

VISUAL CONSTRUCTS OF JERUSALEM



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CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS IN
LATE ANTIQUITY AND THE MIDDLE AGES

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VISUAL CONSTRUCTS OF JERUSALEM

Edited by

Bianca Kühnel, Galit Noga-Banai,
and Hanna Vorholt



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MARY IN JERUSALEM: AN IMAGINARY MAP

Ora Limor

The Open University of Israel

For Miri Rubin

The Franciscan friar Francesco Suriano, son of a mercantile marine family from Venice, spent his adolescence in the Venetian fleet. After traveling widely and acquiring several languages, including Greek and Arabic, he joined the Franciscan order in 1475, at the age of 25. From 1481 to 1484 he served as superior to the Franciscans in Beirut and, between 1493 and 1515, he twice held the office of Guardian of Mount Zion, overseeing the Franciscans in Jerusalem and assisting European pilgrims there.¹ Suriano had a sister, Sixta, who joined the community of Poor Clares in the convent of Santa Lucia in Foligno, and after first visiting the Holy Land he agreed to her request to write down his impressions for her spiritual edification and that of the other sisters in her community, knowing that they themselves could not travel there.² Suriano's treatise is written in

the Venetian dialect as a dialogue between himself and his sister. Sixta asks questions and Francesco, recently returned from the East, answers. The didactic spiritual purpose of the treatise is clear: Suriano offers his sister a 'spiritual pilgrimage, undertaken through meditative prayer alone'.³

The Jerusalem section of the treatise begins with a description of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Sixta first asks how the church was built and who is responsible for its sublime liturgy. The friar replies with a story: St Helena, mother of Emperor Constantine, guided by the Holy Ghost, went to Jerusalem in search of all the mysteries of the Passion. After finding the holy cross, the nails, the lance, and the crown of thorns, she could not bear to see the sites bereft of their due veneration and decided to dignify them with beautiful churches. To this end, she initiated the building of the seven most celebrated churches in Jerusalem: the Temple of Solomon; the birthplace of the Blessed Virgin, where her mother Anna dwelt; the site of the Madonna's presentation in the Temple; the place where her nativity was announced;

1 Bellarmino Bagatti, introduction to Suriano's English translation in *Fra Francesco Suriano, Treatise on the Holy Land*, trans. by Theophilus Bellorini and Eugene Hoade (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1949, repr. 1983) [hereafter *Treatise*], pp. 1–3. For the original text see *Il trattato di Terra Santa e dell'Oriente di frate Francesco Suriano, missionario e viaggiatore del secolo xv*, ed. by P. Girolamo Golubovich (Milan: Artigianelli, 1900) [hereafter Suriano, *Il trattato*]. On the different versions of the treatise see Golubovich's introduction.

2 See Leigh Ann Craig's enlightening discussion of the text in her *Wandering Women and Holy Matrons: Women as Pilgrims in the Later Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), pp. 243–57. Felix Fabri's German Holy Land description, composed in 1495, was written for the use of Dominican nuns. Nuns from around Swabia came in large numbers to the Dominican convent in Ulm to hear Fabri describe his travels 'so they could also make the journey [to Jerusalem] spiritually [...] without exposing themselves to danger and expense': Kathryn M. Rudy, 'A Guide to Mental Pilgrimage: Paris, Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal Ms. 212', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 63 (2000), 494–515 (pp. 514–15). For other guides of this sort, see Kathryn M. Rudy, 'Den aelct der heiliger stat Jherusalem ende des

berchs van Calvarien: Indulged Prayers for Mental Holy Land Pilgrimage in Manuscripts from the St. Agnes Convent in Maaseik', *Ons geestelijk erf*, 74 (2000), 211–54; and Kathryn M. Rudy, *Virtual Pilgrimages in the Convent: Imagining Jerusalem in the Late Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011); Nine Miedema, 'Following in the Footsteps of Christ: Pilgrimage and Passion Devotion', in *The Broken Body: Passion Devotion in Late-Medieval Culture*, ed. by Alasdair A. MacDonald, Bernhard Ridderbos, and R. M. Schlusemann (Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 1998), pp. 73–92; Kathryn Beebe, 'Mental Pilgrimage in Context: The Imaginary Pilgrims and Real Travels of Felix Fabri's "Die Sionpilger"', in *Essays in Medieval Studies: Proceedings of the Illinois Medieval Association*, 25 (2008), pp. 39–70; Mitzi Kirkland-Ives, 'Alternate Routes: Variation in Early Modern Stational Devotions', *Viator*, 40 (2009), 249–70.

3 Craig, *Wandering Women*, p. 240.

the birthplace of Jesus; the site of the Virgin's burial; and the Holy Sepulchre.⁴

Most striking in this tale is the fact that it describes Jerusalem not as the city of Jesus but as the city of the Virgin. Five of its seven most important sites are dedicated to her. In fact, Helena—or rather, her son Constantine—indeed initiated the construction of churches in the Holy Land, but none of them was dedicated to Mary. The association between Mary and Helena is a legend, lacking any historical foundation. Suriano's Jerusalem is a construct, a reflection of memories and beliefs that developed and took shape over hundreds of years. The evolution of this particular construct is the subject of this article. The Marian map, I shall argue, mirrors the process by which the Virgin acquired her prominent status in the Christian religious structure, following Maurice Halbwachs's famous assertion that 'Sacred places [...] commemorate not facts [...] but rather beliefs [...] which form the basis of many of the essential dogmas of Christianity'.⁵

To describe the evolution of the map of Mary and its gradual development throughout the centuries, I shall trace some Holy Land descriptions that seem to be indicative of this process chronologically, highlighting landmarks along this trail. My story pauses at the three main stations of Christian Jerusalem: late antiquity (the Byzantine period in Jerusalem), the crusaders' kingdom, and the fourteenth–fifteenth centuries (the Mamluk period).

Mary in the Late Antique Eastern Mediterranean

The Bordeaux Pilgrim, who visited the Holy Land in the year 333, a few years after Palestine became a Christian province, provides us with the earliest evidence of the shaping of the Christian sacred map. Mary is absent from his map; her name is not mentioned at all. Even in Bethlehem, Jesus is the sole protagonist, as though his mother had not been a prominent actor in the Nativity.

As the pilgrim did not visit the Galilee, it is impossible to know whether Mary was part of the traditions there, but the Jerusalem and Bethlehem sections enable us to conclude that at this formative stage, Mary was as yet out of sight. This situation changed only gradually. While Egeria, some fifty years after the Bordeaux Pilgrim, may have visited one or two holy places connected with Mary, Jerome and Paula, visiting at about the same time (386), knew of none. In his description of Paula's itinerary, Jerome relates that Mary took part in the Nativity and the Flight into Egypt, but he mentions no distinct site dedicated to her.⁷

The picture changes dramatically in the fifth and sixth centuries.⁸ In his description of the Holy Land, Theodosius (530) points to three places devoted to Mary: the Kathisma church on the road to Bethlehem (probably the first Marian church in Jerusalem, built over the site where, according to tradition, Mary rested before giving birth); her tomb in the valley of Jehoshaphat; and the site in Jerusalem where she was born, near the pool of Bethesda.⁹ But the best evidence

Travels, 3rd edn (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1999), pp. 22–34.

