions? I am very skeptical if this rule will ever be helpful in the Gospels.

The "texttype" argument is similar to the "geographical diversity" argument. It is of course a good thing if a reading is supported by geographically diverse manuscripts, but we don't really know the origin of most of the manuscripts, and even if we knew it, how do we have to apply this rule correctly?

The arguments "texttypes" and "geographical diversity" are applied much too frivolously. Our extreme ignorance in all these matters should prevent us from attaching too much weight to those arguments.

So, I think at present it seems to be safest to go with the best manuscripts.

This of course does NOT mean that one has to follow those manuscripts always, but only in those cases where it is impossible with all other arguments to come to a clear decision. There of course remains a large degree of uncertainty and also the best manuscripts have errors, but I don't see at present a better approach. "Texttypes" and "geographical diversity" can only have a weak supporting value.

Overall it appears to me that the concept of "texttypes" is disintegrating today. It is not really helpful. It does not help in deciding textcritical matters nor is it helpful in explaining the history of the text. I think the labels like "Alexandrian" or "Caesarean" will remain, used as textcritical jargon, but texttypes as well defined entities will be difficult to sustain.