

# Christian Arab Pilgrimages to Palestine and Mount Sinai

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## Abstract

Pilgrimage studies to holy sites in early modern Palestine and Egypt have ignored Christian Arabic writings. This paper examines three accounts written by Orthodox and Catholic pilgrims to St. Catherine's monastery in Sinai and to Jerusalem and other parts of Palestine in the years 1637, 1753, and 1755. It shows the popularity of pilgrimages among Christian Arabs and the interactions they had with the various religious communities in the Ottoman world. The pilgrimage accounts show a thriving Christian Arab culture in the middle of a Muslim empire, and they present the views and experiences of pilgrims in their own words – challenging, on numerous occasions, the descriptions of Christian Arabs that appear in contemporaneous European sources.

## Keywords

Christian Arabic writings; early modern pilgrimages; Islam; religious diversity; forms of piety.

The Christian Arabs constituted a sizeable minority in the Ottoman Empire in the early modern period (1517–1798). Unlike the imperialized peoples of the Americas in that same period, these “subjects of the sultan,” to use Suraiya Faroqhi's title, left a vast body of writings in their own language, Arabic, that reflected a vibrant religious culture. One expression of that culture was pilgrimage accounts to holy sites in Palestine and Egypt – a subject that has been ignored in pilgrimage studies in favor of European accounts. But large

numbers of Christians from Bilad al-Sham and Egypt annually travelled to Palestine and to St. Catherine's monastery in Mount Sinai.<sup>1</sup> Their writings recorded Christian voices, telling of experiences sometimes quite different from the European accounts.<sup>2</sup>

Daniel Goffman once noted that the minority communities in the Ottoman Empire "have been examined (and often continue to be examined) autonomously, with minimal regard to the Muslim state and society of which they were a part and which helped mold their unique characteristics."<sup>3</sup> Given that the "geographical literature of the Christian Arabs consists, nearly completely, of descriptions of pilgrimage to the Holy Land/Palestine, and to Sinai,"<sup>4</sup> the Arabic texts shed light on the pilgrimage tradition among them at the same time that their accounts illustrate their sense of place in the Ottoman dominions. Specifically, the texts show the exposure of Arab pilgrims to the religious diversity in the empire and the continuity of Christian piety under Islamic rule.



The first Christian Arabic pilgrimage account written after the Ottoman conquest of Bilad al-Sham and Egypt dates from 1635–36 and describes the journey to the Monastery of St. Catherine in Sinai.<sup>5</sup> A certain monk, Afram, wrote to his addressee, a "lover of Christ," who had asked him to describe the site and the routes from "Egypt" (Cairo), Gaza, and al-Quds al-Sharif.<sup>6</sup> Drawing on his own memories of visits, along with readings of *tawarikh* (books of history), and the Bible (including the Book of Judith), Afram started with practical advice about the food supplies the pilgrim should take, the water sources on the trek, and the camels that would be needed, "because the wilderness can only be traversed by camels." The route, he noted, was the same as the one used by the Egyptian Muslim *hajj*, which starts in Cairo, but while "most of the [Muslim] *hujjaj* pilgrims and merchants sail from this town [Suez] to the Hijaz," the Christians take a route that is biblical in its history. It recalls the pharaoh's pursuit of the Israelites and Moses' crossing of the sea of Qilzim (the Ottoman name for the Red Sea). Appealing to the allegorical interpretation of the exodus narrative, Afram asserted that Moses had drawn the sign of the cross after which the pharaoh and his army were drowned. Throughout the account, Afram combined biblical lore with current geographical information: Moses led the Israelites through the wilderness with its twelve water sources and seventy palm trees; and the port on the Red Sea received ships from India bringing spices, and from Sind, Aden, and Yemen.

On arrival at the monastery, Afram and the pilgrims were welcomed warmly. Half a century earlier, in 1598, a group of pilgrims that included the Franciscan friar Christopher Harant and his brother-in-law had been kept waiting until the evening: the monks inside the monastery feared attacks by Bedouin marauders.<sup>7</sup> Records of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century contracts between the monks and the Bedouins show that there had been assaults on the monks but that Bedouin tribal leaders tried to curb such aberrations. They had set penalties on miscreants: a camel was to be given to Shaykh al-'Arab (the leader) if any Bedouin assaulted a boy going or returning from the orchards with fruit; and a camel if a Bedouin stayed after the Friday prayer and

insulted the monks; and a camel if a Bedouin asked a monk to loan him money or demanded a gift or a mattress or a cover.<sup>8</sup> By the 1630s and 1640s, the situation had changed: the monks had bought their safety by offering cloth, headgear, and silver to local Bedouin chieftains.<sup>9</sup> Afram mentioned no danger as he described the entrance to the “holy monastery” through the *artax* (narthex), to the right of which was the brass serpent that Moses had wielded (Numbers 21:9). Inside the main church, he continued, there are twelve columns with images of martyred saints and their feast days. To the right of the altar is the body of the “saint, glorious among the martyrs, Katrina, whose holy body is inside a marble urn with three iron locks. Above it are three lamps that burn night and day.”<sup>10</sup> Behind the altar to the east is the Church of the Burning Bush where God appeared to Moses, and to the south is the cave in which repose the bodies of “the fathers of Tur Sina Waraytu who had been killed by the *barbar*.”<sup>11</sup> Numerous chapels are dedicated to saints, and near one of the chapels in the northern part of the monastery is a water source, the “Gazelle Well,” and a pomegranate tree, planted at the time the monastery was built. “The tree reveals a great mystery: every year it bears as many pomegranates as there are monks in the monastery.”

Curiously, and while describing the chapels, Afram made no mention of the mosque that stood in the middle of the monastic complex. It had been built during the reign of the Fatimid caliph, al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah (reg. 996–1021),<sup>12</sup> and as a 1518 contract between the monks and local Bedouins showed, the monks were responsible for maintaining the mosque and caring for its muezzin; they were also obligated to host Muslim travelers by offering them food and assistance.<sup>13</sup> Although he made no reference to the mosque, Afram mentioned the gate in the northern wall from which the monks lowered for the ‘*Urban* (Bedouins) a *quffa* (basket) full of bread.<sup>14</sup> He then told a story that the monks had privately relayed to him, quite different from what European pilgrims narrated. In the past, the “‘Arab” and the *barbar* so harassed the monks that the latter decided to abandon the monastery.<sup>15</sup> In addition, the monastery had become infested with venomous snakes and scorpions, and so “the monks ascended the Mountain of God [Sinai], to receive [the saint’s] blessing after which they were to depart.” As they were descending, he continued, the Mother of God appeared to them, but they did not recognize her and took her for one of the “queens of the ‘Arab, her face shining like the sun.” She told them to return to the monastery, promising them supplies and support until the end of time. She also assured them that they would never encounter snakes or scorpions or any other harmful creatures. She then ascended into the sky and disappeared. At that point, the fathers realized that she was the Mother of God and so, they built a church for her on that spot. When they returned to the monastery, they found two hundred camels laden with grain, oil, and other foods that had been delivered, as the porters reported, by “a lightly bearded monk by the name of Moses who had gone into the monastery.” They searched for him but could not find him, but when they all entered the monastery, the “‘Arab” immediately identified him when they looked at the large mosaic in the Basilica of the Transfiguration, which included Moses, the standing figure to the left of Jesus. Thereafter, the monastery was cleansed of the snakes.<sup>16</sup>



Figure 1. Ceiling of the Basilica of the Transfiguration, Sinai, Egypt. © CCA (Centro di Conservazione Archeologica, Rome).

