

# Pilgrims on their Way in the Holy Land: Roads and Routes According to Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Travel Accounts

Landscapes are influenced by several factors; continuous development and change are among their essential characteristics. Geomorphological and climatic factors such as coastal changes, fluctuating groundwater levels or salinization form the terrain, as do human interventions<sup>1</sup>. Towns and villages give structure to a natural space. Their importance and local influence differ due to their individual size and their administrative and economic function; central market towns and trading centers are located next to hamlets and rural production sites<sup>2</sup>. Keeping the factor »time« in mind, one has to consider the different phases of origin, development, climax, decline and eventually, even the disappearance of a settlement. The importance of roads might change due to the development or decline of cities and harbor places in their vicinity<sup>3</sup>. These aspects are important for a correct reconstruction of a former landscape and the living conditions of its inhabitants<sup>4</sup>. For a better understanding of the central concepts of landscape and space, Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991) developed a famous model consisting of *perceived space*, *conceived space*, and *lived social space*<sup>5</sup>. I will talk about this later.

Space can be divided into the categories *open* and *closed*, *public* and *private*, *secular* and *holy*. The origin of holy space, the emergence of a holy place is always connected with an appearance of divinity in a landscape. According to a common human idea, the place of revelation changes its character after the theophany and becomes holy in itself. It transforms into a sacred center, which allows its visitors to get into personal contact with divinity. Theological thinking connects this event mainly with mountains, caves and tombs or sepulchers<sup>6</sup>. If various theological, economic and political conditions are met, the holy place can develop into a center of pilgrimage. I have dealt with this subject elsewhere<sup>7</sup>; in this context, I

just want to emphasize the importance of a pilgrimage center's connectivity with market centers and central places. A working connection with a regional and trans-regional communication system is essential for any pilgrimage center. An efficient road gives the travellers easy access; it guarantees the continuous supply of the place and its inhabitants with food, commodities and building materials for a permanent development<sup>8</sup>. Roads give structure and, in a sense, unity to a landscape (fig. 1), they are important for developing natural space. Their arrangement determines both the individual stages and the entire itinerary of pilgrimage. Their way of construction is responsible for the subdivision into main roads and side routes or tracks. However, the *way of construction* refers not only to the structure of the road and to the concrete building material the artisans used. It also takes into account the existence of bridges that facilitate the crossing of rivers and valleys and, most importantly, a sufficient number of inns and hospices, and of water points and supply stations for both human beings and animals<sup>9</sup>.

In the Holy Land, the *Terra Sancta*, which according to common language use refers to landscapes in Western Syria and in Northern Egypt, as well as Israel/Palestine and the Sinai Peninsula<sup>10</sup>, a large number of sources survive that belong to different categories. Sections of ancient roads, different in length, as well as bridges and milestones are archaeologically accessible. Together with the geographical conditions, they inform people about the *perceived space*<sup>11</sup>. Numerous itineraries, in turn, provide material for considering the *conceived space*. Some examples are the *Antonine Itinerary* from the third century, the *Itinerarium Burdigalense* or *Bordeaux Itinerary* from 333, Egeria's *Itinerary* from 384/385 or the *Peutinger Map*, composed in its last ancient version around 435 (fig. 2-3)<sup>12</sup>. Furthermore, one can use the evidence by later

1 Geyer, Factors 31-35; Külzer, Reconstructing; Teelis, Fluctuations 167-207.

2 Koder, Geography 24-27; Koder, Land use 159-183.

3 Avramea, Communications 58-77; Külzer, Betrachtungen 187-194.

4 Külzer, Möglichkeiten 173-184; Külzer, Reconstructing.

5 Lefebvre, Production 38-41. 46. 220. 316. 361-362. 371-372 etc.

6 Eliade, Das Heilige 27-29; Eliade, Religionen 21-38. 423-428; Külzer, Peregrinatio 67-76; Külzer, Pilgerwege 177-179; Ladstätter/Sporn, Natur; Maraval, Lieux saints 137-151; Olshausen/Sauer, Landschaft.

7 Külzer, Handelsgüter 185-187; Külzer, Pilger 54; Külzer, Pilgerzentren 163; Külzer, Pilgrimage 151-152.

8 Külzer, Handelsgüter 185-196; Koder, Mönchtum 22-24; Maraval, Lieux saints 163-167; Reekmans, Siedlungsbildung 325-355.

9 For example, see Belke, Communications 295-308; Dimitroukas, Reisen I 308-411; Haldon, Issues; Kislinger, Reisen 341-387; McCormick, Origins 64-82; Miller, Itineraria; Schneider, Altstraßenforschung 24-45; Wilkinson, Pilgrims 20-32.

10 Halbwachs, Topographie; Wilken, Land called Holy; Maraval, Lieux saints 9-12. 23-60.

11 Lefebvre, Production esp. 40-42; Veikou, Reconstruction.

12 Sources: Itinerarium Antonini; Itinerarium Burdigalense; Egeria; Tabula Peutingeriana. For background information see French, Itineraria; Miller, Itineraria XIII-LXVII; Weber, Datierungen 229. 250-256.



Fig. 1 Judean Desert, near modern Alon. – (Photo A. Külzer, December 2017).

authors, by ambassadors, hagiographers, historians, pilgrims and others. However, the interpretation of this material, our key to the *lived social space*, the reality of former societies, suffers from incomplete information<sup>13</sup>: the archaeological remains, the road sections, bridges or buildings, are in ruins. Many milestones survive only in fragments and without their geographical context; literary sources usually mention toponyms and place-names, but further details concerning traffic routing or structural road conditions, or space and landscapes in general, are unusual and rare.

The sources refer mostly to so-called *fixed-points*, to individual, precisely determinable points in a landscape with an island-like character. The course of the roads in the intervening *transport zones*, however, remains uncertain, the greater part of the historical communication system is missing. It is determinable to a certain degree by analyzing the geographical and political situation in former times. Computer programs

like the *Digital Elevation Model* determine a *least-cost path*, an existing connection that theoretically allowed people to travel easily from one *fixed point* to another<sup>14</sup>. However, historical reality may differ from the model; therefore, we have to examine the concrete political and geographical situation in that area – was the easiest road available, were there springs and fountains, what about the presence of bandits and enemies? The late antique and medieval pilgrim routes to Mount Sinai testify to this point: coming from both Egypt and Judaea, the difficult structure of the terrain and the distribution of the existing waterholes forced travellers to deviate notably from the spatial racing line<sup>15</sup>.