7 According to the evidence of Peter the Deacon, Egeria may have visited a cave in Nazareth where Mary lived and a village in Egypt where she stayed when she fled there with her baby son: *Itinerarium Egeriae*, ed. by A. Franceschini and R. Weber, *CCSL*, 175, pp. 98, 100; *Égérie: Journal de voyage*, ed. and trans. by Pierre Maraval, Sources Chrétiennes, 296 (Paris: Cerf, 1982), pp. 83, 94; Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels*, pp. 193, 204; Jerome, *Ep.* 108, in *Epistulae 71–120*, ed. by Isidore Hilberg, 2nd edn, Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum, 55 (Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1996), pp. 306–51.

8 Averil Cameron, 'The Cult of the Virgin in Late Antiquity: Religious Development and Myth-Making', in *The Church and Mary*, ed. by Robert N. Swanson, Studies in Church History, 39 (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2004), pp. 1–21; Stephen J. Shoemaker, 'Marian Liturgies and Devotion in Early Christianity', in *Mary: The Complete Resource*, ed. by Sarah Jane Boss (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 130–45.

9 Theodosius, *De situ Terrae Sanctae*, 8, 10, 28, ed. by P. Geyer, *CCSL*, 175, pp. 118–19, 123–24; The *Breviarium de Hierosolyma*, written about the same time as Theodosius's description, also mentions a basilica to Mary and her tomb (p. 112). On this early stage see Stephen J. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions of the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 78–141. On the Kathisma church see Rina Avner, 'The Kathisma Church on the Road from Jerusalem to Bethlehem', *Qadmoniot*, 130 (2005), 117–21 [Hebrew]; Rina Avner, 'The Kathisma: A Christian and Muslim Site', *Aram*, 19 (2007), 541–57. On Mary's tomb see Simon Claude Mimouni, *Dormition et Assomption de Marie: histoire des traditions anciennes*, Théologie Historique, 98 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1995), pp. 549–83; B. Bagatti, M. Piccirillo and A. Prodomo, *New Discoveries at the Tomb of Virgin*

4 Suriano, *Il trattato*, pp. 26–27; *Treatise*, pp. 43–44.

5 Maurice Halbwachs, *La Topographie légendaire des Évangiles en Terre Sainte: étude de mémoire collective* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1941), pp. 149–206 (p. 157). English trans. by Lewis A. Coser in Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 191–235 (pp. 25–27, 199).

6 *Itinerarium Burdigalense*, ed. by P. Geyer and O. Cuntz, in *Itineraria et alia geographica*, ed. by P. Geyer and others, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina [hereafter *CCSL*], 175 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1965), pp. 1–26; English trans. by John Wilkinson, *Egeria's*

of the change in Mary's sacred topography is provided by the anonymous pilgrim from Piacenza, known erroneously as 'Antoninus' (c. 570). In the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Piacenza Pilgrim saw an icon of the Blessed Mary, her girdle, 'and the band which she used to have on her head'.¹⁰ In addition to the Jerusalem churches mentioned in earlier accounts, he describes the 'New Church of St Mary' (the 'Nea'), built in her honour by Justinian.¹¹ This magnificent edifice, described in detail by Procopius, surpassed in size and glory all the other churches in Jerusalem, and it was said that Justinian wanted its glory to exceed that of Solomon's Temple.¹² The Galilean section of the Piacenza Pilgrim's description provides additional information on the growing cult of Mary and the miracles connected with her name. There the pilgrim saw her flagon and bread basket, the chair on which she sat when the angel came to her, her house (now a basilica), and her clothes, which are 'the cause of frequent miracles'.¹³ Mary left her mark not only on landscapes but also on people. Thus the astonished pilgrim writes:

The Hebrew women (*Hebraeas*) of that city are better-looking than any other Hebrew women in the whole country. They declare that this is Saint Mary's gift to them, for they also say that she was a relation of theirs. Though there is no love lost between Hebrews and Christians these women are full of kindness.¹⁴

This unique description may provide evidence for a regional cult of Mary shared by Christian and 'Hebrew' women.¹⁵ Mary's clothes, mentioned by the Piacenza

Pilgrim as the source of frequent miracles, enjoyed an impressive career in the Christian world, especially in Constantinople, 'the City of the Virgin' and the birthplace of her cult in late antiquity.¹⁶ As Mary's body was assumed into heaven, her admirers had to settle for material remains she left behind, first and foremost among these her robe. According to one tradition, the robe—which, since the fifth century, had been the most venerated relic of Constantinople—was found in Mary's tomb in Jerusalem and sent to Empress Pulcheria by Juvenal, bishop of Jerusalem. According to another, the robe had been stolen from an old Galilean Jewess by two brothers, pilgrims to the Holy Land in the days of Emperor Leo I (457–74).¹⁷ In both cases, the holiest relic of Constantinople created a strong bond between the Byzantine capital and the Holy Land.

Marian liturgy went hand in hand with her topography and was shaped at about the same time. As early

a Local Myth (A Chapter in the Religious Life of the Galilean Jew); *Zion*, 61 (1996), 281–317 [Hebrew]. On this section in the Piacenza Pilgrim's description see Ora Limor, 'Mary and the Jews: Three Witness Stories', *Alpayim: A Multidisciplinary Publication for Contemporary Thought and Literature*, 28 (2005), 129–51 [Hebrew]; Ora Limor, 'Mary and the Jews: Story, Controversy, and Testimony', *Historiein*, 6 (2006), 55–71; Andrew S. Jacobs, *Remains of the Jews: The Holy Land and Christian Empire in Late Antiquity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp. 124–31. Simon Claude Mimouni suggested that these *Hebraeas* belonged to a community of Jewish-Christians, Christians of Jewish origin, that still existed in the Galilee, a suggestion that is difficult to prove. See Simon Mimouni, 'Pour une définition nouvelle du judéo-christianisme ancien', *New Testament Studies*, 38 (1992), 171–82, and Ora Limor, 'Tales from the East: Jewish Episodes in Early Medieval Travel Narratives', forthcoming.

16 Averil Cameron, 'The Theotokos in Sixth-Century Constantinople', *Journal of Theological Studies*, 29 (1978), 79–108; Vasiliki Limberis, *Divine Heiress: The Virgin Mary and the Creation of Christian Constantinople* (London: Routledge, 1994); Miri Rubin, *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary* (London: Allen Lane, 2009), pp. 169–73.