The monk’s description of the “Arab” shows that there was cooperation at the same time that there was tension:

The monks are in constant jihad with the ‘Urban . . . who come daily to the monastery and eat and ask for many things, other than bread. They always strike and insult the monks because in that wilderness there is no governor, judge, or ruler – only the ‘Arab, a barbarous people, evil, and murderous.<sup>17</sup>

Evidently, there were good and bad “Arabs” – those who plundered and those whose queen looked very much like the Virgin Mary. Afram continued with descriptions of the cells and the chapel of “St. Catherine’s of the Franks,” which had been built by “*ifranj* [Franks] visitors,” showing that the schism of 1054 had had no impact on European Catholic pilgrimage to this site.<sup>18</sup> He mentioned the orchard where the Israelites carved the golden calf, which they had worshipped at Horeb, next to which was the *kamantir* (crematorium), where “the bodies of the monks miraculously exuded no foul smell.” At this point, Afram reminded his reader that no woman could enter the monastery, “even if she is a queen – nor female animals, nor an *amrad* prepubescent (beardless) boy, unless he is visiting.”<sup>19</sup> There were also the chapels and cells on the mountain of St. Catherine, including the cave where John Climacus (579–649) stayed for forty years. While abbot of the monastery, he wrote



*Sullam al-faḍa'il* (The Ladder of Divine Ascent), a book that Afram and his addressee knew – and which was frequently copied by the monks, as the five Arabic copies in the library attest.<sup>20</sup>

Afram ended his account by urging “my dear brother” to visit the monastery – all the way from Jerusalem via Hebron and then Gaza to Arish and finally to Holy Mount Sinai. All the toil of the journey would be worth it when the pilgrim arrived to receive the intercession of Moses the Prophet, Mary the Mother of God, blessed Saint Catherine, and all the saints. Travel was safe, the monks were welcoming to all, and the “Arab” were largely cooperative.

In writing the account, Afram shows that there was interest among Arab Christians of the Ottoman regions in the monastery about which they seemed to know little.<sup>21</sup> But while they were curious about the monastery, the more accessible site for them was Jerusalem and Palestine about which pilgrimage records are numerous. In the middle of the sixteenth century, the poet 'Isa al-Hazzar made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, possibly having started in *Bilad al-'Ajam*, or Iran,<sup>22</sup> and wrote a few lines of verse about it. At the end of that century, an anonymous monk wrote *Kitab tawarikh Bayt al-Maqdis wa ma bihi min 'ja'ib* (The Book of the Histories and Wonders of Jerusalem).<sup>23</sup> It described Jerusalem to “you pious Christians, men and women, old and young.” The author monk was aware that his Orthodox Church had lost some of its holy sites to the Catholics, the Franks, and the Muslims, and one subtext to the glorification of Orthodoxy in this pilgrimage-cum-homily was the irritating intrusion by the non-Orthodox onto the holy sites. The author did not express alarm as he mentioned the intruders, but he clearly wanted to alert his congregation to the presence of rivals.

In 1668 the Iraqi Catholic priest, Ilyas al-Musalli, visited Jerusalem and wrote the following brief recollection:

[On the way from Baghdad to the “sepulcher of Christ”] We traveled a deserted road, and as we were halfway across, we were attacked by Bedouin robbers. We fought and drove them away. It was Easter Sunday. We were twelve people and they were a hundred, but because of our guns and the power of God we prevailed. From there we continued to Damascus, and from Damascus to Noble Jerusalem [al-Quds al-Sharif], where I was blessed by visiting the holy sites. A few days later, I returned to Damascus and then went to Aleppo.<sup>24</sup>

All pilgrims faced dangers similar to Ilyas's which is why Ottoman governors tried to protect the routes – especially for Muslim pilgrims since security to *Bayt Allah* in Mecca was one of their religious responsibilities.<sup>25</sup> The title of the sultan, after all, included *Khadim al-Haramayn*, Servant of the Two Holy Shrines. Like other pilgrims, Ilyas traveled in a group, apparently without a janissary escort, which is why they attracted the robbers.<sup>26</sup> The pilgrims fought back and succeeded because of their firearms – a rather curious image of monks wielding guns in the Ottoman dominions.<sup>27</sup>

There were also the two pilgrimages to Jerusalem by Bulus, son of Makarius, the 141<sup>st</sup> Orthodox patriarch of Antioch:

In the seventh year of the patriarchate of my father, 7150 [1654 CE], he went to visit holy Jerusalem [*Urushalim*], accompanied by sixty Aleppans, among whom were priests and deacons. And what a visit it was! Unforgettable, to be recalled with joy in future times. We spent all our time in godly happiness and spiritual fulfillment. We prayed and chanted and celebrated. We held continuous prayers, accompanied by music and singing of hymns. We were joined by the Jerusalemites who followed us, walking when we walked, and halting when we halted. From Qara, we left them and went in the direction of Yabroud [Syria].<sup>28</sup>

Bulus and his companions went on to visit Orthodox villages – including the Aramaic-speaking Ma'loula where there was the monastery of Saint Takla, reputed pupil of St. Paul, where her remains were kept; above the village on the mountain was the Byzantine-old convent of Mar Sarkis. When the pilgrims returned to the “holy lands and other places” in April, they stayed for two days at the Monastery of Mar Saba near Bethlehem where they saw the nearly 14,000 monastic cells [sic] carved into rocks in the valley. After St. Thomas Sunday (celebrated by the Orthodox Church in mid-April), they left Jerusalem for Damascus. Throughout their pilgrimaging, they visited tombs of patriarchs and churches, publicly giving expression to their faith in hymns and chants, appearing less as pilgrims in an act of penance and more like Chaucerian pilgrims – but without women.<sup>29</sup> The stops that Bulus mentioned throughout his account confirm the numerous “small pockets” of Christians in Palestine, Lebanon, and Syria.<sup>30</sup>

While it is nearly totally focused on Russia and the journey there, Bulus's account furnishes a glimpse of the Christian Arab pilgrims' sense of the Ottoman world. In Aleppo, Muslims, Christians and Jews, Bulus reported, went to the shrine of one Shaykh Abu Bakr to celebrate the arrival of special water brought from Persia to repel locusts. At the head of the procession were the Muslims who sang in Arabic, followed by the Christians who chanted in Greek, and together, they went around the wall of the city, in a most orderly fashion.<sup>31</sup> Bulus came from a strong Arabic cultural background and found no difficulty in celebrating religious cooperation with Muslims. He recalled that when Sultan Murad IV passed through Aleppo on his way to the conquest of Baghdad in 1638, “All the Christian communities welcomed him with precious cloth which they spread on the sides of the road. . . . It was a memorable day, recalled by all future generations. . . . to see the *sultana al-ifranjiyya* [the French sultana], his wife preceding him by three days with a large number of carriages.”<sup>32</sup> Evidently, there was excitement at the news of a French wife of the sultan, especially in a city with a French Catholic contingent of traders and missionaries. As the Christian community in the city celebrated Easter, the sultan joined them and so much enjoyed himself that “he gave 1000 piasters” to the congregation.