Numerous academic studies are dedicated to the historical road network in the *Terra Sancta*. Manuals and handbooks, along with a huge number of articles and essays, refer to single, sometimes very small road sections. Among these studies, the two volumes on *Roman Roads in Judaea* should

13 See Veikou, Reconstruction. Furthermore, Külzer, Möglichkeiten 173-174; Popović, Geographie 25-26.

14 Gaffney/Gaffney, Routes 79-87; Külzer, Betrachtungen 189-190; Popović, Geographie 24-28.

15 See, for example, Pelagios, Digital Map (19.07.2018); Talbert, Atlas, Maps 70-74. 76; Tsafir/Di Segni/Green, TIR Iudaea 21-22 and Map »Iudaea – Palaestina: Eretz Israel and Sinai during the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine periods«.



Fig. 2 Peutingir Map VIII – IX Terra Sancta. – (From <https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/50/TabulaPeutingiriana.jpg> [30.11.2018]).

be mentioned first and foremost; the first volume was published by Benjamin Isaac and Israel Roll in 1982, the second by both them and Moshe Fischer more than a decade later<sup>16</sup>. Israel Roll published an article on »The Roman Road System in Judaea« as early as 1983, and three years later another one on »Roman Roads in Western Samaria«, together with Eitan Ayalon<sup>17</sup>. Michael Avi-Yonah did research on milestones and inscriptions from the 1930s. He published numerous articles, books and maps, including his »Map of Roman Palestine« in scale 1: 250,000 in 1940<sup>18</sup>. Albrecht Alt wrote an essay entitled »Stationen der römischen Hauptstraße von Ägypten nach Syrien« in 1954<sup>19</sup>. The roads from Jerusalem to Jericho were studied by Robert Beauvery in 1957 and again by John Wilkinson in 1975<sup>20</sup>. The detailed article »Die römischen Meilensteine der Provinzen Syria, Arabia und Palästina«, published by Peter Thomsen as early as 1917, is a scientific milestone in itself<sup>21</sup>. This list, which is by no means exhaustive, should suffice to give a first impression of the extensive scholarship on the topic.

The communication system in the ancient Middle East has a long tradition; the so-called *Way of the Philistines* or *Via Maris* connecting Syria with Egypt dates back to the early Bronze Age. Some routes in the ancient kingdoms of Judah, Moab or Edom belong to the second or first millennium BC, and sections of different Iron Age roads are documented in

Judaea and Samaria<sup>22</sup>. However, scientific statements are often difficult and ambiguous, because the sources are incomplete. Under Roman rule, there was a fundamental expansion of the road network, mainly for administrative and military reasons<sup>23</sup>. Depending on the terrain, the condition of the roads differs; uniform constructions of identical proportions all over the Levant did not exist. Pavement covers many, but not all roads; sometimes only gravel stones were spilled onto the subsoil<sup>24</sup>. Milestones were an important element for Roman roads; they served not only as guides and distance indicators, but also as visible signs of Roman power and domination.

According to one milestone, the section of the Levantine coastal road between Antiocheia and Ptolemais/Acre was reconstructed in the time of the Emperor Nero (54-68); this seems to be the oldest activity of the Romans<sup>25</sup>. Its connection with the First Jewish War 66-73 is obvious; ancient road construction was often connected with rule and dominance, with subjection of foreign space. The coastal road extended to the south, and finally reached the Nile delta. In the time of Emperor Caracalla (211-217), even Alexandria was connected to that road<sup>26</sup>. It seems possible that the milestones refer only to measures of renovation and repair, as Michael Avi-Yonah mentioned some decades ago<sup>27</sup>; the whole road was probably constructed in the first century; it linked the

16 Isaac/Roll, Roman Roads I; Fischer/Isaac/Roll, Roman Roads II.  
 17 Roll, Judaea; Roll/Ayalon, Samaria.  
 18 Avi-Yonah, Map of Palestine. Also important in our context Avi-Yonah, Development; Avi-Yonah, Palaestina 436-443.  
 19 Alt, Stationen 154-166.  
 20 Beauvery, Route 72-101; Wilkinson, Way 10-24.  
 21 Thomsen, Meilensteine 1-103.  
 22 Dorsey, Roads; Dorsey, Shechem 57-69; Har-El, Israelite Roads 18-24; Isaac/Roll, Roman Roads I 3-7.

23 Avi-Yonah, Development; Har-El, Jerusalem & Judea 14; Isaac/Roll, Roman Roads I 7-14.  
 24 Roll, Judaea 148-153.  
 25 Thomsen, Meilensteine 15.  
 26 Alt, Stationen 154-156 etc.; Avi-Yonah, Palaestina 439-440; Thomsen, Meilensteine 15.  
 27 Avi-Yonah, Development 54-55.

