

Manuscripts of the Holy Land

The term “Maps of Pilgrimage to the Holy Lands” denotes manuscripts that include the description of Jerusalem and other archaeological sites and monuments in Palestine. The term is related to the purpose of their existence, namely to guide Christians in their tour along the consecrated sites. Drawing the sites of veneration brought the author redemption of the soul, their reading offering elation to pilgrims. Numerous Greek manuscripts have been salvaged and archived in different libraries in Greece and abroad. The oldest of them are dated to the 16th century, following the Turkish conquest of Palestine. After the first half of the 18th c., the production of manuscripts dwindles due to the flourish of printed books. It is surmised that most manuscripts had been composed in Palestine, whereas very few of them bear their author’s signature, i.e.: Daniel, Simeon, Acacius, Athanasius and others. They are, in their majority, unauthored, their writers believed to have been calligraphers who also produced other manuscripts – all of them joined by solid love for the Holy Lands.

As for the content of the Maps of Pilgrimage, in spite of their format being of a small shape and numbering only a few leaves, they describe each monument in a thorough and complete manner, dedicating an introduction to their history before going on to describe the holy site of veneration. Their value remains great, as they constitute an endless source of information for the research and study of the history of the area of Palestine. Their reader becomes acquainted with the customs and morals of the region, the activities of the Hagiotaphite Brotherhood, and the life of the saints. Using simple and understandable language, the Pilgrim Maps are accessible to pilgrims of all educational levels, who eagerly and piously venerate those consecrated sites, thus contributing to an influx of money to the Patriarchate of

Jerusalem, intended for the restoration and preservation of the holy shrines.