Later, and in writing about regions that were exclusively Muslim, Bulus still expressed a sense of belonging. In Konya, the burial site of the Sufi poet Jalal al-Din al-Rumi (1207–73), the travelers delighted in the *mahabba* (love) for “the *Nasara* and

the monks” that was expressed by the “dervishes.”<sup>33</sup> Throughout their travels, they felt no more danger as Christians than others who traveled and suffered from highway robbers, shortage of provisions, and rough weather.<sup>34</sup>

A few years later, in 1393 AH as he wrote (1676 CE), monk Tawadrus stopped at the monastery of Saydnaya outside Damascus on his way “to Bayt al-Maqdis [Jerusalem] to pray in those noble places”; and in 1689, the Lebanese priest ‘Awn Farah wrote in his diary that he “visited Jerusalem” with a group of clerics and “two boys and others” where they stayed for six months.<sup>35</sup> A few years later, the Syriac Orthodox bishop Danha from Mardin in eastern Turkey went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem where he converted to Catholicism. So angry was his congregation of Jacobites that they poisoned him.<sup>36</sup> A treatise written by Makarius, Bulus’s father, and copied on 1 Shawwal 1103 (16 June 1692 CE), presents a history of Palestine and other regions of Orthodoxy based on the writings of the Greek Church Fathers (many of whom are mentioned by name), with a few asides:

We should visit the land where our Lord Christ was born, and which carries the marks of his feet. There he traveled widely and performed miracles and wonders [*ayat*]. That is why it has become glorified. There the apostles followed him. That land is called Palestine, as Damianos writes about it in his fourteenth chapter.

St. Irenaeus said about Jerusalem in his seventeenth letter that it is not provided with water from below, like Egypt, nor is its grass in need of water. Rather it awaits the seasonal rains from above because the land is full of stones . . . Palestine was given its name from *Philistim*, but they did not use the name accurately and thus called it *Filastin*.<sup>37</sup>

The text continues about the early history of the land, with various references to bishops, bishoprics, and ecclesiastical changes. The Christian past is the only past that Makarius recognizes, but as he is describing Jerusalem, he adds:

This city of Jerusalem remained in the hands of the Christians after Christ’s ascension for 620 years. Then it was taken, in peace, by ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab. The Islam[ic people] kept it until the year 1099 after the birth of Christ. It was freed from their bondage by Godfrey the Frank. In the year 1087 after the incarnation of Christ it was returned, in peace, and by the consent of the Christians, to Salah al-Din. Then, after another period, it was returned, in peace, to the Franks who kept it for 42 years. Then the Moroccans [Fatimids] took and kept it, then the Circasians, and lastly, in the year 1517 after the incarnation of Christ, Sultan Selim conquered it and it has remained in their [Ottoman] hands until now.

But this is a mere digression, after which Makarius returns to the biblical history and specifically to the Orthodox ecclesiastical legacy.

Numerous episodic descriptions of Jerusalem and Palestine appear in Arabic Christian sources.<sup>38</sup> Many pilgrims visited the city with their families: the Maronite patriarch of Aleppo, Istfan al-Duwayhi, mentioned that in 1668, he went on pilgrimage with his mother and his brother; the latter subsequently gained the title of *haji*.<sup>39</sup> Other pilgrims so frequently described their experiences to their communities that the sites and the journey to Palestine became quite familiar among Christian Arabs – which might explain the absence of detailed written accounts. As Donald R. Howard noted in his study of pilgrimage in Europe, although there were nearly 200,000 pilgrims annually to Canterbury, “It must have been too familiar to deserve written accounts.”<sup>40</sup> And so, the next surviving pilgrimage account in Arabic is, again, about St. Catherine’s Monastery, in the year 1753. The Jerusalemite Khalil al-Sabbagh al-Shami (originally from Syria, but living in Jerusalem),<sup>41</sup> started his journey from Cairo accompanied by the abbot of the monastery and fifty-six other Christians “from various countries and speaking various languages.” Sabbagh did not mention the nationalities or the languages of the pilgrims, but when they reached the stone of Moses on their final leg of the journey, all dismounted – the patriarch, the visitors, and the ‘Urban guides<sup>42</sup> – to kiss the stone. Christians and Muslims, Arabs and *ifranj* shared in the veneration of the Moses landmark. When they arrived at the monastery, the monks came out to welcome the abbot with hymns and shooting in the air. The monastery and its surrounding were safe, and the ‘Urban joined in the celebrations of welcome; also, as Sabbagh noted later, the ‘Urban attended the evening liturgy on the feast of St. Catherine (25 November). Again, it is interesting that monks were armed and that bells were ringing loudly – at the edges of the Ottoman world – a noticeable change since the French pilgrim Morison wrote over half a century earlier.<sup>43</sup>

The layout of the site had remained the same since Afram’s account, but now there were numerous additions inside the churches and the chapels. The monastery had received many gifts from pilgrims: the lanterns and icons along with the gold and silver ecclesiastical decorations show that the Muscovites, *al-Maskub*, along with other Europeans, had been regular visitors. One of the icons donated by the Russians was dated 1713; the lamps were made in Venice; the chandelier was made in Austria; and the “seven lanterns ... made of silver plated in gold, [were] made by the Muscovites.” The monastery was also a place of scholarship: 2,000 manuscripts in the “*Philotikion*, which means the library,” including 400 manuscripts in Arabic.<sup>44</sup> Sabbagh was so drawn to the beauty of the monastery that he described it as equal to paradise: “Whoever enters it thinks himself in paradise.”<sup>45</sup> Sabbagh joined the monks in meals and liturgies, and described the celebrations, the chanting, the ringing of bells, the lighting of candles in front of the numerous icons, and the food they were offered: beans and dried fish and black olives. As it was the feast of St. Catherine, the guests were offered grapes and “good wine,” and later, five apples and five pomegranates, after which they drank a glass of arak.<sup>46</sup> There was also coffee – mentioned twice in the account – showing that the drink was available even in that remote part of Sinai.<sup>47</sup> Hospitality was vivacious: the monastery was prospering.

For Sabbagh, the highlight of the visit was the veneration of the relics of St.



