

BEATRICE SALETTI
*'Ululant more luporum'.
Frank Perceptions of Other Christians'
Liturgies in Churches of the Holy Land*

Abstract

In this essay I will discuss how Frank pilgrims perceived Christian rites different from their own in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth centuries. Yet, it cannot escape us that the topic of relations between different creeds is much more complex than it seems, and is likewise highly relevant and strongly confrontational to this day, since still today many cultural stereotypes (often unknowingly) affect the interpretation of what is observed. To illustrate that point, I will borrow an example that may appear unrealistic but is instead a really occurred event: years ago,

the US consul in Jerusalem received a call for help. An American woman, [...] a devout Christian, called from a Palestinian village where her American church had sent her to help a parish. The poor woman was on the edge of a nervous breakdown. 'I came to the Holy Land to help Christians!' she shouted to the consul. As the diplomat didn't seem to understand her distress, she continued more forcefully: 'My church told me that I was going to work with Christians, and now instead I'm in a city of Arabs!'¹

What European Christians in medieval times write concerning Eastern sects and religions, even when they have the opportunity to observe them first hand, may be the result of negative prejudices. In point of fact, the Russian archimandrite Grethenios, in reference to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, writes that the Armenians «are thrice damned» and that, in addition to Greek and Georgian orthodox worshippers, also «damned heretics» like Latin Christians perform their rites there. On the other hand, the German Franciscan Paulus Walther defined Greek monks as «fetentes maxime» (such acrimony, it is clear, is more common among churchmen than laymen)². Despite the fact that the anecdote above clearly shows how irrational and diverse the perception of 'Self' and 'Other' even in the present day can be, among those who study pilgrimage, be they historians or literary scholars, many are fascinated by the 'pilgrim's vision of the Other'. For my part, I must confess that I find it absurd to think that we can "capture" the vision of a European pilgrim. Furthermore, a Franciscan friar who lives in Cremona in the middle of the fourteenth century doesn't have a lot in common with a nobleman from Kent or with a businessman from Nuremberg who lived at the end of the fifteenth. The scenery, climate, and architecture that surround these men in their daily lives are strikingly different: for those who take a journey in the Middle Ages, the sense of foreignness begins shortly after they leave their homes. Indeed, for voyagers from beyond the Alps, even Venice seems extravagant and alien. In the late Fifteenth century the Milanese Casola, evidently closer to home than people who come from much further away, is generally able to understand what he sees in the streets and piazzas of Venice, but anyhow the scenery arouses numerous doubts for him.

My research has focused on a corpus of about 100 texts on pilgrimage written by laymen and clergy, merchants and nobles from all over Europe between 1320 and 1512. I must admit that what I

¹ LORIEUX (2001, I).

² SOLLWECK (1892, 131). In 1461, the bishop of Saintes Luis de Rochechouart wrote: «Dicunt Greci Latinos non esse dignos celebrare in altaribus suis, et nos canes vocant» (COUDERC 1893, 255). the conflict was not limited to Orthodox and Latin, but involved all creeds: pilgrim Wilhelm Tzewers in 1478 noticed that «detestantur Iacobite Grecos et Surianos» (HARTMANN 2004, 188).

offer here are but a few ideas and suggestions, as going deeper would require preliminary research on many aspects of religious life in Jerusalem which are not yet in full light. For example, where Frank pilgrims could observe Oriental rites? First of all, we must divide churches in five categories:

- 1) Churches by the time in ruins, where, according to the covenant of ‘Umar, was prohibited to celebrate.
- 2) Sanctuaries which previously (until the end of the crusader kingdom) were churches, then became Muslim shrines and were forbidden to Christians.
- 3) Sanctuaries which previously (until the end of the crusader kingdom) were churches, then became Muslim shrines, and were open to Christians of all creeds under certain conditions.
- 4) Sanctuaries which were preserved Christians through centuries, and were exclusive domain of a creed or a national church.
- 5) Sanctuaries which were preserved Christians through centuries, and their spaces inside were shared by different creeds.

As it is evident, Christian pilgrims could hear mass only in shrines belonging to categories 3-5. Despite we know that churches in Jerusalem were more numerous, pilgrims wrote only about the few mentioned below. Under the category 3 were the tomb of the Holy Virgin in the Josaphat valley and the (formerly) church of the Ascension on the mount of Olives. Under the category 4 were the church of Holy Archangels and the church of S. Saviour (both belonging to the Armenians), the monastery of Mount Zion (belonging to Franciscan Friars), and the monastery of the Holy Cross (just outside Jerusalem, reserved for Georgians). Under the category 5 were St. George’s church in Lydda, the Basilica of the Nativity in Bethlehem, and the Basilica of the Holy Sepulcher, in Jerusalem.