17 On the Jerusalem tradition see Michel van Esbroeck, 'Le culte de la Vierge de Jérusalem à Constantinople aux 6^e–7^e siècles', *Revue des Études Byzantines*, 46 (1988), 181–90; repr. in Michel van Esbroeck, *Aux origines de la Dormition de la Vierge* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1995); Mimouni, *Dormition et Assomption de Marie*, pp. 632–44; Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions*, pp. 68–69. On the Galilean tradition see Antoine Wenger, *L'Assomption de la T. S. Vierge dans la tradition Byzantine du VI^e au X^e siècle: études et documents* (Paris: Institut français d'études byzantines, 1955), pp. 110–139, 293–311; Norman Baynes, 'The Finding of the Virgin's Robe', *Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves*, 9, *Mélanges Henry Grégoire* (1949), 87–95; repr. in *Byzantine Studies and Other Essays* (London: University of London, Athlone Press, 1955), pp. 240–47; Limor, 'Mary and the Jews'.

Mary in Gethsemane, trans. by L. Sciberras (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1975).

10 *Itinerarium Antonini Placentini*, 20, ed. by P. Geyer, *CCSL*, 175, p. 139; English trans. in John Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims Before the Crusades*, 2nd edn (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 2002), p. 140.

11 *Itinerarium Antonini Placentini*, 23.

12 Procopius, *Buildings*, 5,6, trans. by H. B. Dewing, Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann, 1940), pp. 343–49. Nahman Avigad, 'The Nea: Justinian's Church of St. Mary, Mother of God, Discovered in the Old City of Jerusalem', in *Ancient Churches Revealed*, ed. by Yoram Tsafrir (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1993), pp. 128–35; Yoram Tsafrir, 'Procopius and the Nea Church in Jerusalem', *Antiquité Tardive*, 8 (2000), 149–64.

13 *Itinerarium Antonini Placentini*, 4, 5, pp. 130–31; English trans. in Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims*, pp. 131–32.

14 *Itinerarium Antonini Placentini*, 5, p. 131; English trans. (with changes) in Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims*, p. 132.

15 On regional cults in the Galilee see Elchanan Reiner, 'From Joshua to Jesus: The Transformation of a Biblical Story into

as the fourth decade of the fifth century, the Armenian lectionary bears evidence of a feast commemorating Mary in the Kathisma church on 15 August,¹⁸ and other feasts followed: the Annunciation (25 March), Mary's Nativity (8 September), her Presentation in the Temple (21 November). The fifteenth of August emerged as the most important Marian feast.¹⁹ By the middle of the sixth century it had changed from a celebration of Mary's virginity and divine maternity to a commemoration of the end of her life—her Dormition and Assumption. The context for this transformation may well have been the building, around 450, of the church in the valley of Jehoshaphat commemorating her tomb.²⁰

In the following years, Mary's sacred map became even more detailed. Adomnán, the learned abbot of Iona in the late seventh century, based on Arculf's impressions (c. 670) added to the aforementioned churches of Jerusalem a square church of the Holy Virgin Mary adjacent to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. He also tells of a large cloth 'which it is said the Holy Mary wove', a tradition probably based on her apocryphal biography, in which she is described as taking part in weaving a new veil (*parochet*) for the Temple.²¹ According to Adomnán, 'in this cloth likenesses of the twelve apostles are interwoven, and the image of the Lord himself is depicted. One side of this cloth is red in colour, and the other part, on the opposite side, is green like green plants.'²² Adomnán's Mary is a witness as well as an artist, a unique characteristic unknown in other texts. Two generations after Adomnán, Willibald (724) describes the complete course of Mary's funeral procession: her Dormition on Mount Zion, the place where the Jews attempted to harm her body, and her burial place in the

valley of Jehoshaphat.²³ All these western pilgrims provide evidence of the formation of a holy topography of Mary alongside that of her son.

How can one explain the late appearance of the Marian cult and traditions, on one hand, and the incredible flourishing of this cult from the fifth century onward, on the other? The silence of early pilgrims on Marian beliefs fits the prevailing Pauline spirituality, which attached little importance to the biography of Jesus in which Mary played a prominent part. In the words of Vasiliki Limberis, 'If the spread of Christianity had been left only to Paul, Mary's name would never have been known.'²⁴ The nature of the literary sources for Mary's life may also provide an explanation. While most traditions relating to the biography of Jesus are based on the canonical New Testament, most of those related to Mary derive from apocryphal literature, which fills the gaps in the New Testament narrative by providing details of her childhood and her life after the death and resurrection of Jesus. At least during the early centuries, the status of these traditions was suspect. In his *Panarion*, Epiphanius presents aberrant beliefs about Mary's death as 'popular misconceptions that he thinks could lead to heretical devotion.'²⁵

The late appearance of Marian traditions on the sacred map thus reflects the late entrance of her theology into the core of Christian belief. Although her cult began to develop in the fourth century, or even earlier, along the pattern of the already existing saints' cults, it was only when the Council of Ephesus (431) recognized her elevated status in Christian theology as *Theotokos*, 'Mother of God' or, more accurately, 'God-bearer', that veneration of Mary was set in motion.²⁶ Her map and calendar began to take shape at about the same time, with sites related to her becoming significant components of the Christian topography of Jerusalem and other regions of the Holy Land.²⁷ Just as the holy places linked to Jesus

18 Athanase Renoux, *Le Codex arménien Jérusalem 121*, 2 vols, *Patrologia Orientalis* 35.1, 36.2 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1969–71), II (1971), pp. 354–57.

19 Mimouni, *Dormition and Assomption de Marie*, pp. 371–472; Shoemaker, 'Marian Liturgies', pp. 138–41. According to Shoemaker, Egeria's silence concerning any liturgy connected with Mary cannot be taken as decisive proof of its absence in the late fourth century, as Egeria describes only the major feasts.

20 Shoemaker, 'Marian Liturgies', p. 141.

21 *The Protoevangelium of James*, in *New Testament Apocrypha*, 1, ed. by Wilhelm Schneemelcher, English trans. ed. by R. McL. Wilson (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1991), p. 430. See Florentina Badalanova Geller, 'The Spinning Mary: Towards the Iconology of the Annunciation', *Cosmos*, 20 (2004), 211–60.

22 *Adamnan's De Locis Sanctis*, 1, Chaps 4, 10, 12, ed. and trans. by Denis Meehan, *Scriptores Latini Hiberniae*, 3 (Dublin: Institute for Advanced Studies, 1958), pp. 48–49, 56–59 (Chap. 10, p. 57).

23 *Vitae Willibaldi et Wynnebaldi auctore sanctimoniali Heidenheimensis*, ed. by Oswald Holder-Egger, *Monumenta Germaniae Historica Scriptores*, 15,1 (Hannover: Hahn, 1887), pp. 97–99; English trans. in Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims*, p. 243.

24 Limberis, *Divine Heiress*, p. 101. See also Hans Belting, *Likeness and Presence: A History of the Image Before the Era of Art*, trans. by Edmund Jephcott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), p. 33.

25 Limberis, *Divine Heiress*, p. 117.

26 See the summary by Richard Price, 'Theotokos: The Title and its Significance in Doctrine and Devotion', in *Mary: The Complete Resource*, ed. by Boss, pp. 56–63.