Catherine: her left hand “to her wrist,” and her skull, “skinless.”<sup>48</sup> But, another relic was now available for veneration: the right hand of the fourth-century virgin saint, Marina of Antioch – showing the link between this Orthodox monastery and the other major Orthodox monastery and pilgrimage site in the Arab regions of the Ottoman world: Saydnaya, where St. Marina was venerated. There were two silver candelabra, “made by the *Maskub*” above the reliquary, and under the marble pedestal an Arabic inscription stated that Master Nasrallah al-Shaghuri had repaired the marble in the year 1715. This writing in Arabic reminded Sabbagh of the Arabic inscription on one of the iron gates of the monastery:

The monastery of Saint Catherine was built on the mountain of *munajat* [colloquy], by the poor to God and seeker of His mercy, the royal king, Rumi in denomination, Justinian, to commemorate him and his wife Theodora for all times – in the place where God blessed the land and everything thereon. And he is the best of those to inherit God’s blessing. It was finished thirty years into his reign in the year 6021 After Adam, 527 After Christ.<sup>49</sup>

The inscription in Arabic was meant for Arab readers and visitors who were to remember with praise the Christian emperor and his wife; curiously, there was no mention of the Ottoman sultan. The fact that this inscription was in Arabic – there were many others in Greek – raises the question about the Arab monks in the monastery. How many of the monks were Arabs is difficult to gauge because there is no mention of names at all in the account (nor did Afram before him mention names of resident monks).<sup>50</sup> In the late tenth century, Solomon, Bishop of Mount Sinai, added notes in Arabic to copies of manuscripts, one of which he had brought from Damascus: as Mark N. Swanson observes, the books were “part of a library of Christian literature in Arabic that would readily be available to the monks in the monastery.”<sup>51</sup>

Other Arabic manuscripts in the library from that century to the fourteenth century attest to a thriving Arabic theological culture. In 1536, the preface to one manuscript included reference to its scribe, the Arab monk (*katibihi al-khuri al-‘Arabi*), and in 1574, another preface mentioned the translation of a book into the Arabic language.<sup>52</sup> By the middle of the eighteenth century, the Arab presence was evident, as the surviving diaries, treatises, receipts, and records show (MSS Arab. 687, 688, 691, and the two Covenants of ‘Umar from 1561 and 1683 CE MSS Arab. 696 and 695 respectively).<sup>53</sup> One manuscript, which records encounters with the ‘Urban, was collected by the shaykh deacon Neophotius, “a dignitary of Damascus in Syria, who had been one of the leading monks in *Tur Sina* for about fifty years” (MS Arab. 690). The inscription on the front page explains that the collection and copying of the manuscript was taken over by deacon Afrosiyus al-Halabi (the Aleppan) in order to continue writing in Arabic (*bil-kitaba al-‘Arabiyya*).<sup>54</sup> There are other Arabic names in the manuscripts, and the numerous Arabic inscriptions around the monastic complex (which have yet to be studied fully) confirm active Arab presence.<sup>55</sup> On visiting the crematorium, he saw the garment of a *nasik* (ascetic) that had belonged to one “called *Shami*” (a Damascene).

Later, and accompanied by the other pilgrims, Sabbagh climbed the mountain where he visited a small chapel: above the entrance, there was a marble plate with an Arabic inscription recording the names of the late Mikha'il Sawaya, Jibra'il Mikanna, and Nasrallah al-Shaghuri, all from Damascus, dated 1515. North of the chapel, he added, was a Frankish *haykal* (temple), along with a mosque for the 'Urban.

By the middle of the eighteenth century, St. Catherine's Monastery was prospering and safe with active Christian Arab pilgrimages.<sup>56</sup> Unlike the situation in Jerusalem, there were no rival Christians laying claim to the holiness of the monastery. Pilgrims had been regularly visiting this Orthodox site, both from Arab and European regions, all contributing to the monastery's wealth and dazzle. The constant references by Sabbagh to the gold and silver, the jewels, and the crowns confirmed for him the holiness of the monastery, where Orthodox monasticism had first been consolidated. St. Catherine's was a wholly Orthodox site, a *waqf*, uncontested by other Christian denominations, and located in an Arabic-speaking region (unlike, for instance, Mount Athos). Thus, Sabbagh's last words in the margin to encourage future pilgrims: "All that we have described can be seen by the visitors who come. God be praised."<sup>57</sup>

Two years later, on 13 April 1755, Ilyas Ghadban al-Halabi, a Greek Catholic dignitary, accompanied by two monks from the Lebanese monastery of Dhur al-Shwayr, left Aleppo on their way to the Holy Land.<sup>58</sup> Ghadban returned on 27 May and wrote an account about his pilgrimage (but mentioned nothing about his companions). The account was in two parts: the actual itinerary, written in the form of a log about the route and date of the journey across Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine, the cities and villages on the road, the time spent in every place, where he and his companions slept, the churches they visited and in which sometimes they celebrated mass, and brief descriptions of non-religious sites – as for instance, the Baalbek Roman ruin, "a wonder of the world." The longer second part consisted of detailed descriptions of holy sites, furnishing exact measurements as well as historical, contemporary, and sometimes religiously spurious information about them. Ghadban was a man of some status (one of the *a'yan* of Aleppo) because he was able to gain access to abbots and to local dignitaries and to stay at the house of the English consuls in Acre (twice) and in Ladhikiyya.<sup>59</sup> What his relation to the English was is not revealed, but he was on such good terms that he took letters of introduction from the consuls, which helped him enter holy sites that were largely restricted to members of specific denominations.

Most striking about this pilgrimage account was the meticulousness with which Ghadban recorded the number of *sanawat ghufuran* (years of indulgence) he earned after visiting holy sites, ranging from three or four or seven years of indulgence to full indulgence. The exact value of the indulgences was determined by the patriarch in Aleppo,<sup>60</sup> and with an eye to informing future pilgrims, Ghadban itemized the spiritual value of each site, turning the pilgrimage into a journey of indulgence collecting: "Know that when you enter the tomb [in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre] you receive full indulgence. And if you enter numerous times in the same day, each entry earns you full indulgence" (30r).<sup>61</sup> But this regimentation did not detract from his deep piety in which the sensory experience of Palestine turned the land into one big relic.

For him, there was holiness in the physical objects and sites, and indulgences could be earned just by touching, or even looking from afar on churches that had been turned into mosques and which pilgrims did not enter. After reaching Jerusalem, he spent four days *mahbus*, in isolated solitary meditation.

Ghadban described in detail the gold and silver he saw on altars, candelabras, reliquaries, and other ecclesiastical paraphernalia, along with the marble decorations, the frescos, and the luxurious cloth. “The iconostasis is old,” he wrote, “like ours in Aleppo, but this one is heavily plated in gold” (32r). Frequently, he mentioned the expensive (*mukallafat*) lanterns sent by foreign royalty, confirming thereby the universal recognition of Catholic holiness. Thus, inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, he saw “four famous lanterns of gold, the first from the sultan of France, the second from the sultan of Naples, the third from the sultan of Austria, and the fourth from the sultan of Portugal” (29r). The Catholic potentates of Europe validated the holiness of the site; even, from Istanbul, a door made of mother-of-pearl had been sent, costing 4,000 piasters (24v). Evidently, the local monks kept record of all the gifts and proudly told their guests about the donors.