At present I have no significant information from pilgrimage accounts, written by faithfuls of Roman obedience, about liturgical celebrations in the Armenian and Georgian sanctuaries, but only generic observations like: «sunt in dicta ecclesia [S. Crucis] decem presbiteri calori celebrantes ibi officium more grecorum»³. In fact, pilgrims don’t seem at all interested in the oriental liturgy. Or, at least, they do not write about it. It seems rather that they came across other creeds celebrations in accidental circumstances: namely, when they enter shrines in order to visit holy places in them. For example, the church in Lydda, built where Saint George was martyred, was a Byzantine-Orthodox place of worship, but it could also host Latin mass since there were two separate altars inside: travel accounts describe Latin Masses only⁴.

It is no coincidence that there are numerous descriptions of the various celebrations at the tomb of the Virgin for the feast of the Virgin’s Assumption, which takes place on 15 August. For the same reason, the main chance for looking at Eastern rites was the visit to the church of the Holy Sepulcher, which took place on three nights, usually not consecutively, from Vespers to nine in the morning.

To the substantial indifference of pilgrims, it must be added that various factors made it difficult for them to witness liturgies that were different from their own. The first of these to consider is time: ever since the Franciscans had established themselves in Jerusalem and Bethlehem between

³ PICCIRILLO (2003, 92).

⁴ Nompar de Caumont, a French nobleman travelling at the beginning of XV century, wrote: ‘Davant le grant autel, où présent ha un ung aultre autel, où je fis dire messe de monseigneur saint George, présens plusieurs Sarrazins qui n’avoyent guières dévotion, dont je avoye grant despit de leur contenance [...]. Et les faux chiens n’en tenoient compte, ains s’en moncoyent; en cette ditte église à grant pardonance, laquelle tiennent les Grex’ (‘in front of the main altar there is another altar, where I celebrated the Mass of my lord saint George in the presence of many Saracens that had not devotion, so that I was very annoyed by their behavior [...]. And the false dogs didn’t take it into account and they crowd. In that church, that the Greeks hold, there is a great pardon’ (LELIÈVRE MARQUIS DE LA GRANGE 1858, 47). The detail of the different faith of the altars is given by Mariano da Siena, in PIRILLO (1991, 82): ‘Sonvi due altari, uno de’ greci, l’altro sopra el proprio luogo dove fu moza la testa a sancto Georgio’ (‘There are two altars, one of the Greeks, the other above the very place where saint George was beheaded’).

the fourth and fifth decades of the 14th century and the institution of a regular service from Venice to Jaffa towards the end of the century, the voyage to the Holy Land had been standardized, so to speak: pilgrims visited the Holy Land for about ten days at a time, and sometimes even less. Most of them visited only Jerusalem and the surrounding areas: Bethany, Bethlehem, and towns between Jerusalem and Jaffa. They were able to travel as far as the River Jordan only when Bedouin belligerence allowed. Within this area there are several churches, and above all several tens of outdoor holy places (the Kidron valley, the Akeldama, where Jesus met Simon of Cyrene, where Peter denied...): the time at the disposal of pilgrims was hardly sufficient to visit them all. In fact, if we consider that the Jaffa galleys left the port of Venice between the end of spring and the summer, upon arriving in Jerusalem it was necessary to dedicate only certain time slots to the visits in order to avoid the excessive heat. This too may have been a factor that impeded the pilgrims from witnessing liturgies different from their own: the experience of the Franciscan friar Walther, who resided in Jerusalem for a year (from 1482 to 1483), was much different. As a friar he actively participated in rites, and in fact he offers a plethora of information on the liturgical calendar and on the ways that other confessions celebrated mass.

A perhaps more important factor is the management of the sanctuaries by the Mamluks. Some sanctuaries required payment to visit, and some were places of worship for Muslims as well. Access to the sites was not always allowed: while father Mariano of Siena, pilgrim in 1431, was invited to enter the shrine of the tomb of the Virgin by the *nā'ib* of Jerusalem who went to pray there with a following of 200 people, the Dominican friar Rinuccini observed that Christians there had to hear mass before dawn, because Muslims hindered the rite by sitting on the altar or by taking hold of the chalice⁵. Moreover, many pilgrims who passed by this edifice during their quests found it closed in the daytime⁶.

Another factor has to do with public order: so as to avoid incidents and not offend local sensibilities, it was prohibited in Jerusalem and elsewhere for pilgrims to walk the streets unless they were accompanied by a dragoman or by the friars of Mount Zion. This regulation greatly limited their movements.

Another important factor is the various rights that different faiths were able to enforce in different places of worship. It is well documented that many different Christian denominations had specific places within the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Even in the smaller shrine of the tomb of the Virgin, in the Valley of Josaphat, there were distinct altars reserved for different faiths (indeed, as we have already seen above, the opportunity to celebrate Christian rites was restricted because the rulers of Jerusalem favored the fruition of the shrine from muslims)⁷. There were shared spaces in the church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and in the shrine of the Ascension on the Mount of Olives which, despite the fact that it had been transformed into a Muslim pious foundation (*waqf*) by Saladin as early as the late twelfth century, was opened to all Christian denominations on the day

⁵ «In this church, those who want to celebrate Mass have to go there before the day, otherwise the church is filled with dogs Moors, and they take the chalice in their hand and put themselves on the altar, creating many obstacles, and no recourse may be had against them»: CALAMAI (1993, 70-71), my translation. As witnessed by the florentine pilgrim Giorgio Gucci, the situation was similar a century earlier: «Quando i Cristiani vogliono ire a udire messa in detta chiesa ed a orare, conviene che vi vadano molto per tempo, quasi anzi di, perché di detta chiesa di buona ora siamo spacciati quasi buona pezza anzi il levare del sole [when Christians want to hear Mass in that church and to pray, it is convenient that they go very early, almost before the day, because we are pushed out from it early, almost quite a while before the day]»: LANZA – TRONCARELLI (1990, 289).