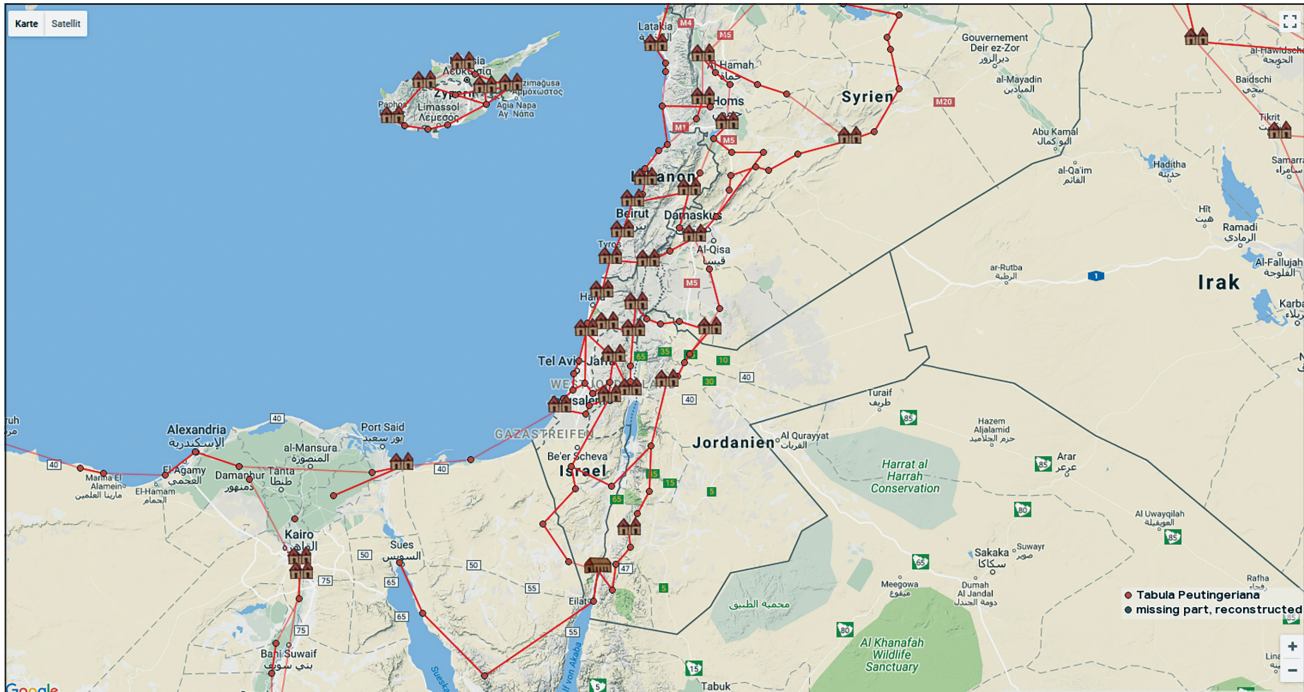


Fig. 3 The Terra Sancta on the Peutinger Map. – (From <https://omnesviae.org/it/> [06.08.2018]).

important Roman military bases in Egypt and Syria. The road from Megiddo/Legio to Scythopolis, in former times a section of the *Via Maris*, was rebuilt in 69; the subsequent road section between Scythopolis, Pella and Gerasa was repaired in the time of Trajan (98-117) and therefore must have existed before this period<sup>28</sup>. In the time of the Emperor Hadrian (117-138), the communication network was expanded extensively, according to the milestone evidence<sup>29</sup>. This was mainly occasioned by measures against the revolt of Bar-Kokhba (132-135). Further important road construction phases belong to the time of Emperor Marcus Aurelius (161-180) and to the Severan dynasty (193-235)<sup>30</sup>. The main interest of the Romans was an ongoing connection of administrative centers and market towns, including important harbors. One road, for example, started in Jaffa/Ioppē on the Mediterranean Sea, and led to Lydda/Diospolis. Here it split up into two main branches that led to Jerusalem, the northern one via Caphar Ruta and Beit Horon, the southern one via Emmaus/Nicopolis<sup>31</sup>. In the later middle ages, this road was one of the most important in all of Judaea, a major axis of pilgrimage. In general, we know about eight routes leading from Jaffa to Jerusalem; their distance is between 60 and 90 km<sup>32</sup>.

Scholars debate whether Jerusalem, in the first centuries still known as Aelia Capitolina, was the center of the Roman traffic net from its early beginning or not: in later times, the

city certainly held this function; in the time of Hadrian it was one of the legionary headquarters (besides Legio)<sup>33</sup>. In the third century, the network of major roads extended more than 1,500 km only in Judaea<sup>34</sup>. In the following centuries, extensions were made on a smaller scale. However, conservation and maintenance work continued; there is similar evidence also for the early Byzantine period<sup>35</sup>.

According to literary sources, the roads were extensively used in late antiquity and during the middle ages; pilgrims were among the travellers<sup>36</sup>. Thanks to the localizations Eusebius of Caesarea worked out in his *Onomastikon* before 324, numerous places known from the Old or New Testament awaited them<sup>37</sup>. The monasteries near the river Jordan and the Dead Sea formed further destinations; most of these places were connected with the road system, also for matters of supply. In some cases, however, the access paths were poor and small or generally in bad condition.

In the early days of Arabic rule, the Roman road network continued to exist<sup>38</sup>; actually, we know about the restoration of road sections thanks to milestones written in Arabic. It was only in the middle of the eighth century that decline became obvious; the new ruling dynasty of the Abbasids was not interested in that area anymore<sup>39</sup>. After centuries of decline, a new period of conservation and re-establishment of different communication roads started in the high mid-

28 Avi-Yonah, *Development* 55; Thomsen, *Meilensteine* 13-14.

29 Avi-Yonah, *Palaestina* 436. 439; Isaac, *Milestones* 47-49.

30 Roll, *Judaea* 144; Tsafirir/Di Segni/Green, *TIR Judaea* 21.

31 Fischer/Isaac/Roll, *Roman Roads II*; Avi-Yonah, *Palaestina* 440.

32 Har-El, *Jerusalem & Judea* 14.

33 Isaac, *Bandits* 187.

34 Tsafirir/Di Segni/Green, *TIR Judaea* 21.

35 Har-El, *Jerusalem & Judea* 14.

36 Roll, *Judaea* 147; Külzer, *Pilgrimage* 154-155.

37 Eusebios, *Onomastikon* 58, 19-20; 74, 17-18; Kislinger, *Reisen* 344; Klein, *Entwicklung* 145-181; Külzer, *Pilger* 54; Maraval, *Lieux saints* 251-310.