Even though he was on a pilgrimage of penance, Ghadban took time to enjoy himself: sightseeing, collecting small pebbles from churches as souvenirs, and harvesting silkworms. But his main focus was on the Christianness of holiness: as he wandered around Palestine and southern Lebanon, he confirmed an image of the land as the land of Christ. Like Bulus before him, he traveled among the Christian communities: the many churches he visited and described show how much the region was thriving with Christian life, with new and restored monasteries, and with active clergy – whose names Ghadban often mentioned.<sup>62</sup> But Ghadban also showed how much tradition and legend defined the geography of Palestine, and he praised the Franciscans who had “discovered” and preserved the holy sites – “otherwise, the sites would be unknown or destroyed.”<sup>63</sup> The Franciscans, whom he met in Nazareth, had identified numerous Old and New Testament sites, such as *Bayt Jahla* (Bayt Jala?) (11v) where Samson had killed 1,000 men with a jawbone, or the house of Dives in Jesus’s parable (Luke 16:19, 14v). The precise locations allowed Christian pilgrims like Ghadban and his companions to feel a sense of belonging in the Muslim sultan’s dominion. On her way back from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, for instance, Mary had sheltered under a batam tree as it rained and snowed – a tree that still stood and which Ghadban visited, thereby earning seven years of indulgence (13r).<sup>64</sup>

Ghadban did not mention any interaction with Muslims – even though at the outset of the journey he stated that he and the pilgrims had slept twice in *takiyya* (hospices):<sup>65</sup> evidently, the Muslim overseers had welcomed the Christian pilgrims from Aleppo – just as Bulus had been welcomed in Konya and in the Aya Sophia Mosque. But while Bulus engaged with the Muslim communities, Ghadban did not even use the word “Muslim” or “Ottoman”: instead, he used the word *umam*, or gentiles – the Arabic biblical translation of “gentile.”<sup>66</sup> The house of Saint Veronica contained her body, “as it was said, but today the house is inhabited by the *umam*,” and so was the Upper Room in *Jabal Suhyun* (Mount Zion) which “used to be a great church

of extraordinary beauty, but now it is in the hands of the *umam* and no [Christian] believer can enter at the risk of losing his spiritual or physical life” (15v) – that is, conversion, or mortal punishment. However, and much as he ignored the *umam*, Ghadban appreciated how they shared in the veneration of “his” Christian sites. The house where Mary poured perfume on Jesus’s feet had been a church, but was now “in the possession of the *umam* who keep a lighted candle above the imprint of his [Jesus’s] foot” (17r-v); the tree under which Isaiah the Prophet sought shelter became a *musalla* (chapel), for the *umam* (22v); for a bribe, the *umam* allowed the Franciscans to celebrate mass inside a church-turned-mosque; and on the Feast of the Ascension, the monks assembled around the imprint of Jesus’s foot – which the *umam* protected (20r). The *umam* celebrated the Christians’ geography of piety, which is why, even as the sites had become Islamized, they still had the power of indulgences: for the three sites above, the pilgrim earned seven full years of indulgences for each.<sup>67</sup>

While he did not mention Muslims directly, Ghadban was not reticent about non-Catholics. He referred to the Copts briefly, but when he reached a church near Lydda, which housed the relics of *al-shahid Jawirjius*, the martyr George, he did not visit it because it belonged to the *mushaqin* [sic] *Rum* (schismatics) (10r); later, he lamented the condition of the Church of St. Helena, because it was in Orthodox hands, and “not in the hands of its rightful owners” (28r). Earlier in the century, Uniates with Rome and Orthodox worshipped together, but after 1719, the former were prohibited from joining in Orthodox worship;<sup>68</sup> the two communities separated completely, not without acrimony in polemics, and even street fights.<sup>69</sup> When he was welcomed by the Armenian abbot, Ghadban admired “everything in him except his faith: May God guide him to the light of [Catholic] truth” (25v). Even when he could not but defer to the Orthodox in Jerusalem, because many of the holy sites were in their possession, *bi-yad al-Rum*, he could not refrain from snickering: “The *Rum* visitors squeeze between two columns [in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre]: the slim visitor goes through easily but the fat one with difficulty. Sometimes the latter gets stuck and people laugh and make jokes. May God have mercy” (30r-v).



The pilgrimage accounts show a thriving Christian Arab culture in the middle of a Muslim empire. Holy sites were both accessible and flourishing to pilgrims from Mosul to Shaghur to Jerusalem to Sinai, and the Palestine which Ghadban and other pilgrims visited was full of Christian-biblical history, miracles, and wonders. Even though some sites had been seized by Muslims, they still furnished indulgences: Muslim rule had not rendered the Christian imprint inefficacious. In addition, history had been preserved and could be reclaimed: When he wandered around Jerusalem, Ghadban “recalled” the “Christianity” of sites, even after a millennium of Arab-Islamic presence and over two centuries of Ottoman rule. After he visited the gates of Jerusalem, he wrote that there was “the Bayt Lahm Gate which the Islam call Bab al-Khalil, Bab al-‘Amud which the Islam call the Bab al-Sham, the Bab al-Mazabil which the Islam call Bab al-Maghariba Gate.” When Ghadban reached a well which

people called *Bir Ayub* (Well of Job), he promptly interjected how “the Christians [*Masihyyun*] knew that it was really the Well of Ezra the Priest” (22r). There were the “Christian” names and there were the “Muslim” names: by recalling the “Christian” names, Ghadban re-appropriated the sites to his own religious community. Even though Muslims were in possession of the places and their names, he as a Christian was in possession of their timeless nomenclature.

Generally, Christian Arab pilgrims encountered no linguistic differences since the Ottomans had not Turkified the region. They did not have to deal with political border crossings, nor did they have to change into different “local” clothes, as European pilgrims did. As subjects of the sultan, Christian Arabs paid less than others during their visits to holy sites,<sup>70</sup> and if they were attacked by marauders, as priest Ilyas reported, they had guns with which to fight back. Traveling from Aleppo or Damascus or Mosul to Palestine or to Mount Sinai, the pilgrims moved in an Ottoman world that was relatively undistruptive in its culture and peoples, currencies and foods. At the same time and speaking the same language of the peoples around them, they heard stories that European Christians never heard, slept inside Muslim spaces that Europeans never entered, and engaged with the Bedouins to such an extent that the latter celebrated with them upon arrival at St. Catherine’s monastery, and even entered with them into the church. Historicizing themselves in Arabic, and treating the sites as their *patria communis*, the pilgrims recalled Venice and Austria and Russia, at the same time that they kissed holy stones next to fellow travelers from among the ‘Urban.

And all in the dominions of *Khadim al-Haramayn* – Servant of the Two Holy Shrines.