⁶ I just quote SCUOR (2005-2006, 58).

⁷ Johannes Poloner, in TOBLER (1874, 233): «Primum [...] est Armenorum, secundum [...] est Georgicorum, tertium sub fenestra versus aquilonem est Fratrum minorum, quintum juxta primum gradum ascensionis a sinistris est Jacobitarum. Sciendum, in eodem latere ascensionis est Indianorum»; HARTMANN (2004, 224): «Capella autem sepulcri est magna [...] habet altaria tria aut quatuor»; NEWETT (1907, 247): «In the same church there are several other altars served by Greek priests».

of the Ascension so that they could celebrate mass there⁸. Some accounts, however, are of opposite sign: friar Walther declares that Orthodox community in Gaza denied Frank pilgrims to celebrate mass in the local church, in order to not profane his altar⁹. The grotto on the mount of Olives visited by Jews, Christians and Muslims (because ascribed to the burial of prophetess Hulda from Jews, of saint Pelagia from Christians, and of the mystic Rabi'ah al-Badawiyyah from Muslims)¹⁰ did not contained an altar; the non-muslims devotees limited themselves to enter – for a fee – and pray. I am not certain that this list is complete, and only an extensive and comparative study of the extant documents can provide a better understanding of the situation. By way of example, Friar Walther is, to my knowledge, the only pilgrim to report about a practice on the day of Saint Sabas that would allow Franciscans to celebrate «plures missas» and to solemnly sing a Divine Office in the Byzantine-Orthodox monastery of Saint Sabas. But given the reaction of the crowd of Byzantine-Orthodox faithful, which solicited the intervention of Muslims (who threatened «ne canetis missam, vel male habebitis»), it seems an enterprise that was not destined to last long¹¹.

Another matter that merits deeper study is the sharing of open spaces: each Christian Church participated in the Palm Sunday procession on the Mount of Olives. On 2 April 1483, at the banks of the River Jordan, a group made up of Franciscan friars, Armenians, and more than 300 Ethiopians – who had all left from Jerusalem together a day earlier – sung the Office of the Mass.¹² Was it possible to celebrate mass in other churches belonging to different creeds? If so, were there fixed schedules or were these merely exceptional concessions to occasional requests? In how many churches that were not exclusively Frank were Frankish pilgrims allowed to say mass? And how did the equilibrium among different Christian creeds change over time in the sanctuaries of the Holy Land, subject as they were to sudden variations in the wake of relations between Christian states and the Mamluk Sultanate, or even to the internal relationships among different branches of Christianity (we have only to remember, in this regard, events like the council of Ferrara and Florence)? Into the church of the Holy Sepulcher, for instance, «in a period of thirty years Calvary changed hands five times»¹³. As a matter of fact, in short, we do not know exactly which sanctuaries had shared spaces for different confessions or religions, as well as the ways and times in which this sharing occurred¹⁴.

While some creeds were able to maintain the presence of churchmen within the church of Holy Sepulcher, others were only allowed to enter the church to celebrate mass but had to live elsewhere. As Philippe de Voisins points out: «You find that in the church of the Holy Sepulchre *reside* five christian communities, as Abyssinians, who are from Priest John's land; Syrians, Armenians, Georgians and Latins»¹⁵. Not all pilgrims paid as much attention to this fact (which is not an

⁸ According to the Bishop of Sainte Louis de Rouchechouart, mass was celebrated by «omnes christiani» (i.e. «Latins, Armenians, Greeks, etc.») only on the day of the Ascension: COUDERC (1893, 246).

⁹ SOLLWECK (1892, 191): «In civitate Gazara sunt multi Christiani Greci heretici negantes nobis celebrationem in eorum ecclesia». Dominican friar Fabri, which travelled with Walther, wrote: «Denegaverunt nobis introitum ecclesiae suae et adeo vilipenderunt preces nostras, ac si judaei fuissemus, dicentes quod ecclesiam suam nollent profanari et execrari celebrationis nostris»: HASSLER (1843-1849, II, 362).

¹⁰ SELIGMAN – ABU RAYA (2001).

¹¹ SOLLWECK (1892, 131-132).

¹² *Ivi* 148. Walther specifies that he and his brethren took with them from Zion «paramentis pro officiis divinis».