27 Averil Cameron writes: 'the cult of the Virgin [...] grew

were constructed through imperial activity in the fourth century, so were those of Mary in the fifth and especially the sixth centuries.²⁸

By the seventh century, the cult of the Virgin in the East 'had reached a pitch that could hardly be surpassed'.²⁹ One expression of this development was the shaping of a sacred geography of Mary, evolving alongside the sacred geography of Jesus. The churches and chapels built over sites connected with the Virgin fixed her image in the physical space, just as liturgy fixed it in the Christian calendar. Sacred time and sacred space immortalized official theological doctrine and gave expression to the religious fervour of the believers.

Mary in Medieval European Devotion

The great outburst of devotion to Mary in western Christendom in the eleventh century and even more so in the twelfth is well known and well documented.³⁰ While veneration of her existed in the Latin West since at least the sixth century, influenced by developments in the Byzantine empire, it is in the course of the eleventh and

naturally with and out of the self-definition of the Church and formulation of doctrine after the council of Nicaea, and in the context of intense debate about both virginity and Christology'; 'The Cult of the Virgin in Late Antiquity', p. 14. See also Shoemaker, 'Marian Liturgies', p. 142: 'The Council of Ephesus should thus be understood as just as much a product of Marian piety as it was its vehicle, and the roots of Marian devotion are to be found instead in beliefs and practices of fourth-century Christianity, where the cult of the Virgin first developed within the broader context of the emerging cult of the saints'.

28 Holy Land church construction dedicated to Mary was part of a much wider project, manifested especially in Constantinople. Three churches dedicated to the Virgin were built there by the Empress Pulcheria, and some time later Mary's robe, mentioned above, found its way to the church of the Virgin in Blachernae. The relic supported the legend of the empty tomb, in which it had been left behind. See Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, pp. 34–35. Mary's girdle was kept at the Chalkoprateia church in Constantinople.

29 Belting, *Likeness and Presence*, p. 36.

30 Hilda Graef terms the twelfth century 'the golden age of Mariology': Graef and Thomas A. Thompson, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, rev. edn (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2009), p. 165; Jaroslav Pelikan, *Mary Through the Centuries: Her Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996); Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (New York: Random House, 1976); Klaus Schreiner, *Maria: Jungfrau, Mutter, Herrscherin* (Munich: Hanser, 1994); Miri Rubin, *Mother of God*; Sandro Sticca, *The Planctus Mariae in the Dramatic Tradition of the Middle Ages*, trans. by Joseph R. Berrigan (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988).

twelfth centuries that Mary became an object of ardent veneration. Depictions of Mary as triumphant queen now became prominent. She was depicted as Mary the Church (*Maria Ecclesia*) or as Mary Queen of Heaven (*Maria Regina*), crowned, radiant and surrounded by angels, and commonly accepted as personifying the triumphant church.³¹ Her role as *mediatrix*—mediator of divine grace—justified her elevated position, and her maternal majesty was stressed by monastic authors, who described her as mother of all humans, *mater omnium*.³² Apart from this triumphant role, the scene at the cross, as described in John, became the foundation of Mary's cult as a mother, and her grief found its way into literature and art. Devotion to Mary now acquired an imitative nature, emphasizing the suffering of Christ and the compassionate grief of his mother.³³

According to Benedicta Ward,

Two factors contribute to the universal and unlocalized devotion to the Virgin Mary. The first of these was that in the twelfth century there was no need to establish her claim to sanctity by miracles. She was the first of saints, holding a pre-eminent place in the economy of salvation as the Mother of the Redeemer, from the earliest ages of the church [...]. Secondly, the miracles of the Virgin were not primarily localized in her relics. It was generally believed that the Virgin Mary had been assumed into heaven, leaving behind no more than fragments of her clothing. There was no body to be venerated and therefore no central shrine that housed it.³⁴

While in the early centuries the sacred landscape echoed views and beliefs originating mainly in Constantinople, western domination of the Holy Land in the twelfth century enabled its shaping (or reshaping) according to the expectations of European conquerors and pilgrims. To the local traditions that grew over time the Latin settlers added their own ideas and expectations, dressing Jerusalem's geography in western decoration and adding to it a western triumphalist flavour. In Miri Rubin's

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31 Eva De Visscher, 'Marian Devotion in the Latin West in the Later Middle Ages', in *Mary: The Complete Resource*, ed. by Boss, pp. 177–201 (p. 180); Rubin, *Mother of God*, pp. 121–57.

32 Rubin, *Mother of God*, p. 154.

33 See Rachel Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800–1200* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Graef, *Mary*, p. 207; Sticca, *Planctus Mariae*.

34 Benedicta Ward, *Miracles and the Medieval Mind: Theory, Record and Event 1000–1215* (Aldershot: Gower House, 1982), pp. 132–33.

words, ‘European Mary had something affective and new to offer Christians of the east.’³⁵ Thus, side by side with the growing cult of Mary in the West, the Virgin also acquired increasing importance in the Holy Land and her map became more elaborate and detailed.

Travel narratives again offer reliable testimony.³⁶ Every event of Mary’s life story was now marked on the map of Jerusalem, and Latin verses were inscribed on the walls of churches, relating her stories and explaining their significance. Thus, in her tomb in the valley of Jehoshaphat, a marble tablet was set on the wall with verses that read:

Hic Iosaphat vallis, hinc est ad sydera callis.
In Domino fulsa fuit hic Maria sepulta,
Hinc exaltata caelos petit inviolata,
Spes captivorum, via, lux et mater eorum.³⁷

Marian places were many and found throughout the city, near the Holy Sepulchre, on the Temple Mount, on Mount Zion, on the Mount of Olives, and also in the outskirts of the city, on the road to Bethlehem and in Ein Kerem. Enthusiastic pilgrims visited the impressive churches dedicated to Mary, among them St Mary the Great (the site of the meeting between Jesus and Mary when he was on his way to Golgotha), St Mary the Latin (where she fainted during the Crucifixion), St Anne (where Mary was born), Mary’s church on Mount Zion (where she lived after the Crucifixion and where she fell asleep), the place where the Jews tried to harm her body, and her tomb church in the valley of Jehoshaphat. They adored the school she frequented, her bed, the place of her presentation in the Temple, sites upon which she stood, rested, suckled her baby son, and tore her hair during the Passion. They venerated her icons. In many details, Mary’s biography imitated that of Jesus and followed the same pattern of heroic biography.³⁸ This

similarity is also evident in the Jerusalem landscape: the presentation of Mary in the Temple is one example, the empty tomb another. John of Würzburg, who visited Jerusalem around 1160, says explicitly ‘Honoratur quoque et veneratur eadem eius sepultura ratione cuiusdam consorcii ad similitudinem honorificentiae, que exhibetur sepulchro dilecti filii eius.’³⁹