38 Isaac/Roll, *Roman Roads I* 14-16; Roll, *Judaea* 147.

39 Roll, *Judaea* 147.

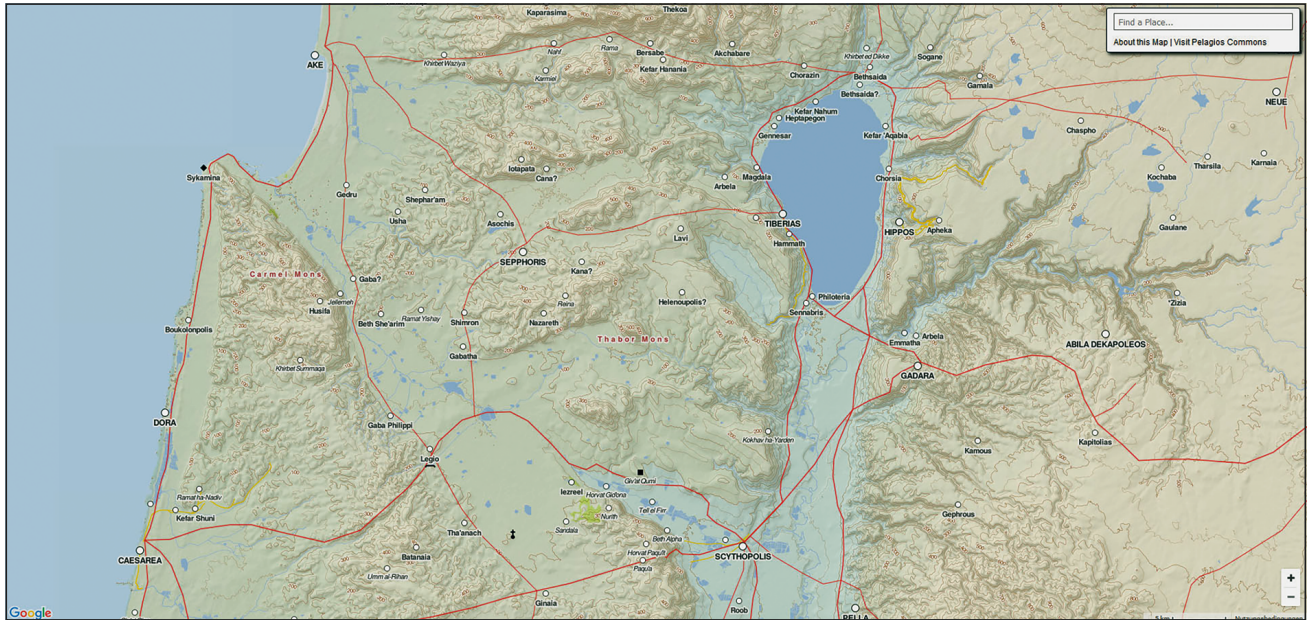


Fig. 4 Galilee, according to Pelagios, Digital Map (19.07.2018).

dle ages. Some roads continued to be preserved up to the Ottoman period.

### Pilgrims on the Road: Following the Traces of John Phokas and Daniel of Ephesus in the Terra Sancta

Now it is time to look at the itineraries of two medieval Greek pilgrims who travelled on different routes to the holy places in Judaea. The routes they chose brought them into contact with various centers of worship. The texts they wrote render representative movement data for Byzantine and post-Byzantine pilgrims. First, I want to mention John Phokas. He was born in Crete and served as a soldier in the army of Emperor Manuel I (1153-1180). In his later years, he became a monk on the island of Patmos. Most probably, this was the starting point of his journey, which took place in the year 1177. Phokas's description is transmitted in only one manuscript, today in Rome at the Bibliotheca Vallicelliana<sup>40</sup>.

After a short preface, Phokas begins his account in Antiocheia; most likely, he travelled from Patmos by ship and landed at the important harbor Portus Sancti Symeonis, located near the mouth of the river Orontēs. Phokas travelled southwards, using the coastal road, which was rebuilt in the time of Nero and already documented in the *Antonine*

*Itinerary* and on the *Peutinger Map*<sup>41</sup>; inter alia, he passed Laodikeia and Tripolis. The journey led southwards to Ptolemais/Acre. He paid particular attention to the important harbor sites along the route. He highlighted the facilities in Beirut, Sidon and Tyros<sup>42</sup>. So many pilgrims visited the port of Acre that various diseases and epidemics spread; the air had a bad smell in general<sup>43</sup>.

Maybe this was the reason why John Phokas left the coastal road in Acre and moved via another Roman road to the interior of Galilee, first to Sepphoris/Diokaisareia, and later to the nearby pilgrimage centers in Cana and Nazareth (fig. 4)<sup>44</sup>. He moved eastwards to Mount Tabor, where he mentions biblical events, but also the local monasteries and hermitages. After a reference to the Sea of Tiberias and the upper Jordan, Phokas turned to the south to visit Nain (Luke 7,11-17) and En-Dor, mentioned in Psalm 83,11. He then travelled on a road that is not clearly determinable but that possibly led via the Jewish village of Belemoth/Balamōn, the place of death of the prophet Hosea, to Sebastē, the seat of King Herod in Samaria<sup>45</sup>. Having recovered the connection to the trans-national road network there, John Phokas moved southeast to Neapolis in the north of Mount Gerizim. The road southwards to Jerusalem, which he used afterwards, was rebuilt and equipped with milestones by the Emperors Nerva (96-98) and Trajan (98-117). This was one of the oldest Roman roads in the whole area. According to the pilgrim, it

40 Text John Phokas; English translation Wilkinson, Pilgrimage 315-336; German translation Külzer, Peregrinatio 287-305; for background information see Külzer, Orientreise 203-208; for a different approach, see Messis, Litterature 146-166.

41 Itinerarium Antonini 21,147-152; Tabula Peutingeriana IX; Miller, Itineraria 801-812; Tsafir/Di Segni/Green, TIR Iudaea Map »Iudaea – Palaestina: Eretz Israel and Sinai«.

42 Külzer, Orientreise 204; Külzer, Peregrinatio 144. 259-260. 274-275.

43 John Phokas 6, chapter 9; Külzer, Orientreise 207; Külzer, Pilgerwege 186; Tsafir/Di Segni/Green, TIR Iudaea 204-205; Wilkinson, Pilgrims 151. 168. 171. 178.

44 Avi-Yonah, Palaestina 440; Tsafir/Di Segni/Green, TIR Iudaea Map »Iudaea – Palaestina: Eretz Israel and Sinai«.

45 Tsafir/Di Segni/Green, TIR Iudaea 78. 220-221; Maraval, Lieux saints 290.

was completely paved with stones; there were numerous trees and vineyards on both sides, despite the drought<sup>46</sup>. Therefore, its condition was immaculate in the twelfth century, at least in the perception of the traveller.

After a detailed description of Jerusalem with its pilgrimage centers known from the Old and New Testament, with its monasteries and places of worship, the text continues with the monastery of Hagios Sabbas, located in the Kidron Valley and founded in 483. John Phokas had probably used the so-called *Salt Route*, a pathway running south of the main road from Jerusalem to Jericho that had been constructed in pre-Roman times for economic reasons and was often taken by Christian and Muslim pilgrims during the middle ages<sup>47</sup>. Phokas gives a full description of the monastery's local saints, its ascetics and chapels. Afterwards he turned to the neighboring monasteries Hagios Theodosios and Hagios Euthymios, and then to the remote and hardly accessible monastery Choziba in Wādī el-Qelt. The road from the monastery to Jericho was characterized as »long, narrow« and »generally difficult« because of the lack of stone foundations; John Phokas complains that its course was difficult to see in the ground<sup>48</sup>. These phrases suggest that the traveller again did not use the main road to Jericho, which is documented by pavement sections, by milestones and a bridge near the last mentioned city, but a connected, likely unpaved branch road<sup>49</sup>.

The reference to Sodom when talking about the Dead Sea and the mouth of the river Jordan refers to a transfer of memories that had taken place in early Byzantine times. Ancient sources such as the historian Flavius Josephus in his *Antiquities of the Jews* from 93/94 located Sodom and its neighboring cities Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboim in the south of the Dead Sea<sup>50</sup>. The Piacenza pilgrim (ca. 570) is one of the first to describe them to the north of the Dead Sea<sup>51</sup>. The new destination was easier to reach for the pilgrims coming down from Jerusalem; it was not a concrete place but an area. Many pilgrim guides presented it next to the place where Jesus of Nazareth was baptized: thus, the believers found several places of interest and worship close together<sup>52</sup>.