¹³ HINTLIAN (1989, 42) (no need to add that, unfortunately, in the studies produced within the respective Churches, the level of bias is remarkably high). Sebald Rieter Jr., a merchant from Nuremberg pilgrim in 1479, witnessed the last passage of Calvary from the Armenians to the Georgians: «Sy haben vor albeg inngehabt den heyligen pergk Calvarie, aber bey 4 jaren nachst vergangen vor der jarzal 1479 hatt der konig von Jorsia dem Soldan ettlich goben geschanckt, also hatt der Soldan den Jorsyen oder Georgiten den heyligen perg Calvarie eingeben und den Armenyen dy statt, als oberurt, da fur eingeben» (RÖHRICHT – MEISNER 1884, 16).

¹⁴ For an overview on the topic, see KEDAR (2022); KEDAR (2001, 89-91); WELTECKE (2011, 73 -95).

¹⁵«Vous trouverés que dedans l'eglise du Saint Sepulchre demurent tousiours *residens* cinq nacions de chrestiens, comme sont Auasins qui sont de la terre du prebtre Jehan, Suriens, Armaniens, Jurgiens et Latins»: TAMIZEY DE LARROQUE (1883, 33) (my emphasis).

insignificant detail) as Voisins; but for example Don Messore notes that ‘«Contiguous to this tabernacle [*sc.* the aedicule of the Holy Sepulchre] there is a a small chapel in which, when the church is opened, Jacobites enter»¹⁶.

Unfortunately, there is not enough space here to adequately discuss these matters. I would simply like to recall that even in the period between the loss of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem and the settlement of the Franciscans, it was possible for religious pilgrims to celebrate the Latin mass. The Franciscan friar Francesco Pipini lists a substantial number of places where he celebrated mass, around 1320;¹⁷ Antonio de’ Riboldi, another Franciscan friar, celebrated mass in the church of the Saint Sepulcher, on Calvary, in 1327, and in the Chapel of Mary Magdalene in 1330 (he made the voyage twice). He wrote:

Multum longe plus habui de consolatione spirituali secunda vice quam habuerim prima, et nullus intravit nobiscum ecclesiam Sepulcri *nisi soli Latini*, ita quod potui cantare alta voce in monte Calvariae et Sepulcro, nemine prohibente, ita quod benedicantur illi vii floreni, quos dedi eis¹⁸.

Once again, for the sake of clarity, we could divide the pilgrimage accounts into three distinct categories:

- 1) those who completely ignore the other faiths;
- 2) those who nominate the presence of other faiths, but limit themselves to associating them with a certain place;
- 3) those who describe theological concepts, liturgical and/or devotional practices, or the physical aspect and/or clothing of the faithfuls. Among those pilgrims who note the various denominations in the church of the Holy Sepulcher, however, there is a certain amount of confusion, which is made even greater by serious scribal errors: in 1419 an anonymous French, omitting the Latin, distinguished:

- 1) *Grecz*
- 2) *Ermins*
- 3) *Gogos*
- 4) *Abasins*
- 5) *Jacopites*
- 6) *Chrestiens de la saintisure*
- 7) *Melliqy*
- 8) *Suriens*
- 9) *Marrony*
- 10) *Nasturiny*
- 11) *Serfz*¹⁹

The list proposed by the spaniard Tafur in 1436-1438 is:

- 1) *Griegos*
- 2) *Armenios*
- 3) *Jacobitas*
- 4) *los de la India*
- 5) *los de la çintura*
- 6) *Zingaros*²⁰

The Englishman William Wey, in 1458, lists:

¹⁶ «Contiguo a questo tabernaculo [*sc.* la struttura architettonica esterna del Santo Sepolcro] si è facto una piccola capelleta in nela quale, quando se apre la chiexa, intranno dentro i Iacopiti»: SALETTI (2009, 80).

¹⁷ MANZONI (1896, 88-89).

¹⁸ GOLUBOVICH (1906-1927, 341).

¹⁹ LELIÈVRE MARQUIS DE LA GRANGE (1858, 54).

²⁰ BELLINI (1986, 54).

- 1) *Greci*
- 2) *Armeni*
- 3) *Gorgii*
- 4) *Pessini*
- 5) *Jacobite*
- 6) *Indii*
- 7) *Suriani*
- 8) *Maronite*
- 9) *Nestorii*
- 10) *Aridiani*
- 11) *Abbatii*²¹

I could go on like this at length. Moreover, sometimes Georgian monks are confused with Byzantine-Orthodox or Armenian ones²². It is not always easy, or even possible, to understand who the pilgrims are referring to. Indeed, most of the pilgrims' accounts are a poor starting point in identifying the various Eastern Christian denominations. Even distinguished scholars are not always able to positively identify the different religious faiths on the basis of the few insignificant details given by pilgrims. Consequently, there is a small number of reliable works on Christians of the Girdle; and the difference among 'Indian', 'Nubian', and 'Ethiopian' Christians has been studied in depth by Camille Rouxpetel²³.