Although her tomb was empty and her body absent, an imaginative setting of the Virgin’s life existed for those willing and able to undertake the hardships of pilgrimage. This setting enhanced the authenticity of Mary’s life story and created a tangible context for her iconography, her elaborated liturgy, and for her famous relics, now scattered throughout Christendom. Pilgrims wished to find in Jerusalem the religious iconography of the cathedrals, writes Halbwachs, part of the process whereby ‘in each period the collective Christian memory adapts its recollections [...] to the contemporary exigencies of Christianity, to its needs and aspirations.’⁴⁰ As for relics, alongside the robe there were now other famous objects—intimate and sentimental remains of Mary’s presence, among them her tunic (the important relic in the cathedral of Chartres, a source of encouragement in the defence of the city against the Normans); her hair, kept in the cathedral of Laon and other churches (according to tradition, this was the hair the Virgin tore from her head during the Crucifixion; it was collected and kept by John and carried to France by a crusader); her slipper; and her milk, preserved in many churches all over the Christian world.⁴¹ And in Walsingham, ‘the saving power of Palestine’ was brought to Norfolk by creating there in the eleventh century a replica of the house in Nazareth where the Annunciation occurred.⁴²

These relics were removed from the Holy Land, leaving it devoid of miracles and sacred objects. Yet there still remained the real places where the Virgin had lived and where all these familiar miracle-making objects orig-

35 Rubin, *Mother of God*, p. 173.

36 See the descriptions of John of Würzburg and Theodericus in *Peregrinationes tres: Saewulf, John of Würzburg, Theodericus*, ed. by R. B. C. Huygens, CCSL, 139 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1994); English trans. in John Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrimage 1099–1185* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1988).

37 John of Würzburg, *Peregrinationes tres*, p. 128; Theoderic (p. 169). English trans. by Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrimage 1099–1185*, pp. 270–71, 298: “Jehoshaphat” this valley’s called, | The path to heaven is here installed. | In God she trusted, Heaven’s Queen, | Here Mary would have buried been. | But hence she was raised up on high, | And sought, inviolate, the sky, | The Captive’s Hope, their Light to see, | Who can their Way, their Mother be’.

38 Alan Dundes, ‘The Hero Pattern and the Life of Jesus’, in *In*

Quest of the Hero, ed. by Otto Rank, Lord Raglan, and Alan Dundes (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 179–223.

39 John of Würzburg in *Peregrinationes tres*, p. 128; English trans. by Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrimage 1099–1185*, p. 271: ‘Thus this tomb of hers is honoured and revered as, so to speak, a spouse, and a place worthy of like honour to that which is given to the sepulchre of her dear son’.

40 Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. by Coser, p. 234.

41 Ward, *Miracles*, pp. 132–65; Rubin, *Mother of God*, pp. 182–88.

42 Colin Morris, ‘Introduction’, *Pilgrimage: The English Experience from Becket to Bunyan*, ed. by Colin Morris and Peter Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 9.

inated. Relics, legends, iconography, and liturgy created a bond between West and East. Pilgrims coming from Europe in the twelfth century could see the site of Mary's original house, not its replica; the cave of the milk in Bethlehem, the source of the milk relics; the place where she tore her hair during the Crucifixion; and the tomb in which her venerated garments were left behind. They could locate in space the events narrated in hagiography and celebrated in liturgy; time and place were combined.

'Marianization' of the Late Medieval Holy Land

The cult of the Virgin reached its peak in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Passion plays, devotional liturgies, meditations on the life of Jesus and his mother, and other expressions of piety became extremely popular. They all were forms of the emotional expression of agony in response to the extreme suffering of Jesus and the sorrow and pain of his mother.⁴³ Jerusalem pilgrimage in this period became part and parcel of this form of devotion.

The creativity of the Franciscans, who were appointed in the fourteenth century as custodians of the holy places, brought the process of 'Marianization' of Christian Jerusalem to its peak. Pilgrimage at that time was conducted as a religious drama, orchestrated and led by the Franciscan friars of Mount Zion, using the 'original' stage to their advantage. It was the Franciscans who made the greatest contribution to Marian piety in Europe, and they imported their deep devotion, as well as their power as cultural mediators, to the holy places.⁴⁴ The friar Francesco Suriano, with whom we opened our journey, is a witness to this process, as are such other pilgrims as the German priest John Poloner, who visited the Holy Land about 1421, or the Dominican friar Felix Fabri, who came in the 1480s. It emerges clearly from their descriptions that Mary's elaborate holy landscape was composed of two layers: her own life story and that of her son. In addition to the places connected with her own biography, she now 'invaded' every important location connected with Jesus.⁴⁵

Under Franciscan guidance, pilgrims followed the route that Christ was believed to have followed on his

way to Golgotha, a trail that Mary also followed after the Crucifixion, visiting the places sanctified by her son.⁴⁶ Among the many sites along the route, they saw where Mary stood when her son was brought from the house of Pilate. Upon seeing the site with their physical eyes, the pilgrims also saw in their mind's eyes the venerated event of the past, as expressed by John Poloner: 'When she saw Him spat upon and covered with blood, forgetting all her former consolations, she went distraught, fell down half dead, and so lay till she was lifted up and carried away by the other women.'⁴⁷ From the end of the thirteenth century, the deposition from the cross and the handing of Jesus's body to his sorrowful mother was also localized in a stone placed inside the entrance to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Leonardo Frescobaldi also mentions the presence in the Holy Sepulchre of 'the chapel, where Christ appeared to Our Lady',⁴⁸ and his co-traveller Giorgio Gucci lists three chapels there: 'the place where the mother took him in her arms and bitterly wept over him', the 'devout and beautiful chapel where Christ appeared to his mother', named 'the chapel of Our Lady', and the chapel where Mary and St John stood when Jesus was on the cross.⁴⁹ Mary was a witness to the Passion and the pilgrims imagined the exalted drama through her eyes, moved, as they were, to the depth of their souls. The sacred map thus reflected the nature of Christian devotion, which since the eleventh and twelfth centuries placed great emphasis on the life and suffering of Christ as a mortal, and especially on his Passion, as a basis for meditation and imitation. It expressed the pathos that was becoming such a distinctive component of devotion, art, and literature.⁵⁰

46 Albert Storme, *The Way of the Cross* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1976), p. 94.

47 Johannes Poloner, *Descriptio Terrae Sanctae*, in *Descriptiones Terrae Sanctae ex saeculo VIII, IX, XII, et XV*, ed. by Titus Tobler (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1874; repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1974), p. 230; English trans. by Aubrey Stewart, *John Poloner's Description of the Holy Land (circa 1421 A.D.)*, Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society, 6, 4 (London: Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society, 1894), p. 5. On the mind's eye see Madeline H. Caviness, 'Images of Divine Order and the Third Mode of Seeing', *Gesta*, 22 (1983), 99–120; repr. in Madeline H. Caviness, *Art in the Medieval West and its Audience* (Aldershot: Variorum, 2001).

48 Frescobaldi, Chap. 45, in *Visit to the Holy Places of Egypt, Sinai, Palestine, and Syria in 1384*, by Frescobaldi, Gucci, & Sigoli, trans. and ed. by Theophilus Bellorini and Eugene Hoade (Jerusalem: Franciscan Press, 1948), p. 77.

49 Gucci, chaps 96–97, *Visit to the Holy Places*, ed. by Bellorini and Hoade, pp. 131–33.

50 Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion*, pp. 195–203; Rubin,

43 Donna Spivey Ellington, *From Sacred Body to Angelic Soul: Understanding Mary in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001).