Having visited different monasteries, caves and stylites in the Jordan region and the Dead Sea area, John Phokas moved to Bethlehem. Maybe the road he used was built under Hadrian; under Marcus Aurelius, there is clear evidence for construction measures<sup>53</sup>. It is not sure if he continued on that road to Hebron. In any case, he returned to the Medi-

terranean coast, probably by the road via Eleutheropolis/Bet Jibrin<sup>54</sup>. When he passed Emmaus, he described it as a *polis megalē*, a big city<sup>55</sup>. The place he saw was for sure Nicopolis, modern Imwas, which received the status of a city from Emperor Heliogabalus (218-222). It remains doubtful if there really was a big settlement in the late twelfth century. Maybe the characterization was just a reference to local history. Due to its geographical location, Nicopolis prevailed over other villages that also claimed identification with the Biblical Emmaus (Abu Gosh, el Kubebe). The church in Lydda/Diospolis receives a precise description. The harbor of Caesarea Maritima finds the traveller's deep admiration. The text ends with the mention of Mount Carmel<sup>56</sup>. Phokas probably returned home from the neighboring Acre, perhaps to the island of Patmos.

In his pilgrimage description, John Phokas refers extensively to the landscapes north of Jerusalem, to pilgrimage sites in Galilee and Samaria. Our next author is Daniel of Ephesus<sup>57</sup>; his journey touched different landscapes, most of them in the south of Jerusalem. Daniel was metropolitan of Smyrna from 1470/1471 to 1481; afterwards he was metropolitan of Ephesus until 1488/1489. Between these two functions, he travelled to the Middle East on behalf of Patriarch Maximus III of Constantinople (1476-1482) who ordered him to discuss various ecclesiastical matters with the three Oriental patriarchates of Alexandria, Jerusalem and Antiocheia<sup>58</sup>. Daniel's description is transmitted by only one manuscript now in Venice, the Marcianus gr. 105 (clas. II) from the sixteenth century.

In Attaleia/Antalya in southern Asia Minor, Daniel embarked to sail to Egypt. He landed at the delta of the Nile. Using a small boat (*meta ploiaríou*)<sup>59</sup>, he sailed upstream and reached Fustat/Cairo, which was called Babylon (Babylonia) in ancient times, and Aegyptus in medieval Greek. Daniel obviously chose this starting point because of its political function. After describing several churches and places of worship, he mentions the pyramids of Giza. He refers to a tradition, documented already in the sixth century, in the *Ethnika* of Stephanus of Byzantium: the buildings were identified with the granaries of Joseph, mentioned in Genesis 41,46-49. However, Daniel rejects this idea and explains their function correctly as »graves of the Egyptian kings«<sup>60</sup>. Unfortunately, it is hard to decide whether this was his own idea because a *proskynētáron*, a pilgrims' guide transmitted in the codex Athous Dionysiou 301, contains the same argument<sup>61</sup>. Written before

46 John Phokas 11-12, chapter 14; Avi-Yonah, Palaestina 441; Thomsen, Meilensteine 73-75.

47 Har-El, Route 550-552.

48 John Phokas 19, chapter 20; Külzer, Peregrinatio 152; Maraval, Lieux saints 278.

49 Talbert, Atlas Map 70; Thomsen, Meilensteine 78-79. Also Külzer, Pilgerwege 186.

50 Flavius Josephus, Antiquitates I 11,4.

51 Antonini Placentini Itinerarium chapter 10 (p. 133); 24 (p. 142); Külzer, Pilgerwege 187; Wilkinson, Pilgrims 172.

52 Külzer, Peregrinatio 224-226; Külzer, Pilger 56.

53 Thomsen, Meilensteine 82.

54 Tsafirir/Di Segni/Green, TIR Iudaea Map »Iudaea – Palaestina: Eretz Israel and Sinai«.

55 John Phokas 27, chapter 29; Külzer, Peregrinatio 155-156; Maraval, Lieux saints 298; Wilkinson, Pilgrims 156.

56 John Phokas 31, chapter 31-32; Külzer, Peregrinatio 231-232.

57 Text Daniel of Ephesus; German translation Külzer, Peregrinatio 337-351; for background information see Külzer, Peregrinatio 28-29.

58 Daniel of Ephesus 2, chapter 2.

59 Daniel of Ephesus 2, chapter 2: μετὰ πλοιαρίου.

60 Daniel of Ephesus 3, chapter 3; Stephanus of Byzantium P 284 (540); Külzer, Peregrinatio 159-160.

61 Anonymos Athous Dionysiou 301 saec. XV 13-14, chapter 3; for background information, see Külzer, Peregrinatio 45-46.

the year 1481, that guide is older than Daniel's account and it is very similar in structure and phrasing to Daniel's description. Thus, there is a good chance that the texts are interdependent.

From Cairo, Daniel moved on a caravan route towards Mount Sinai. After three days, he reached the area of Clysma/Kum el-Qolzum at the northern end of the Gulf of Suez, in those days still an important harbor<sup>62</sup>. The *Antonine Itinerary* and the *Peutinger Map* mention the place as well<sup>63</sup>. Here Daniel got access to a Roman road depicted on the *Peutinger Map*; it leads southeast to the Pharan oasis. The famous Egeria had used it in the fourth century, as well as the Piacenza pilgrim two hundred years later<sup>64</sup>. Various late antique and medieval pilgrims documented their journey throughout the Sinai Peninsula by inscriptions; many of these texts are preserved. Written in Arabic, Armenian, Greek and other languages<sup>65</sup>, they serve as *fixed points* as well, presenting information of the various travellers' routes and their degree of utilization.

The first destination on the track starting in Clysma was Marah, modern Abu Mereir, the place with bitter waters mentioned in Exodus 15,22-25; in this road section the scarcity of drinking water was a big problem<sup>66</sup>. A three days journey away lies Raithu, an old coastal town on the Red Sea. Nearby was a monastery built in the sixth century but destroyed in the fifteenth century<sup>67</sup>; again, the phrases used by Daniel are almost identical with the sentences in the *proskynētariou* Athous Dionysiou 301<sup>68</sup>. In Exodus 15,27 the place-name is Elim; the current name Raithu is first documented in the *Christianikē topographia* written by Cosmas Indikopleustes in the middle of the sixth century. The source confirmed that the whole journey from Marah to Raithu was along the seaside<sup>69</sup>. Daniel's text gives the same impression<sup>70</sup>. However, this information can only be true if the travellers used unsecured paths through difficult terrain. The concrete geographical conditions contradict this; travelling there is impossible even on the back of a camel. A more believable assumption is that the travellers continued on the Roman road in the south of Marah<sup>71</sup>. However, this road runs largely in the interior of the peninsula; for more than 100km, there is definitely no sea-view. Obviously, something must be wrong.