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#### Endnotes

1 For the importance of Jerusalem and Sinai in the early histories of Christian pilgrimage, see Andreas Kuelzer, “Byzantine and early post-Byzantine pilgrimage to the Holy Land and to Mount Sinai,” in *Travel in the Byzantine World*, ed. Ruth Macrides (Farnham, UK: Aldershot, 2002), 149–61; J. M. Fiey, “La pèlerinage des Nestoriens et Jacobites à Jérusalem,” *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 12 (1969): 113–26; Herman Teule, “The perception of the Jerusalem pilgrimage in Syriac monastic circles,” in *VI Symposium Syriacum*, 1992, University of Cambridge, ed., R. Lavenant (Rome: Orientalia Christiana Analecta 247, 1994), 311–21; the

account by Bar Hebraeus in Herman Teule, “Syrian Orthodox Attitudes to the Pilgrimage to Jerusalem,” *ECA* 2 (2005): 121–26, also discussed in Abdullif Wadi, “The Centrality of Jerusalem in the Arabic-Christian Literature,” in *Jerusalem House of Prayer for all Peoples in the Three Monotheistic Religions*, ed. Alviero Niccacci (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 2001), 103–12; and Anton Pritula, “From Tigris to Jerusalem: Early Syriac Poetic Notes from the Ottoman Time,” *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 22 (2019): 193–234. See also the fourteenth-century anonymous account in Gérard Troupeau, “Un ancien guide arabe des lieux



- saints,” *Parole de l’Orient* 21 (1996): 47–56; and Hilary Kilpatrick, “Between Ibn Baṭūṭa and al-Ṭaḥṭawi: Arabic travel accounts of the early Ottoman period,” *Middle Eastern Literatures* 11 (2008): 233–48.
- 2 Of course, the largest number of pilgrimage accounts to Palestine was written by Muslim Arabs – to Jerusalem and Hebron, and Mecca and Medina. As Mahammed Hadj-Sadok observed, it was the Moroccans and the Andalusians who left behind the largest corpus of Muslim pilgrimage accounts: “Le genre ‘Rih’la,”” *Bulletin des études arabes* 40 (1948): 198. The study of pilgrim accounts by Muslim Arab writers is beyond the scope of this paper, but see some references in my “Arabic Travel Writing, to 1916,” in *The Routledge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. Carl Thompson (London: Routledge, 2015), 139–51. For Ottoman records, see section 6 “Pilgrimage and the Lebanon” in Abdul-Rahim Abu-Husayn, *The View from Istanbul* (London: Taurus, 2004).
  - 3 Daniel Goffman, “Ottoman Millets in the Early Seventeenth Century,” *New Perspectives on Turkey* 11 (1994): 136.
  - 4 Ignati Iulianovich Krachkovski, *Isotria Arabskoi Geograficheskoi Literatury* (Moscow, 1957), trans. Salah al-Din Utham Hashim (Cairo: Lajnat al-ta’lif wa al-tarjama wa al-nashr, 1963), 700. Ora Limor repeated this view, “‘Holy Journey’: Pilgrimage and Christian Sacred Landscape,” in Ora Limor and Guy G. Stroumsa, eds., *Christians and Christianity in the Holy Land: From the Origins to the Latin Kingdom* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 336.
  - 5 Louis Cheikho, “Waṣf Tur Sina wa abniyatihi,” *al-Machriq* 9 (1906): 736–43 and 794–99. Cheikho did not date the account, but the date is 1636, as cited in *al-Makhtutat al-‘Arabiyya fi al-adyira al-Orthodoxiyya al-Antakiyya fi Lubnan*, 127. See also Carsten-Michael Walbiner, “Ein christlich-arabischer Bericht über eine Pilgerfahrt von Damaskus zum Berge Sinai in den Jahren 1635/1636 (Hs. Balamand 181),” *Parole de l’Orient* 24 (1999): 319–37. I am grateful to my sister Inaam Matar for the translation.
  - 6 The reference to the Arabic name of Jerusalem varies from a transliteration of the Hebrew *Urushalim*, to a mangled alternative – *Urshlam* (as it appears in C. M. Walbiner and M. Nanobashvili, “Nicon’s Treatise on the Conversion of the Georgians,” *Le Muséon* 121 (2008), 456 in 437–61) to the Ottoman name, *al-Quds al-Sharif*, and the Arabic equivalent, *Bayt al-Maqdis*.
  - 7 Anne Wolff, “Two Pilgrims to Saint Catherine’s Monastery: Niccolò di Poggibonsi and Christopher Harant,” in *Desert Travellers: From Herodotus to T. E. Lawrence*, ed. Janet Starkey and Okasha El Daly (Durham: ASTENE, 2000), 47. See also Anne Wolff, “Pilgrims to the Monastery of St. Catherine,” in *How Many Miles to Babylon?* (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2003), 195–232.
  - 8 D. S. Richards, “St Catherine’s Monastery and the Bedouin: Archival Documents of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries,” 149–79 in *Le Sinai de la conquête arabe à nos jours*, ed. Jean-Michel Mouton (Cairo: Institut Français d’Archeologie orientale, 2001), *Cahiers des annales islamologiques* 21: 178.
  - 9 See the numerous references to gifts in MS Arab. 688 at the Library of the Monastery of St. Catherine, Mount Sinai. I am grateful to the assistant at the Library of Congress for sending me a digitized reproduction of the Arabic manuscript. For the contracts, see especially MS Arab. 687.
  - 10 Mentioned also by Niccolò di Poggibonsi in 1349, see Wolff, “Two Pilgrims to Saint Catherine’s Monastery,” 42.
  - 11 An attack on the monastery by “Saracens” occurred in the fourth century CE; see Philip Mayerson, “An Inscription in the Monastery of St. Catherine and the Martyr Tradition in Sinai,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 30 (1976): 375. The story of the martyrs is associated with St. Nilus (c. 400).
  - 12 In 1349, Niccolò mentioned the mosque, Wolff, “Two Pilgrims to Saint Catherine’s Monastery,” 43.
  - 13 For the texts of this and other contracts, see Richards, “St Catherine’s Monastery and the Bedouin,” 149–79.
  - 14 A year later, 1637, the Russian Vasily Yakovlev ‘Gagara’ wrote that the monks were forced to feed “500 ‘wild’ Arabs,” see Galina Yermolenko, “Life and Journey of Vasilii Gagara to Jerusalem and Egypt,” in *Christian-Muslim Relations 1500–1900*, ed. David Thomas (Brill online). The French Anthoine Morison also observed on how the monks gave bread to the “pauvres Arabes,” *Relation*, 106.
  - 15 Afram uses the terms “barbar” and “Arab” and “Urban” interchangeably.
  - 16 Differently, Harant mentioned that the monks had planned to leave, but then they stayed because they were asked to do so