44 On the Friars and Mary see Rubin, *Mother of God*, pp. 197–216.

45 Rubin, *Mother of God*, pp. 177–82.

The late medieval map of Jerusalem, dotted with sites commemorating Mary's life, closely intertwined it with that of Jesus. Although she was not present during the trial in the House of Pilate, she had a site of her own very nearby—the school where she learned to read and write. The house where she was born was also close at hand, and down in the valley of Jehoshaphat, very near the place where Jesus was betrayed (she was not part of that scene, either), is her tomb, one of Jerusalem's most important and beloved churches. Forty-five steps farther on, ascending the Mount of Olives, the pilgrims came to the spot where Mary was assumed to heaven and left her girdle to Doubting Thomas. Higher up the hill is the place where Jesus wept over Jerusalem, and one hundred and ninety-five steps from there is the site on which the angel Gabriel brought Mary a palm branch and informed her that she would soon depart from this world. The Christological traditions of the Mount of Olives were thus joined by a set of Marian traditions, and the holy mountain acquired a Marian aura. These traditions were not fortuitous but matched the specific lore of the Mount's holiness as the location closest to heaven on earth, a place of gnostic knowledge where secrets and mysteries are revealed.⁵¹

The list of Marian sites on fifteenth-century maps is longer still, and reading pilgrims' narratives in sequence can sometimes offer a glimpse of the moment of a site's birth. In 1384, the Florentine pilgrims Frescobaldi and Gucci mention on the Mount of Olives the place where 'Our Lady very many times rested after the resurrection of Christ, when she made the most holy visits'.⁵² This was a new spot, not mentioned by earlier pilgrims such as Niccolò Poggibonsi, who had visited the Holy Land forty years earlier, in 1345. It was probably a resting place for fourteenth-century pilgrims, who, after climbing the Mount of Olives and visiting the many sites on it,

refreshed themselves there. Mary is introduced here as the first, archetypal pilgrim, who shows the way to those who follow in her footsteps. According to tradition, after Christ's Ascension Mary remained in Jerusalem and, as long as she lived, visited every spot that her son's presence had sanctified. In his *Evagatorium* Felix Fabri describes at length the long pilgrimage Mary made each day to all the holy places of Jerusalem, a pilgrimage now imitated by the pilgrims. She followed in her son's footsteps and they now were following in hers.⁵³

The growing number of sites connected with Mary is especially salient on Mount Zion: the house in which she dwelt after the Resurrection; the place where she met Mary Magdalen, who told her that her son had been resurrected from the dead; the stone upon which she sat and listened to his preaching on the morning of his Ascension; the place where she used to withdraw to pray; the place where St John said mass for her every morning for fourteen years; the spot from which she departed from the world (for her pillow she had a stone, which the angels brought from Mount Sinai). Nearby, too, is the place where the Jews tried to harm the Virgin's body when it was being borne by the apostles for burial.⁵⁴

The Franciscans' headquarters was situated on Mount Zion, and there they located as many traditions as possible, splitting them into short episodes and creating a network of holy sites within a limited space. By the fifteenth century, Mary dominates that Mount.⁵⁵ The way to Bethlehem is also sanctified by her. Pilgrims are shown the site where she rested and the place where she passed on her way back from Egypt. Near Bethlehem is a cave where she stayed for fear of Herod: 'In her fear she chanced to let fall some of her milk upon a stone in that place, which milk is there even to this day.'⁵⁶ West of

Mother of God, pp. 243–54, 313–15; Jonathan Sumption, *Pilgrimage: An Image of Mediaeval Religion* (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), pp. 92–94; Daniel R. Lesnick, *Preaching in Medieval Florence: The Social World of Franciscan and Dominican Spirituality* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989), pp. 134–71.

51 Ora Limor, 'The Place of the End of Days: Eschatological Geography in Jerusalem', in *The Real and Ideal Jerusalem in Jewish, Christian and Islamic Art: Studies in Honor of Bezalel Narkiss on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. by Bianca Kühnel, *Journal of Jewish Art*, 23/24 (Jerusalem: Center for Jewish Art, 1998), pp. 13–24; Ora Limor, 'Mary of the Mount of Olives', forthcoming.

52 Frescobaldi, Chap. 40, *Visit to the Holy Places*, ed. by Bellorini and Hoade, pp. 72–73; cf. Gucci, Chap. 93, *Visit to the Holy Places*, ed. by Bellorini and Hoade, p. 129.

53 On Mary as the ideal pilgrim see Felix Fabri, *Fratris Felicis Fabri Evagatorium in Terrae Sanctae, Arabiae et Egypti Peregrinationem*, ed. by Konrad Dieterich Hassler, 3 vols, Bibliothek des Literarischen Vereins in Stuttgart, 2 (4) (Stuttgart: Societatis Litterariae, 1843–49), 1, 401–08. See Thomas Rennan, 'Jerusalem in Late Medieval Itineraria', in *Pilgrims and Travelers to the Holy Land*, ed. by Bryan F. Le Beau and Menachem Mor (Omaha, NE: Creighton University Press, 1996), pp. 119–31 (p. 126).

54 Frescobaldi, Chaps 42, 43, 44, *Visit to the Holy Places*, ed. by Bellorini and Hoade, pp. 74–75; Gucci, Chap. 95, *Visit to the Holy Places*, ed. by Bellorini and Hoade, pp. 130–31.

55 The 'mental guide' described by Rudy also emphasizes sites in and around Mount Zion; see Rudy, 'A Guide to Mental Pilgrimage', p. 496.

56 *Ludolph von Suchem's Description of the Holy Land*, trans. by Aubrey Stewart, Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society, 12, pt. 3 (London: Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society, 1895), pp. 95–96.

Jerusalem was Ein Kerem, where Mary visited Elizabeth, uttered the Magnificat, and a spring burst out of the earth where she rested. Long gone were the days of the Bordeaux Pilgrim, Egeria, and Jerome. In the late Middle Ages, Jerusalem was the city of the Virgin; pilgrims looked for her and found her wherever they went.⁵⁷

Mary at the Holy Sepulchre

The uncontested climax of the pilgrims' experience was the night visit to the church of the Holy Sepulchre and the rituals performed there. Francesco Suriano's description is not the sole evidence for this experience, but it is the most compelling. It combines a tour of the place by night with an impressive liturgy that he suggests performing during the tour. It is an imaginary tour, to be read and meditated upon by Sixta and her sisters in their faraway Italian cloister, designed to help them penetrate, emotionally and spiritually, into the Passion of Christ and the compassion of the Virgin.⁵⁸