Let us consider, for instance, the relatively rich account of Anselme Adorno, who described the places pertaining to all of the various 'sects':

Solempnibus diebus, quibus omnes christiani gratis intrant, vadit unaqueque secta ad locum proprium ubi sua divina officia celebrant, unaqueque ritu ac more suo. Quas mirabiles diversitates ibidem tunc vidimus.

Fuerunt enim *Greci*, quorum aliqui erant calogeri, aliqui non, habentes chorum ecclesie pro loco sibi appropriato qui in greco devotissime officia celebrarunt.

Item fuere et *Indiani*, qui alia Abassini vocantur, qui suum appropriatum locum habent in parte meridionali Sepulchri. Hii altaria sua gemmis et lapidibus preciosis ornatissima habuerunt cappisque, fere uti nostri presbiteri faciunt, ornatissimis induuntur.

Item fuere et *Jacobite* qui habent suum locum proprium retro ad sepulchrum sive monumentum Domini. Jacobite sunt christiani a sancto Jacobo conversi. Hii cantibus lingua materna propria et noliculis sive campanulis in rota parva appensis que manu movebatur Deum Jhesum Christum collaudabant.

Item fuere et *Armeni*, qui pro loco montem Calvarie habent. Hii pulchriorem ac devociorem locum ecclesie habent, unus ex hiis solum armenica lingua passionem totamque vitam Domini alta voce ex libro legebat, ceteris omnibus audientibus admodum diligenter quod plures ex hiis, viri et mulieres, ad amarum fletum alta voce cum gutture sonantem inducendatur. Ideo mihi visi sunt ceteris devotiores.

Item fuere et *Gorgiani*, qui suum habent locum sub monte Calvarie in capella in qua jacet nobilis Godefridus de Bilion. Quos omnes, post mediam noctem, peracto officio primo, comedentes ac simul bibentes caritative invenimus.

Item et *Syriani* qui habent suum locum in fine ecclesia in parte occidentali, non habentes loco muris seclusum, sed locum suum cortinis sive anabatriis distinctum ac liberum faciunt.

Item fuere et *Nestorini*, que inter ceteras minor est natio, qui habent locum suum in oppositum chori in parte septentrionali²⁴.

Adorno judges the Greeks on how they officiate their rites (*devotissime*), but he does not describe the liturgy. On 'Indians' he notes the richness of the altar and of the liturgical robes (though Enrico Cerulli writes that this description is highly unlikely to be creditable)²⁵. Finally, when discussing the Jacobites, he mentioned aspects of the liturgy, such as the language used (*lingua materna*) and their

²¹ *THE ITINERARIES* (1857, 77-78).

²² Among those who make this mistake are Roberto Sanseverino, Antonio da Crema, and Arnold von Harff.

²³ LEVI DELLA VIDA (1944, 484-487); ROUXPETEL (2012, 71-90); see also ROUXPETEL (2016) and EAD. (2018). On the history of Eastern Churches, the fundamental work is still BRINCKEN (1973).

²⁴ HEERS – DE GROER (1978, 268-270).

²⁵ CERULLI (1943, I, 261).

use of bells. He also saw and described a moment of Armenian liturgy – that is, a reading – and the language that they used. Adorno came upon the Georgians after they had already celebrated their mass, and so he did not write anything about. When discussing the Syrians and Nestorians, he only mentioned the places where they celebrated mass and nothing else. But we must ask ourselves why: perhaps he arrived too late in that part of the church and they had already finished mass? Or he was simply not interested? Or maybe on some days only certain denominations celebrated masses? I do not have enough information to answer these questions. What is certain, though, is that an anonymous French pilgrim wrote that the masses were celebrated contemporaneously: «and it is a marvelous thing, being in the aforementioned church of the Holy Sepulcher, to listen to each nation and type of Christians *at the same time* do their service»²⁶. A detail which is also reported by others with regard to nocturnal offices. It is not impossible, then, that the extended observation of one ceremony might preclude being present at another, due to nothing more than time constraints.

We must note, however, that the information that Adorno provides us about the different faiths is not consistent. The Milanese pilgrim Casola, in this respect, is different. We know that he wrote what he saw directly (or at least, as this annotation reveals, he tried to reproduce the succession of events; for example: «I have not said anything yet about the place of the Holy Sepulchre because up to this day I had not seen it»)²⁷. Only when he describes his third entrance – the final one – into the Holy Sepulcher we find information about the different rites.

At the side there is the ascent to the place of the Calvary, which is governed by a sect of Christians called Georgians [...]. At the side there is the chapel [...], and is administered by another sect of Christians called Armenians [...]. Then there is another chapel, [...]; it is in the hands of another sect of Christians called Abyssinians [...]. There are other places also around the body of the said Temple which are governed by various sects of Christians called, some Syrians, some Maronites, some Golbites (sic), and all have different services [...]. Behind [...] there is a sort of chapel served by a sect of Christians called Jacobites. They have a very strange way of chanting the offices. At night I stood a while to watch their ceremonies and chants, which rather provoked the company to laughter than anything else. The *calogeri*, as their priests are called, had little hammers in their hands, and as they chanted they beat with the said hammers on a piece of iron. I could not understand why they did so²⁸.