- by the Bedouins; Wolff, “Two Pilgrims to Saint Catherine’s Monastery,” 51. See Kurt Weitzmann’s discussion of the Moses icons, “Thirteenth Century Crusader Icons on Mount Sinai,” *The Art Bulletin* 45 (1963): 179–203, especially the discussion of icon 18.
- 17 Bibliothèque nationale, Paris, MS Arabe 312, 31. This passage is omitted from the edition by Cheikho.
  - 18 In 1715, the priest Mikha’il ibn Bulus, a Maronite priest, went to St. Catherine’s so that he could report back to his monastery on “l’image de l’Eskim,” the garb of the monk, Paul Bacel, “La Congrégation des Basiliens Chouérite,” *Échos d’Orient* 6,40 (1903): 181.
  - 19 In one of the contracts between the monks and the Bedouins in 1599, there is mention of a penalty on any Bedouin who *ghabana amrad sabiyy*, mistreats a “beardless” boy. It was specifically noted that during Friday prayer when worshippers entered the monastery to pray in the mosque, the *amrad* should not enter: Richards, “St Catherine’s Monastery and the Bedouin,” 178. I am grateful to Professor Wadad Kadi for discussing this term with me.
  - 20 See the reference to Climacus in Morison in 1697: *Relation*, 105. In 1736, a monk copied an Arabic translation of the *Ladder* of Climacus, “You have reached the top of the holy ladder,” from Sinai MS Arab. 339 reproduced in Agnes Smith Lewis and Margaret Dunlop Gibson, *Forty-one Facsimiles of Dated Christian Arabic Manuscripts* (Cambridge: CUP, 1907), 77. Climacus was widely consulted by Maronite monks in Lebanon in the eighteenth century; see Joseph Torbay, “Un texte sur la prière de Abdallah Qaraali, 1672–1742: réformateur du monachisme maronite moderne,” *Parole de l’Orient* 1 (1970): 231–54.
  - 21 Among the Greek Orthodox communities, the monastery was famous, attracting numerous ascetics and monks from the sixth century on: Nicephorus the Hesychast, Gregory of Sinai, and Gregory of Palamas. John Meyendorff, *St. Gregory Palamas and Orthodox Spirituality*, trans. Adele Fiske (St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1974), 35. A Greek account about the monastery was written in 1659 by Nektarios, Patriarch of Jerusalem, who had been a monk in the monastery before he became patriarch in 1661; Shihadeh Khury and Nicola Khury, *Khulasat tarikh kanisat Urshalim al-Orthodoxiyya* (Jerusalem, 1925), 154–56.
- See also Kostas Saris’s article on Nektarios’s *Epitomē tēs hierokosmikēs* (Venice, 1677), in *Christian-Muslim Relations 1500–1900*, ed. David Thomas.
- 22 Louis Cheikho, “Shu‘ara’ al-Nasraniyya ba‘ada al-Islam,” *al-Machriq* 16 (1913): 268.
  - 23 BnF MS Arabe 312. All references are to this copy. See the English translation by Mohammad Asfour in *Through the Eyes of the Beholder: The Holy Land, 1517–1713*, ed. Judy A Hayden and Nabil Matar (Leiden: Brill, 2013): 27–53.
  - 24 Translated in Nabil Matar, *In the Lands of Christians* (London: Routledge, 2003), 51.
  - 25 Suraiya Faroqhi, *Pilgrims and Sultans: The Hajj under the Ottomans* (London: I. B. Taurus, 1994), 8–9.
  - 26 For the life of Ilyas, see John-Paul A. Ghobrial, “The Secret Life of Elias of Babylon and the Uses of Microhistory,” *Past and Present* 222 (2014): 51–93.
  - 27 As Thomas Philipp noted, throughout the early modern period, “firearms were illegally imported from Europe to the Syrian coast,” “Bilad al-Sham in the Modern Period: Integration into the Ottoman Empire and New Relations with Europe,” *Arabica* 51 (2004): 415.
  - 28 BnF MS Arabe 6061, 7r – from the journey of Bulus that started in July 1652. This MS was copied in the early eighteenth century.
  - 29 European women were rarely encouraged to join pilgrimages to Palestine: Johan Huizinga, *The Autumn of the Middle Ages*, trans. Rodney J. Payton and Ulrich Mammitzch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966), 185. An exception was the English Margery Kemp who left an account of her pilgrimage, *The Book of Margery Kemp*, trans. B. A. Windeatt (Penguin, 1985). Meanwhile, Muslim women, just like men, were expected to go on pilgrimage because it was a religious duty.
  - 30 *Syrian Christians in Muslim Society: An Interpretation* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1970), 10. Over a period of forty-five days, Bulus and his father visited numerous villages with Christian congregations in the Sidon bishopric in southern Lebanon. In the regions of Baqa’a, Iqlim al-Tuffah, and al-Shuf, they visited twenty-nine villages.
  - 31 Bulus, son of Macarius, *Voyage du Patriarche Macaire d’Antioch*, trans. Basile Radu in *Theologia Orientalis* 22 (Paris, 1930): 50, 103.
  - 32 BnF MS Arabe 6061, 6v.
  - 33 BnF MS Arabe 6061, 13v. As Michel

- Balivet noted, from the fifteenth century on, Turkish dervishes affirmed their “croyance en l’identité profonde de l’islam et du christianisme,” “Chrétien secrets et martyrs chrétiens en Islam turc: quelques cas à travers les textes (XIIIe – XVIIe siècles),” *Islamochristiana* 16 (1990) 110 in 91–114. For Bulus’s description of mosques and Muslim sites, see Hasan Çolak, “Worlds Apart and Interwoven: Orthodox, Syrian and Ottoman Cultures in Paul of Aleppo’s Memoirs,” *Studies in Travel Writing* 16, 4 (2012): 375–85.
- 34 See also the warm welcome given to French priests by the “derviches d’Antioche,” in the late 1620s: Georges Goyau, “Une capitale missionnaire du Levant: Alep, dans la première moitié du XVIIe siècle,” *Revue d’Histoire des Missions* 11 (1934): 169.
- 35 Antonious Shibly, “Nubdtha min tarikh Lubnan fi-l-qarn al-sabi’ ‘ashar,” *al-Machriq*, 25 (1927): 813.
- 36 Ishaq Armaleh, “Fi al-batrakiyya al-Anṭakiyya,” *al-Machriq* 21 (1923): 661.
- 37 British Library OC ADD 9965, 142, 164.
- 38 See Joseph Nasrallah, “Historiens et chroniqueurs melchites du XVIIIe siècle,” *Bulletin d’Études Orientales* 13 (1949–51): 145–60.
- 39 *Tariikh al-Ṭa’ifa al-Maruniyya*, ed. Rashid al-Shartuni (Beirut, 1890), 240.
- 40 *Writers and Pilgrims: Medieval Pilgrimage Narratives and Their Posterity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 29.
- 41 BnF MS Arabe 313. See also Louis Cheikho’s edition, “Rihlat Khalil Ṣabbagh ila Ṭur Suna,” *al-Machriq* 7 (1904): 958–68, 1003–12. I shall use both texts. As Cheikho noted: “There is no travelogue in Arabic like Mikhail Sabbagh’s which includes the description of Tur Sinai and its surroundings,” 1012.
- 42 In 1697, Morison gave the number of Arabs in his pilgrimage caravan as two hundred, *Relation*, 198.
- 43 Morison wrote that bells were not used, but “longues barres d’acier,” *Relation*, 109.
- 44 Out of “about 4,000 mss,” according to *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Christian East*, ed. Edward G. Farrugia (Rome, 2015), 1309.
- 45 After all, the monks in the monastery followed the same rites as the Melkite Orthodox (and not the Alexandrian Coptic) patriarchate of Jerusalem – where the abbot-bishop of the monastery was always ordained.
- 46 Contrast the meager foods mentioned by Harant; Wolff, “Two Pilgrims to Saint Catherine’s Monastery,” 49.
- 47 As Svetiana Kirillina showed, coffee was frequently offered to pilgrims in monasteries: “The Magic of the Holy Land and Realities of the Ottoman Empire: Russian Pilgrims within the Borders of Islam and their Narratives from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries” in *Mélanges en l’Honneur du Prof. Dr. Suraiya Faroqhi*, ed. Abdeljelil Temimi (Zaghouan: Fondation Temimi, 2009), 193.
- 48 In 1489, Francesco Suriano mentioned two hands “white as milk,” *Treatise on the Holy Land*, trans. T. Bellorini and E. Hoade (Jerusalem: Franciscan Press, 1983), 188.
- 49 The fresco of Justinian and his wife, Theodora, is at the entrance. See a reproduction in figure 19 in Weitzmann, “Thirteenth Century Crusader Icons.”
- 50 Morison mentioned that the “pere vicaire” spoke at one time in Arabic, *Relation*, 112. The pere was Ioannikios I (John Lascaris) (1671–1702), whom the English Levant Company chaplain, Robert Huntington (1671–1680), met in Cairo in 1680: see the reference in Shereen Khairallah, “Arabic Studies in England in the Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries” (PhD diss., University of London, 1972), 106. Two years later, in 1699, Lascaris asked the French consul in Cairo to send him a portrait of King Louis XIV, E. Charles-Roux, *France et Chrétiens d’Orient* (Paris: Flammarion, 1939), 60–61.
- 51 Mark N. Swanson, “Solomon, Bishop of Mount Sinai (Late Tenth Century AD)” in *Studies in the Christian Arabic heritage in honour of Father Prof. Samir Khalil Samir*, ed. Rifaat Ebeid and Herman Tuele (Leuven, 2004), 106.
- 52 Sinai MS Arab. 121 and MS Arab. 264.
- 53 Interestingly, the latter manuscript included a Turkish translation of the Covenant.
- 54 Throughout the record, the scribes used the Hijri calendar, but in the preface, the Aleppan used the Adamic calendar, 7190. In 1774, a Damascene deacon, Akakius al-Dimashqi, translated into Arabic a Greek text about Mount Sinai. The text described the wondrous miracles that had occurred there, the various abbots who had been there, and their interactions with the “Arabs in those regions, living in the wilderness,” BL *Codices Arabici*, XXXIII.
- 55 In the study of the inscriptions in the monastery, Ilhor Shevchenko focused