In the dark of night, within the thick walls of the church, poorly lit by candles, cut off from the world outside, the pilgrims went from one station to the next, taking part in an 'imaginative "remembrance" of the evangelical past.'⁵⁹ To enhance the experience, Suriano invites the Virgin Mary to be their guide in this remembrance. In a book written for women, it is indeed appropriate that Mary, as well as Mary Magdalen, be the guides on this imaginary voyage.⁶⁰ Suriano describes a process that can be defined as 'meta-memory', with the participants taking part in Mary's memories. She, who best remembers

the details of the drama, shares them with her devoted listeners so they can remember them with her.⁶¹ Like Beatrice, the all-knowing guide who can identify with the pilgrim's gaze without losing her sublime heavenly essence, Mary leads the pilgrims in the liminal universe of the Holy Sepulchre church, encapsulating within its walls death (Golgotha) and resurrection (the Anastasis). While every Christian was encouraged to imagine Christ's suffering as if he or she had witnessed the historical scene, it was Mary, the grief-stricken mother, who felt his pain most overwhelmingly. In the later Middle Ages, Mary's experience as the mother of sorrow, *mater dolorosa*, became parallel to Christ's passion and the central theme of European devotion.⁶² This view of her was disseminated especially by the Franciscans.⁶³

Suriano thus writes within the framework of a vast tradition. He introduces Mary as a spiritual guide who leads the believers in a devotional exercise, envisioning themselves as taking part alongside her in the drama of the Passion. While Suriano helps them travel in their imagination to Jerusalem, the Virgin helps them travel back in time, to the very day of the Crucifixion. In this way the nuns can take part in the sacred events as if they were actually present, part of the audience at the actual historical scene. They approach the Passion through Mary's eyes. She leads them from one station to the next, at each one explaining what she saw, what she said, and how she felt. Mary, the *mater dolorosa*, was, in Donna Spivey Ellington's words, 'a co-sufferer with Christ, her soul's compassion echoing the physical passion which he endures'.⁶⁴ While the pilgrims were unable to feel Christ's physical pain, they could feel Mary's motherly suffering as she witnessed his pain. Mary's role as tour leader encapsulates her role as a model believer and life-leader. During the Holy Sepulchre nighttime pilgrimage, the sisters weep and lament with the Virgin Mary and thus deepen their personal relationship with her, a relationship already established through liturgy and sermons. The liturgy during this nocturnal visit includes

57 I have counted thirty-two Marian traditions located in and around Jerusalem, but the number could be even higher.

58 Suriano, *Il trattato*, Chap. 21, pp. 34–63; *Treatise*, pp. 52–76. Suriano defines the liturgy as a procession (*devotissima processione*). Compare Kathryn Rudy's illuminating description of MS 212 of the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal in Paris, dating from the 1470s, where she shows how the manuscript functioned as a book for devotion, creating 'a mental guide for pilgrimage that is partially adapted from existing pilgrim's guides' (Rudy, 'A Guide to Mental Pilgrimage', pp. 496–97). Concerning mental pilgrimages, see also the words of the Carmelite John Pascha at the beginning of the sixteenth century: 'Courage then, brave spiritual pilgrim, do not grow weary on the sweet journey of the honourable Way of the Cross, which will lead you straight to the Celestial Jerusalem and to eternal life' (cited by Storme, *The Way of the Cross*, p. 59). See also Lesnick, *Preaching in Medieval Florence*, pp. 134–71.

59 Definition in Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion*, p. 197; see also Sticca, *Planctus Mariae*, p. 117.

60 Suriano, *Il Trattato*, pp. 36–37; *Treatise*, pp. 52–53.

61 I am grateful to Yael Zerubavel for her comment on meta-memory at the conference of the International Society of Cultural History, Oslo, October 2011.

62 Rubin, *Mother of God*, p. 117.

63 John V. Fleming, *An Introduction to the Franciscan Literature of the Middle Ages* (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1977). Fleming defines Franciscan writing as a style 'in which the conscious manipulation of vicarious emotional experience has become an important element' (p. 186). See also Sticca, *Planctus Mariae*.

64 Ellington, *From Sacred Body to Angelic Soul*, p. 44.

hymns and antiphons used in the divine office, several of them introduced by the Franciscans. They were already known to the sisters, which made the visit to the church and the liturgy held there familiar and intimate.

Holy Land pilgrimage in the late Middle Ages should be seen in the framework of the deep dedication to Mary and as one form of its many well-known expressions: texts such as the *Meditationes vitae Christi*,⁶⁵ liturgical drama, Passion sermons, hymns, contemplation on Mary's seven sorrows, and many forms of visual art, first and foremost the Pietà, which became a ubiquitous motif throughout Europe. All these forms of devotion inspired Holy Land pilgrimage and were inspired by it, as the pilgrims brought back their accounts of Jerusalem as revealed to them—or created—by their Franciscan leaders.⁶⁶ The nighttime-tour section of Suriano's text, written in the tradition of liturgical drama, should be considered part of this devotional literature on the Passion. Like other forms of Franciscan sermons and liturgy, Suriano's text is designed as a devotional aid to the reader and as a guide to an inner, spiritual pilgrimage, focused on episodes from the life of Jesus. However, Suriano's text differs from these by taking as his narrative framework a geographical pilgrimage in earthly, historical Jerusalem. In his text, place is added to sight, emotion, and imagination to lead the participants in a concrete interactive experience. Suriano uses his intimate familiarity with Jerusalem to help his audience travel in their minds and feel the agony as if they were there with him.

In the circuit of the Holy Sepulchre, Suriano's description includes eight lamentations of the Virgin. The lamentations reconstruct, step by step, the dramatic events of the Passion in the places where they occurred. Seen through her motherly eyes, the mental pilgrim shares her unbearable agony at the sight of her son's suffering while she remains helpless nearby. In this way, Suriano combines the external experience of pilgrimage (travelling, arriving, seeing, and performing at the sites) with the internal one (praying, meditating, feeling compassion, and identifying with the suffering Christ through the

eyes of his mother).⁶⁷ Sixta could not travel, and the spiritual journey offered by Suriano was a substitute, a spiritual experience, based on the assumption that a visit to the sites, even if only in the imagination, had the power to intensify her experience and deepen her agony.⁶⁸

Suriano's description stresses empathy and mimesis; it is an exercise in 'affective piety'.⁶⁹ This form of piety, it would seem, had a unique intensity in Jerusalem, in the very places where the tragic events took place. The lamentations of the Virgin were 'made in sorrow *in this place*'.⁷⁰ They include direct references to the specific places where the liturgy was performed, making the topography of the Holy Sepulchre church a major factor in the scene. As an experienced guide, Mary makes use of the place as a didactic catalyst:

My Son, meek lamb—she cries—*this is the place* where thou wert held prisoner [...] *This is the place* where my only-begotten Son, who created heaven and earth and healed the infirmed stood with his hands bound behind his back [...] Kiss ye all *these stones*—she tells the sisters—and let us go to where the garments of my Son were divided [...].⁷¹

Going down to Helena's chapel, where the True Cross was found, Mary commands the sisters: 'Kiss for devotion *this glorious place* in which so long lay that precious wood [...].'⁷² Coming to the place where she met Jesus, she bids the sisters again: 'Kiss *this place* and let us go to

67 Craig defines Suriano's treatise an 'oddly hybrid document'. In her view, 'Sixta was not really interested in travel, but rather in Scripture [...] Her interest [...] was spiritual and textual in its orientation' (Craig, *Wandering Women and Holy Matrons*, pp. 244–46). Yet, as Jerome knew well, places were considered helpful means to understand Scripture. See Ora Limor, 'Reading Sacred Space: Egeria, Paula, and the Christian Holy Land', in *De Sion exhibit lex et verbum domini de Hierusalem: Essays on Medieval Law, Liturgy, and Literature in Honour of Amnon Linder*, ed. by Yitzhak Hen (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), pp. 1–15.