Only 30km from Mount Sinai, the Roman road had its junction to et-Tur, the place where Raithu is located<sup>72</sup>. The

specified itinerary Marah – Raithu – Sinai indicates that the traveller was close to the main attraction of that region, to the most important pilgrimage place of the whole peninsula, the place where God Himself appeared on earth (Exodus 3 f. 19 f.). Here, he decided not to continue his journey. Instead, he says that he travelled two days in each direction through a hostile, hot and dusty landscape just to visit a secondary place of remembrance. One cannot exclude this behavior in principle, but it is unlikely. A possible solution could be that the place both Kosmas Indikopleustes and Daniel were thinking about was not et-Tur, but another place near the coast of the Red Sea, easier to access. Which place that could have been remains speculative, due to possible landscape changes and a replacement of historical and oral traditions. One of several possible solutions could be the Wādī Gharandal, a place the nun Egeria knew as Arandara and the Piacenza Pilgrim as Surandela<sup>73</sup>. Anyway, one has to note that some scholars localize Raithu north of the Pharan oasis (fig. 5)<sup>74</sup>, but others deep in the south of the mentioned oasis (fig. 6)<sup>75</sup>. Of course, there is also the possibility that the metropolitan's entire Sinai journey was nothing more than a literary device on the textual basis of the *proskynētariou* transmitted in Codex Athous Dionysiou 301, the pure result of imagination and spiritual desire.

After a detailed description of the monastery of Saint Catherine and the famous holy mountains, Daniel explains that he used the same travel route to go back to Cairo<sup>76</sup>. Whether this journey included Raithu, remains unclear. At the river Nile, Daniel started his journey to Judaea; and this part of the text is certainly authentic and from his own pen, due to his official mission. It was not necessary to see Mount Sinai for an inspection of the Oriental patriarchates (so his description of this part of his journey may be derivative), but it was definitely necessary for him to join Jerusalem. Describing his itinerary, Daniel tells us that he first joined »Gaza and other towns«<sup>77</sup>. He probably started his journey by boat and disembarked at the harbor of Gaza, the former Maiumas Gazae, modern el-Mine. The city itself was an important market place in the middle ages, mentioned in Greek and Latin *proskynētaria*<sup>78</sup>. Gaza was a crossroad, connected with several trans-regional roads, one of them leading to the Sinai Peninsula (and used by the Piacenza pilgrim around 570)<sup>79</sup>. Another one that led to Jerusalem was already documented

62 Daniel of Ephesus 4, chapter 4; Maraval, *Lieux saints* 306; Tsafirir/Di Segni/Green, *TIR Iudaea* 104-105.

63 *Itinerarium Antonini* 170,4; *Tabula Peutingeriana* VIII.

64 *Tabula Peutingeriana* VIII; Talbert, *Atlas Map* 76. *Antonini Placentini Itinerarium* 149-150 chapters 40-41; Egeria chapters 1-10; Mayerson, *Pilgrim Routes* 46-47. 55 fig. 4; Wilkinson, *Pilgrims* 17 Map 1; 86 Map 27.

65 Mayerson, *Pilgrim Routes* 44-45.

66 Daniel of Ephesus 4, chapter 4; Maraval, *Lieux saints* 306; Mayerson, *Pilgrim Routes* 54; Wilkinson, *Pilgrims* 164.

67 Daniel of Ephesus 5, chapter 4.

68 Anonymos Athous Dionysiou 301 saec. XV 14, chapter 7.

69 Cosmas Indikopleustes V 199 (tr. Wilkinson, *Pilgrims* 73).

70 Daniel of Ephesus 4, chapter 4; 5, chapter 5.

71 Talbert, *Atlas Map* 76; Tsafirir/Di Segni/Green, *TIR Iudaea Map* »Iudaea – Palaestina: Eretz Israel and Sinai«.

72 Tsafirir/Di Segni/Green, *TIR Iudaea* 214, Map »Iudaea – Palaestina: Eretz Israel and Sinai«.

73 Wilkinson, *Pilgrims* 156.

74 Wilkinson, *Pilgrims* 17 Map 1.

75 Tsafirir/Di Segni/Green, *TIR Iudaea Map* »Iudaea – Palaestina: Eretz Israel and Sinai«; Pelagios, *Digital Map* (19.07.2018).

76 Daniel of Ephesus 8, chapter 6.

77 Daniel of Ephesus 8, chapter 7: *διὰ πόλεως τῆς Γάζης καὶ τῶν ποιούτων.*

78 Külzer, *Peregrinatio* 157-158; Tsafirir/Di Segni/Green, *TIR Iudaea* 129-131; Wilkinson, *Pilgrims* 157.

79 *Antonini Placentini Itinerarium* 144-148, chapters 32-37. See Talbert, *Atlas Map* 70; Tsafirir/Di Segni/Green, *TIR Iudaea Map* »Iudaea – Palaestina: Eretz Israel and Sinai«.