Advancing into the church, Casola lists various places as belonging to *Georgians, Armenians, Abyssinians, Syrians, Maronites, Golbites*. He then describes a Jacobite mass, which was the only one he describes at all. Perhaps was it the only one being celebrated at that moment? Or perhaps, if it is true that everyone held mass at the same time, this was the one that attracted him for some reason? Perhaps for Casola the others weren't as important as this one? Whatever the case, it is true that the silence of some pilgrims is meaningful: the anonymous Franciscan friar who visited the Holy Sepulcher in 1463 did not name a single liturgy, nor even the 'heretics' with whom his brothers had to share the church. He merely wrote that «singulis Christianorum sectis singula loca hinc et inde cohabitari in hac ecclesia a Saracenis concessum sit», claiming (without justification) that the Latin clergy held rights «superiori tempore»²⁹.

I would like to concentrate now on the *Jacobite*, the *Nestorian* and the Ethiopian Coptic (that is, the aforementioned *Indian, Ethiopian*, or – for someone – *Abyssinian*) clergy. To begin we should try to compare what some of the pilgrims wrote about the Jacobites. The richest description of this clergy comes from Nicolò da Poggibonsi, who brought their liturgy to life, as if it were a movie. He was probably able to be so detailed because, as he explains, he spent an entire day with a Jacobite

²⁶ «Et est une meraveilleuse chose, quant on est en ladicte eglise du Sainct Sepulchre, de ouyr une chacune nation et maniere de chrestiens, et *toutes a une heure*, faire leur service»: DANSETTE (1979, 368) (my emphasis).

²⁷ NEWETT (1907, 256).

²⁸ *Ivi* (275-276).

²⁹ KOHLER (1909-1911, 18).

community in Egypt and was warmly welcomed, even though it was impossible to communicate, as he did not understand their language and expressed himself «with gestures and hand movements»³⁰.

Don Messori limits himself to commenting on the strangeness of the liturgy, while the bishop Rochechouart notes that they celebrate mass with covered heads and bare feet³¹. The German Breydenbach is by far the most verbose.

Parvulos suos instar Sarracenorum circumcidunt. Plerique etiam eosdem ante circumcisionem ferreo calamo adurunt signantes eos in frontibus et cauterium imprimentes in modum crucis alii in ambabus genis, alii in tymporibus, putantes eos per huiusmodi adustionem materialem a peccato originali expiari [...]. Communiter portant cruces in brachiis calamo ferreo impressas [...]. Ipsi etiam nunquam sua confitentur peccata alicui homini, sed soli Deo in abscondito, hoc videlicet ritu: ponunt enim thus in igne iuxta se et orant, putantque cum fumo illo pariter peccata sua illa ascendere coram Deo et deleri. Isti etiam heretici Iacobite uno solummodo se digito signant in modum crucis, quos Greci et Suriani procedentes asserunt ideo facere quia tenent unam in Christo consistentem naturam. Ipsi etiam parvulos suos adhuc ad ubera pendentes sub utrasque specie communicant, in hoc Grecis et Suriani conformes³².

Keeping ourselves strictly to the liturgy, he wrote that they make the sign of the cross with just one finger, and that even the infants take part. An anonymous French pilgrim adds the parts of the body that they touch when making the sign of the cross³³.

The excerpt of Casola's account seen above focused as well on the strangeness, even ridiculousness of the Jacobite mass.

Proceeding with a systematic comparison between what we know of these rites and what the pilgrims wrote down, always keeping in mind the physical aspects of the experience like timetables and spaces, I am certain that we can truly learn a great deal.

Yet, we must be careful with the sources. Indeed, cases like Breydenbach's account show most clearly how multi-layered pilgrimage writings can be. As has been pointed out long ago, his text is a sort of collage of much older sources, which date back to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries or even earlier (the *Speculum Historie* by Vincent de Beauvais, the *Historia Orientalis* by Jacques de Vitry, Burchardus de Monte Sion, Isidore of Seville, etc...)³⁴. But many scholars, probably the majority, pay no attention to the intertextual relationships that form a constant in pilgrimage literature, and, like the light of dying stars, offer long-surpassed information as contemporary to the voyage under consideration. If Breydenbach copies indiscriminately, clearly showing what he borrowed from others, many other texts which have been edited but not studied in this regard may give rise to dating errors, mixing old information with the new that is the result of direct observation. One such example in Breydenbach is the detail about *Jacobites* making the sign of the

³⁰ BACCHI DELLA LEGA (1996, 148).

³¹ «They celebrate and say mass in their manner, so that sure is odd looking them; and when they sacrifice they wear strange clothes [Fano soi officii et dicono messa alo lor modo, che certo fa stranio a vederli; e tengono stranni abiti in dosso quando fanno li loro sacrificij]»: SALETTI (2009, 80). «Hi circumcidunt se, non confitentur, sed loco confessionis ponunt se retro altare, cum incenso fumante, et dicunt quod ascendunt peccata cum fumo. Velant capita celebrando, discalciatis pedibus»: COUDERC (1893, 256).