68 Mary J. Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 42–44; Edward S. Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 189.

69 McNamer, 'The Origins of the *Meditationes vitae Christi*', pp. 938–45.

70 'Lamento che fece la vergene Maria in questo loco adoloramento'. Suriano, *Il trattato*, p. 42; *Treatise*, p. 57 (all italics mine).

71 '[...] questo è lo loco [...]'. Suriano, *Il trattato*, p. 48; *Treatise*, p. 63.

72 Suriano, *Il trattato*, p. 51; *Treatise*, p. 66.

65 Iohannis de Caulibus, *Meditationes vite Christi: olim S. Bonaventuro attributae*, ed. by M. Stallings-Taney, *Corpus Christianorum, Continuatio Medievalis*, 153 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997). See Sarah McNamer, 'The Origins of the *Meditationes vitae Christi*', *Speculum*, 84 (2009), 905–55.

66 Ellington, *From Sacred Body to Angelic Soul*, pp. 82–83, cites a sermon by Gabriel Barletta that is clearly influenced by accounts of Jerusalem. See also Rudy, 'A Guide to Mental Pilgrimage'; Kirkland-Ives, 'Alternate Routes'.



Figure 2.1. Assisi, San Francesco, lower church, *Deposition of Christ from the Cross*, by Pietro Lorenzetti, fresco, c. 1320 (photo retrieved from Wikimedia Commons. Image in the public domain).

Mount Calvary, *the place of my great unhappiness*.⁷³ The drama gathers momentum and the sites play a major role in the process. When they reach Mount Calvary, where the cross had stood, Mary falls senseless to the ground. Then Mary Magdalen takes a cross and puts it in the hole of the True Cross that had borne Christ. As the blessed Virgin comes to herself and recovers her strength, all, barefoot, prostrate themselves with arms outstretched, weeping and begging loudly for mercy.⁷⁴ Then Mary says to the pilgrims: ‘Have then compassion on me, broken-hearted, and weep with me in my distress. And that ye may the more fully understand my sorrow and anguish, let us descend *to the place of anointment*’.⁷⁵ And thus they descend, the mother holding her son’s head, Mary Magdalen his feet, and John his body, a scene familiar to believers from countless works of art (Fig. 2.1).

Iconography is thus projected onto the sacred space and becomes one with it. Then, having finished their prayer, the pilgrims led by Mary descend to the place of unction and from there to the Holy Sepulchre itself. Here Mary makes her last lamentation, beginning with the words:

O beloved disciples of my Son, *this is that glorious place*, in which we placed amid infinite tears your master and spouse, Daughters. *This is that blessed spot*, where having laid him I embraced him and kissed him all over [...]. And so, all on our knees, we adore the Sepulchre of the only-begotten Son.⁷⁶

Mary tells her audience how she kissed the wounds of Jesus when he was taken down from the cross: ‘I sat down on the ground and took him on my lap with great sighs [...] I looked now at one wound, now at another on

⁷³ Suriano, *Il trattato*, p. 54; *Treatise*, p. 68.

⁷⁴ Suriano, *Il trattato*, p. 55; *Treatise*, p. 69.

⁷⁵ Suriano, *Il trattato*, p. 60; *Treatise*, p. 73.

⁷⁶ Suriano, *Il trattato*, pp. 61–62; *Treatise*, p. 75.

his hands and would kiss the wound, likewise the wound at his side.⁷⁷

Suriano clearly opts for a detailed, morbid version of the Passion. His text is a clear example of what Rubin defined as the 'devotional style of extravagant emotional display of Mary's suffering',⁷⁸ and it uses the site and its special atmosphere to enhance the experience, knowing that this is why pilgrims go all the way to Jerusalem: to see more sharply, to understand more clearly, to feel more deeply. Once the night tour is over, Mary bids farewell to the pilgrims: 'And so, all on our knees we adore the sepulchre of my only-begotten son. And then return to your home to which I shall ever recommend you. I thank you for the tears shed for me and my son.'⁷⁹

Mary's Place

Perhaps more than other holy maps, Mary's map was flexible and, like her image itself, it absorbed feelings and ideas and was formed and changed accordingly. In late medieval Jerusalem, Mary is elevated to a position equal to that of her son, as can be seen from her detailed map and the rituals attached to it. Her map adapted itself both to the general basic outlines of Jerusalem's Christian map and to the Marian image that took root among believers—inhabitants of the Holy Land, conquerors, guides, and pilgrims—who brought with them new devotional ideas from far away. The prominent place Mary held in their structure of belief was projected onto the sacred landscape, and episodes in her life filled the space of Jerusalem. At the same time, she acquired an important foothold in sites originally belonging solely to Jesus. In a way, the pilgrim experienced the religious drama through Mary, who became a kind of prism through which sacred history was depicted and understood.

Jerusalem, one must admit, had little new to offer to pilgrims of the late Middle Ages. The narratives of Christian sacred history were well known to them, and European cathedrals, with their magnificent architecture and rich visual representations, were much more imposing than most of Jerusalem's churches. The difference is that Jerusalem is the landmark that says: 'Here is where it happened'. By the fifteenth century many sites stood in ruins, with only a few still preserving their ancient splendour, yet pilgrims do not express any disappointment at seeing them. Unlike modern tourists, magnificent churches were not the reason for their journeys, but rather the places themselves, and through them the sacred events.⁸⁰ In a way, the humble state of the sacred sites accorded well with the pilgrims' expectations, because this was the way they imagined the sacred history—the life story of the Saviour and his poor virgin mother. Moreover, the poor condition of the sacred places matched late medieval ideas of poverty and humility, so emphasized by the Friars and especially by the Franciscans. The combination of the image fixed in the mind and the actual geographical locations shaped the pilgrimage experience and compensated for all the hardships and dangers endured on the journey. Sacred geography is the result of an ongoing attempt to organize space as a testimony to memory and belief; it is a spatial representation of tradition. Providing the cult of Mary with a space containing real, tangible sites gave it validity and power. This was Jerusalem's contribution to the thriving cult of Mary.

77 Suriano, *Il trattato*, pp. 60–61; *Treatise*, p. 74.

78 Rubin, *Mother of God*, p. 247.

79 Suriano, *Il trattato*, p. 62; *Treatise*, p. 75.

80 See Bianca Kühnel's assertion regarding the early Christian period: 'The churches commemorating the holy places are only rarely and briefly mentioned by pilgrims and are usually ignored by representational arts': Bianca Kühnel, 'The Holy Land as a Factor in Christian Art', in *Christians and Christianity in the Holy Land: From the Origins to the Latin Kingdoms*, ed. by Ora Limor and Guy G. Stroumsa (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), pp. 473–74.