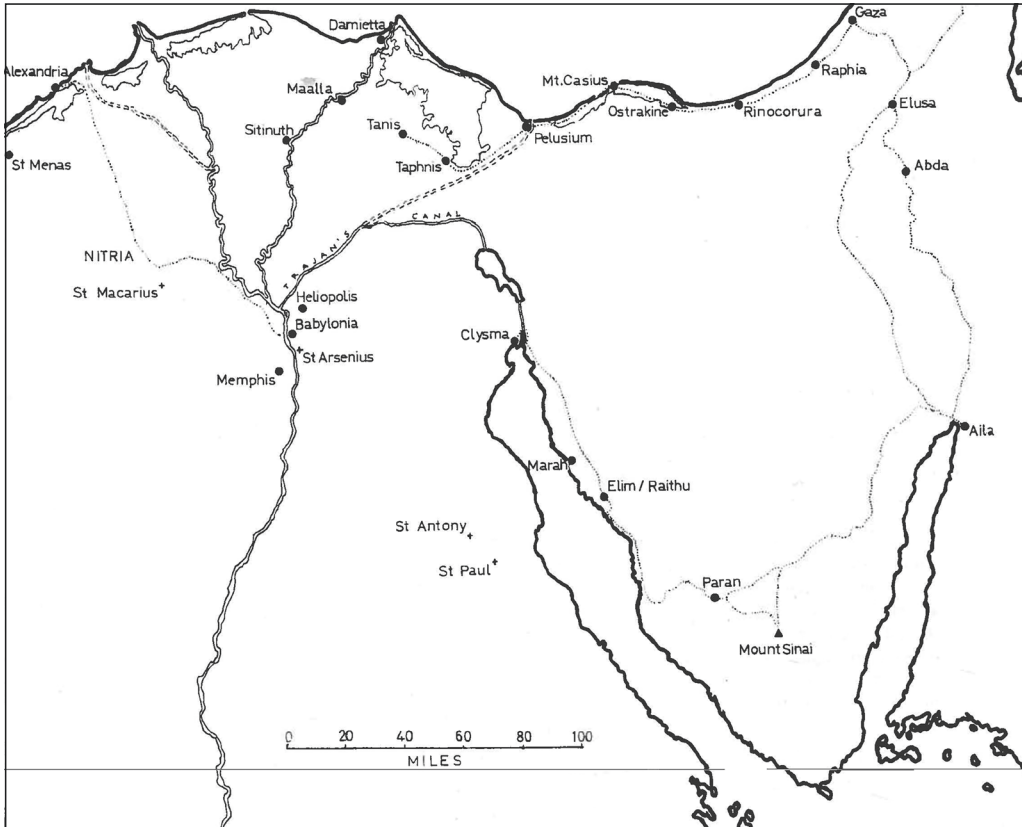


Fig. 5 Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula. – (From Wilkinson, Pilgrims 17 Map 1).

in the Acts of the Apostles 8,26. Among others, the *Topography of the Holy Land* written by Theodosius before 518<sup>80</sup> and the Piacenza Pilgrim around 570<sup>81</sup> refer to this connection.

Daniel spent some time in Jerusalem; then he went to Bethlehem. He used the Roman road, as John Phokas did three hundred years earlier. While the latter remained neutral on the state of the road, Daniel laments its rough and bad character, he speaks about a *ὁδὸς τραχεῖα*<sup>82</sup> – obviously, the condition of the road had changed for the worse. Afterwards, Daniel moved on the classical pilgrimage route of his days: he visited various monasteries near the river Jordan, among them the famous Lavra of Saint Sabbas, furthermore Jericho and the Dead Sea. In order to join the coast of the Mediterranean, he took the road via Lydda/Diospolis to Jaffa. It was there that he left the *Terra Sancta*.

Based on two pilgrimage texts in Byzantine tradition, a literary genre that is in general much rarer than its Latin counterpart, our paper has presented some important parts of the regional and trans-regional road system in the Holy Land. Both accounts mention numerous *fixed points*; sometimes they also refer to the concrete situation of roads in between. Archaeological remains enrich this information. It is obvious that several roads existed from the Roman period up to the middle Ages. Both travellers used similar routes to the pilgrims

of late antiquity when the *network of worship* developed, a network that consisted of precisely located holy sites mentioned in the Old and New Testament, but also of more »modern« destinations, sites of hermits, stylites and monasteries. In general, the communication network constructed in antiquity continued during the middle ages. Nevertheless, the existence of such an extended network must not obscure the fact that, starting with the high middle ages, most pilgrims restricted the radius of their travel to a much smaller space. The *Terra Sancta* they saw was limited to Jerusalem and its hinterland, to Bethlehem, the lower Jordan and the northern parts of the Dead Sea. Their scope was concentrated on single places in Judaea. Far fewer people attended the centers of worship in Samaria and Galilee. The same applies to Egypt and the Sinai Peninsula; an extended use of the *network of worship*, as it is documented in many late antique itineraries, but also in both texts presented here, became an exception. A shorter stay in the *Terra Sancta* became the rule, perhaps for cost reasons; travel distances were reduced. Instead of an entire, all-encompassing viewing and worshipping experience, people reduced themselves to the spiritually essential and to a few curiosities. This attitude was responsible for the relocation of some places of holiness and remembrance; even in the past, economic efficiency could be stronger than pure theology.