³² BREYDENBACH (1490, fol. j iiv).

³³ DANSETTE (1979, 366): «Ces Crestiens icy ne se confessent point a prestras mais seulement a Dieu. Et ony pres d'eulx du feu ou ilz mectent de l'encens, et disent que leurs pechez s'en vont pardonnez avec la fumees [...]. Ilz se baptizent avec fer chault. Et se font le signe de la croix au fronc, en l'estomac, et au braz».

³⁴ For reasons of space, I quote only DAVIES (1911). As Davies pointed out a century ago, Breydenbach composed a sort of *Summa* of the medieval knowledge. Below I offer a sample of how slavishly he copied: BREYDENBACH (1490, fol. j iiv): «... vocantur Iacobite sive Iacobini a quodam magistro suo dicto Iacobo, cuiusdam Alexandrini patriarche quondam discipulo [...]. Hi a multis iam retro habitis annis a Dioscoro quondam Costantinopolitano patriarcha fuerunt excommunicati et ab Ecclesia Grecorum [...] sequestrati. Hi maiorem partem Asie inhabitant quida permiscue iner Sarracenos, alii alias quasdam regiones seorsum ab infidelium consortio occupantes...». DONNADIEU (2008, 304-306): «Iacobitas appellant a quodam magistro suo dicto Iacobo, cuiusdam Alexandrini patriarche discipulo. Hi a multis iam temporibus a Costantinopolitano patriarcha Dioscoro excommunicati et ab Ecclesia Grecorum sequestrati, maiorem partem Asie et totius tractus orientalis inhabitabant. Quidam inter Saracenos, alii autem proprias absque infidelium consortio occuparunt regiones...».

cross with one finger, which comes up as early as Jacques de Vitry, while the detail about the body parts that they touch do not. Another example can be found in the *Libellus descriptionis Terre Sancte*, in which an anonymous Franciscan wrote that among the various peoples by whom «sancta Iherusalem populata est» were the *Puliani*, that is, the second and third generations of crusaders³⁵. The writer, beginning the book ‘anno Domini 1427’, does not even remotely concern himself with the problem of the historical inconsistency of what he writes, despite the fact that he is copying from Jacques de Vitry. However, he does have the foresight, so to speak, to omit other sections of the original that were evidently outdated, like a tribute to the Templars. On his turn the Bishop of Rochechouart, even though the fact that he is an attentive observer, directly copied a passage on the Georgians that comes from a source that can be dated to roughly the beginning of the Thirteenth century³⁶.

Among the various Eastern denominations, there is at least one faith which is observed by the pilgrims with greater attention: Ethiopian Coptics. The ‘eye-witness’ information is much more extensive than for the other rites, and the motive behind this seems to be curiosity (an aspect already underlined by Camille Rouxpetel).

Item, Indians too have a chapel; but they do not reside there [...] they enter when [the Church] is opened and they say their very strange Office. And their mass is very long, and strangely they sing. And all of them take part in this way: once that the priest who celebrate the mass took part, he takes what remains in the chalice, and another one takes the cup, and they turn around. And first starts with priests, and gives them from this bread; and the other with a spoon gives him some wine, and so keeps on giving to everybody, to children as well as to adults. Then he goes back to the altar, and finishes their mass³⁷.

Hi observant circumcisionem, celebrant in fermentato, conveniunt in multis cum Jacobitis, cantant divina tenentes baculos in manibus, circulum faciunt in modum choree et ululant, more luporum, quando dicunt: Christe eleyson, vel Alleluya, dicunt mille vicibus³⁸.

They say their mass in a strange way. On the altar they have a big basin and their chalice inside, and at the foot of the chalice the paten, and a leavened bread as a hardtack or a biscuit; in front of the priest is one holding a cross dressed like the priest without alb similar to a cope, and under [a dress] like a dalmatic and as amice a cloth scattered with crosses, and many times he incenses the altar and turn around after the consecration and take a part and those who helped him to say mass come next to the priest and dispense [the sacrament] and take it on

³⁵ LIBELLUS (1894-1895, 385): «Est populata Civitas Sancta hominibus qui Puliani nominantur, in deliciis enutriti, molles et effeminati, balneis plusquam preliis assueti, et immunditie et luxurie dediti; more mulierum mollibus induti, circumornati et compositi, ut similitudo templi, tam desides et ignaves, quam pusillanimes et timidi contra Christi inimicos se exhibuerunt». The anonymous clearly copied from DONNADIEU (2008, 290): «filii autem eorum qui Puliani nominantur, in deliciis enutriti, molles et effeminati, balneis plusquam preliis assueti, et immunditie et luxurie dediti; more mulierum mollibus induti, circumornati et compositi, ut similitudo templi, quam desides et ignavos, quam pusillanimes et timidos contra Christi inimicos se exhibuerunt».