- exclusively on the Greek inscriptions: “The Early Period of the Sinai Monastery in the Light of its Inscriptions,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 20 (1966): 255–64.
- 56 The view of Otto F.A Meinardus needs to be reevaluated, “From the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, the Monastery of St. Catherine was repeatedly abandoned,” *Christians in Egypt: Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant Communities Past and Present* (Oxford, 2006), 67.
- 57 BnF MS Arabe 313, 7. These words are not in Cheikho.
- 58 For a general history of Greek Catholics, see Robert M. Haddad, “Conversion of Eastern Orthodox Christians to the Unia in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries,” in *Conversion and Continuity: Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands Eighth to Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. Michael Gervers and Ramzi Jibran Bikhazi (Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1990), 44–59.
- 59 Very likely Thomas Phillips Vernon, see David Wilson, “List of British Consular Officials in the Ottoman Empire and its former territories, from the sixteenth century to about 1860,” July 2011, online at [www.levantineheritage.com/pdf/List\\_of\\_British\\_Consular\\_Officials\\_Turkey\(1581-1860\)-D\\_Wilson.pdf](http://www.levantineheritage.com/pdf/List_of_British_Consular_Officials_Turkey(1581-1860)-D_Wilson.pdf) (accessed 18 January 2021).
- 60 Over a decade after Ghadban’s visit, in 1773, the *Propaganda fide* tried to prohibit the patriarch from issuing such indulgences, arguing that he should have the permission of the pope in Rome first. Patriarch Yusuf Istfan and his congregation wrote against this prohibition: *Basa’ir al-zaman fi tarikh al-‘allama al-batirak Yusuf Istfan*, ed. Bulus Aboud Gostaoui [sic] (Beirut, 1911), 1: 94–106 for the year 1773.
- 61 University of St. Joseph, Beirut, Lebanon, MS 34. All page references are to the Arabic numerals at the bottom left side. I am grateful to Dr. David Calabro of the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library at St. John’s University, Minnesota, for his assistance.
- 62 See the 1761 survey of Christian parishes and numbers (of Catholics) in various cities of Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt, L.J. Rogier and Joseph Hajjar, *Siècle des lumières révolutions restaurations* (Paris: Seuil, 1905), 259–62.
- 63 Since their arrival in Palestine in the early fourteenth century (their Custody was established in 1342), and supported by Prince Fakhr al-Din II three centuries later, in the 1620s, the Franciscans excavated various sites in Palestine.
- 64 A century and a half earlier, the English traveler William Biddulph saw this “Terebinth or Turpentine tree,” *The Travels of Certain Englishmen* (London, 1609), 132.
- 65 In Damascus, there were the Sulaymaniyya *takiyya*, est. 1559, and the Murad Pasha *takiyya*, est. 1568; and in northeast Aleppo, the Shaykh Abu Bakr ibn Abu al-Wafa’ (d. 1583) *takiyya*, est. 1631. The *takiyya* housed the darwish/dervishes.
- 66 The term is used in the 1671 Arabic Bible published by the *Propaganda Fidei* in Rome.
- 67 There were numerous manifestations of such inter-religious activities, especially around saints, venerated by Muslims and Christians alike. See Bernard Heyberger, “Frontièrs confessionnelles et conversions chez les chrétiens orientaux (XVIIe- XVIIIe siècles),” in *Conversions islamiques: Identités religieuses en Islam méditerranéen*, ed. Mercedes Garcia-Arenal (Paris, 2001), 248–49.
- 68 Qustantiin Basha, *Tarikh ta’ifat al-Rum al-Malikiyya wa al-Ruhbaniyya al-Mukhalisiyya* (Sidon, Lebanon: Maṭba‘at Dayr al-Mukhalliṣ, 1938), 1:25. See also L.J. Rogier and Hajjar, *Siècle des lumières*, 252.
- 69 Ferdinand Taoutel, *Watha’iq tarikhiiyya ‘an Halab* (Beirut: Catholic Press, 1940), 1: 53–57.
- 70 Under Sulayman the Magnificent (r. 1520–1566), Arab pilgrims paid less admission fees to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem than did Europeans. Ottoman overseers drew a distinction between foreigners, on the one hand, and Arabs and Copts, on the other. And so, the European paid, fourteen piasters; the Greek, seven piasters; the Armenian, five piasters; and the Arab and the Copt, three piasters; Muhammad Hashim Ghosheh, *al-Quds fi al-‘ahd al-‘Uthmani* (Amman: Dar al-thaqafa, 2009), 168–69.