80 Theodosius 116, chapter 3 (tr. Wilkinson, Pilgrims 65).

81 Antonini Placentini Itinerarium 144, chapter 31 (tr. Wilkinson, Pilgrims 85).

82 Daniel of Ephesus 18, chapter 15.



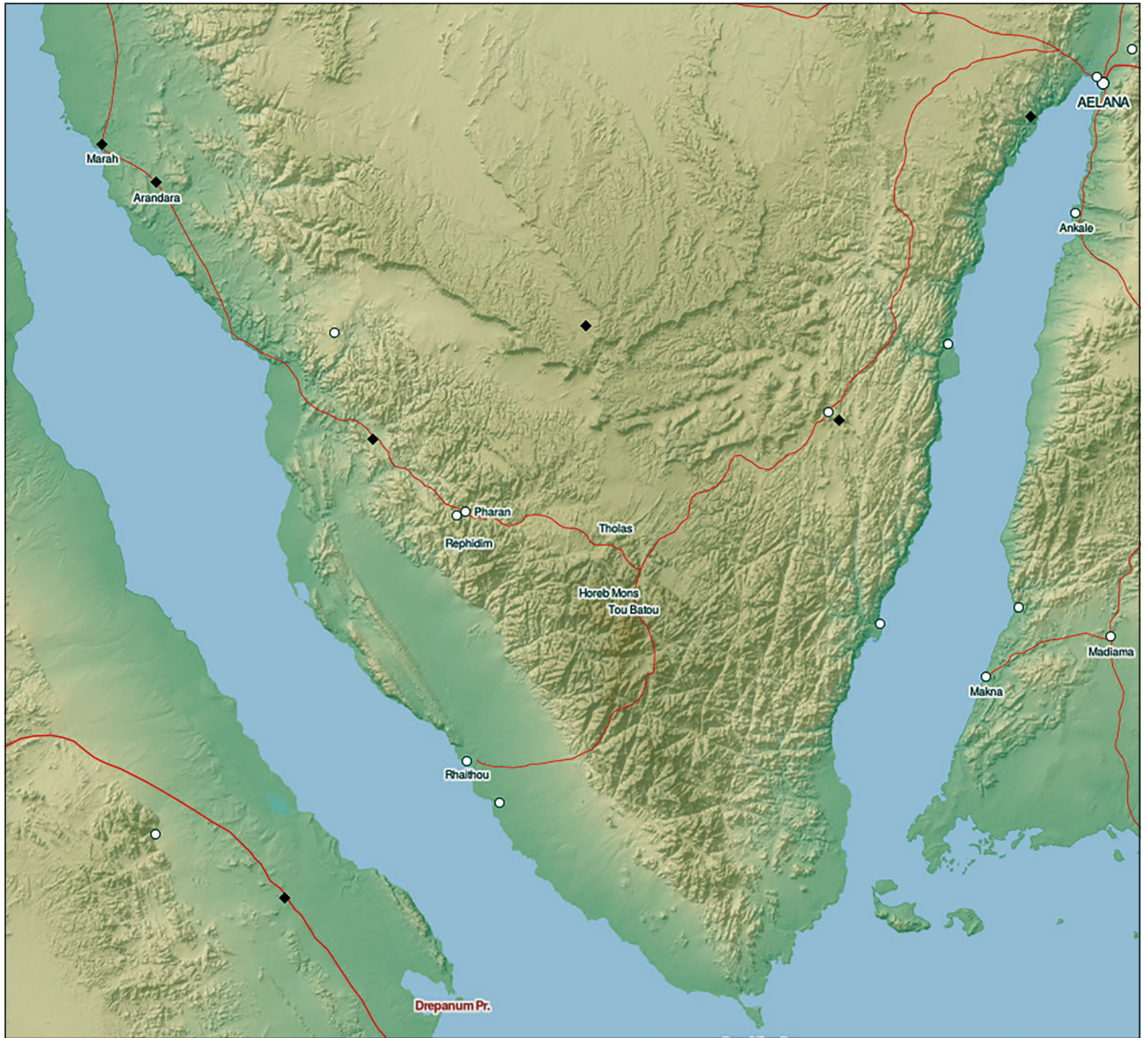


Fig. 6 Sinai Peninsula, southern part, according to Pelagios, Digital Map (19.07.2018).

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## Zusammenfassung / Summary / Résumé

### Pilger auf ihrem Weg ins Land: Straßen und Wege nach den byzantinischen und postbyzantinischen Reiseberichten

Pilgerstätten sind spirituelle Sehnsuchtsorte, aber auch Zentren wirtschaftlicher Aktivitäten. Sie veranlassen Menschen aus unterschiedlichen Beweggründen, sich zu ihnen zu bewegen, sei es, um dort zu beten, um einen Heilungswunsch auszudrücken, um Handel zu treiben oder einfach, um Neugierde zu befriedigen. Die Lebensdauer der Zentren hängt von verschiedenen Faktoren ab; ungeachtet religiöser Kriterien wie der durch Wundertaten bezeugten andauernden Attraktivität des vor Ort verehrten Heiligen sind günstige wirtschaftliche und politische Rahmenbedingungen wichtig. Maßgeblich ist die gute Erreichbarkeit, der problemlose Zugang zum Pilgerort durch den Anschluss an das überregionale Straßen- und Wegesystem.

Straßen gliedern die Landschaft, sie geben den Reisenden Wegetappen vor und bestimmen die Abfolge der Besichtigungen. Wird ein Pilgerort vom Wegesystem abgeschnitten, wird der Zugang schwierig, so verliert die Stätte schnell ihre Bedeutung. Mitunter wird die religiöse Tradition von einem derartigen Ort gelöst und auf einen anderen übertragen, der besser zu erreichen ist. Entsprechende Beispiele finden sich natürlich auch in der *Terra Sancta*, den weiten Landschaften zwischen Syrien und Unterägypten mit den Zentren in Israel/Palästina und auf der Halbinsel Sinai. Die griechischsprachigen Pilgerberichte des Johannes Phokas aus dem 12. Jahrhundert und des Daniel von Ephesus aus dem 15. Jahrhundert dienen exemplarisch der Beschreibung des dortigen ausgedehnten Wegenetzes zur Grundlage.

### Pilgrims on their Way in the Holy Land: Roads and Routes According to Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Travel Accounts

Pilgrimage sites are places of spiritual desire, but also centers of economic activities. Since ancient times, people have been visiting these places for different reasons; these include worship and prayer, requests of healing and cure, but also trading activities and commodity exchange or simply the satisfaction of personal curiosity. The endurance of pilgrimage sites depends on various factors; some of them are religious, such as continuous miracles or the constant fragrance of holiness; both document the presence of the holy at a special site. Other parameters belong to the fields of politics and economics. Easy accessibility is one of the most important factors for continuity; a road connection or even a route between the venerated place and the national communication system is necessary.

Roads structure the landscape; they determine the stages as well as the complete itinerary of a pilgrimage. If a pilgrimage site is suddenly separated from the national communication system due to climatic, political or other reasons and the approach becomes too difficult for a common visitor, then the place usually loses its importance rather quickly. The religious tradition connected to this place will be forgotten, or in some cases transferred to another location that is situated in a more convenient landscape. Our paper follows the traces of Greek pilgrims from the Byzantine and Post-Byzantine period as documented in different travel accounts, and presents some interesting details on roads, routes and accommodations.

### Les pèlerins en route pour la Terre sainte: routes et chemins d'après les récits de voyage byzantins et post-byzantins

Les lieux de pèlerinage sont des lieux de soif spirituelle et, aussi, des centres d'activité économique. Ils poussent les gens à les rejoindre, quelle que soit leur motivation, ne serait-ce que pour y prier, exprimer un souhait de guérison, y faire du commerce ou tout simplement satisfaire leur curiosité. La longévité de ces centres dépend de différents facteurs. Indépendamment des critères religieux et de l'attrait du saint vénéré sur place dont témoignent les miracles, ce sont des conditions économiques et politiques favorables qui importent. Un bon accès au lieu de pèlerinage depuis le réseau routier inter-régional est également déterminant.

Les routes structurent le paysage, imposent des étapes aux voyageurs et déterminent l'ordre des visites. Si un lieu de pèlerinage est coupé des voies de communication, l'accès en deviendra alors difficile et cet endroit sombrera vite dans l'oubli. Parfois, la tradition religieuse d'un tel lieu est récupérée pour être transférée à un autre plus accessible. On en trouve naturellement aussi des exemples en *Terra Sancta*, dans les vastes territoires situés entre la Syrie et la Basse-Égypte avec des centres en Israël/Palestine et dans la péninsule du Sinaï. Les récits de pèlerins en grec de Jean Phokas au 12<sup>e</sup> siècle et de Daniel d'Éphèse au 15<sup>e</sup> siècle livrent de manière exemplaire les sources nécessaires à la description du vaste réseau routier de cette région.

Traduction: Y. Gautier