³⁶ «Georgiani dicuntur qui sanctum Georgium solemnizant, vel melius a Georgio heretico, cujus sequuntur errorem, barbam et comam immensam nutrientes, gestant pilleos immensos. Isti, tam laici quam ecclesiastici, coronas deferunt, sed laici quadratas, ecclesiastici vero rotundas. Sacrificant in fermentato pane et fere in omnibus imitantur Grecos. Litteram tamen propriam habent. Tenent altare sub monte Calvarie et locum in quo fuit inventa crux»: COUDERC (1893, 255). «Alii sunt Georgiani, sanctum Georgium solenni pompa colentes, armis plurimum exerciti, barbam et comam in immensum nutrientes, gestantes unius cubiti pilleos. Isti tam laici quam clerici coronas habent ad instar clericorum, clerici rotundas, laici vero quadratas. Fermentatum sacrificant et fere in omnibus Grecos imitantur. Propriam habent litteram»: KEDAR (1998, 124-125). The text, named *Tractatus de locis et statu sancte terre ierosolimitane*, has been recently studied by KEDAR – TROVATO (2018).

³⁷ «Item, li Indiani ancho hanno una capella; ma quilli non stanno li [...] intranno quando s’apre e dicono lo loro offitio stranijsimo. Et la lor messa è molto longa, e straniamente cantano. E tuti se comunicano in questa forma: comunicato che s’è el prete che dice la messa, lui tolge lo resto che là è reservato in nel calice, e uno altro tolge la copa, e voltavisi. E prima inconminzia algi preti, e dàlgi di quel pane, e poi l’altro con uno chuxiliero li dae del vino; e cusi va dreto dandone ad ognuno di loro, cusi agli picolli chomme et iandio algi grandi. E poi si se ne ritorna al’altare, e fornisse la lor messa»: SALETTI (2009, 81-82).

³⁸ COUDERC (1893, 256).

the palm of their hand, and he who hold the cross comes and take the chalice and gives drink to the priest and to the others and after it they take widely water and they wash the chalice, the paten and the basin, and drink all.³⁹

They are very black and misshapen people, and during their consecrations they practice marvelous and various ceremonies; and they are three to say mass and very often they sing altogether very strangely and he who consecrates gives others the sacrament putting it in his hand and the others take it from his hand and the others [devotees] take it in their mouth without touching his hands⁴⁰.

And the Nestorians? From what I have seen, their presence in Jerusalem has not been studied very much at all. As they did not belong to a national church, nor to a well-defined ethnic group, they are rarely mentioned by pilgrims in the fifteenth century, while descriptions of their rites are nearly inexistent⁴¹. Curiosity, hostility, and indifference are not grounds on which we expect to shine light on our information. Still, these profoundly human sentiments may be the motivating factors that led the most observant pilgrims to conserve traces of what they saw in the Ethiopian rites: from the repetition of the *Alleluja*, to the uniqueness of their ways of singing, and the physical participation (dances, movements) that were characteristic of Ethiopian liturgy.

As I mentioned before in this panorama, in which I have listed the most general problems and distinctions to be considered, I was only able to touch on a very few of the many aspects this topic entails. But I must insist upon the importance of studying these testimonies and deriving as many stimuli as possible from them: on liturgical history, on the division of sanctuaries, on prejudice, on inter-textuality, on cross-confessional relations and the ways in which international politics influenced them in the middle ages, and continues to do so to this day.

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³⁹ «Dient leur messe en estrange magniere. Ilz ont ung grant bassin sur l'autel et leur calice dedens et au pié du calice la patene, et ung pain levé comme une galette ou ung gatellet; devant le prebtre est ung qui tient une croys, vestu comme le prebtre, sans aube comme une chappe et dessoubz comme ung dalmaticque et pour emit ont ung drappel tout semé de croys, et encense plusieurs foys l'autel et tourne autour après la consecration et prent une partie et ceulx qui ont aidé a dire la messe viennent a coste du prebtre et les administrent et le preignent sur le creux de sa main et celuy qui tenoit la † vient et prent le calice et donne a boire au prebtre et aux aultres et a luy et après preingnent de l'eaue largement et lavent le calice, pateinne et bassin et boivent tout»: TUCOO-CHALA – PINZUTI (1974, 143-144).

⁴⁰ «Sont gens fort noirs et difformez et font en leur consecration de merveilleuses et diverses ceremonies; et sont trois à dire la messe et bien souvent chantent tous ensemble moult estrangement et celuy qui consacre, baille du sacrement aux aultres en le mettant au meillieu de sa main et les aultres le prennent au meillieu da sa main et les aultres le prennent à la bouche sans toucher des mains»: SCHEFER (1882, 73).

⁴¹ I was able to find just few references about Nestorians, but only the French pilgrim Barbatre writes (very shortly) about their rite: «sont bas a dextre de ladie chapelle de Nostre Dame en ront du Sepulchre et font le service a leur mode fort estrange»: TUCOO-CHALA – PINZUTI (1974, 143).

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