Introduction

Monasticism in the Christian tradition was a product of the Eastern Roman Empire, particularly the provinces of Egypt, Syria and Palestine. Monks and monasteries already existed in Syria and the Holy Land before the end of the fourth century and, despite the profound changes associated with the Arab and Seljuq conquests of the seventh and eleventh centuries, some were still functioning by the time of the First Crusade at the end of the eleventh century. The most distinctive feature of monasticism in the Holy Land was its close relationship, both institutional and spiritual, with the shrines and Holy Places that also exercised a magnetic attraction to pilgrims from all over Christendom. As a result of this draw, monasticism in the Holy Land developed from the start an 'international' character, and foundations of varying types were established by people from different parts of the Roman world. Even before the Western conquests and settlement at the end of the eleventh century, Holy Land monasteries had been served by Greeks, Syrians, Armenians, Georgians, Persians, Egyptians and Franks. The arrival of the crusaders and the establishment of the Crusader States, however, caused the redrafting of the religious map of the Holy Land. Alongside monasteries of the Greek Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox and Armenian traditions, new Latin foundations sprang up. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries, in consequence, experienced a surge in new monastic vocations and a more intensive monastic presence in the region than at any point since before the Arab conquest.

Although early Christian monasticism in Syria and the Holy Land has long been the subject of study, remarkably little attention has been paid to the phenomenon of monasticism in the region under crusader rule. This study, first conceived by Bernard Hamilton as a complement to his *The Latin Church in the Crusader States: The Secular Church* (1980), is an attempt to fill this gap by examining in as systematic a fashion as possible the foundations of the Latin Church alongside those of the Greek Orthodox, the dominant religious tradition of the indigenous Christian population.

This study is concerned with monastic foundations of both Latin and Greek Orthodox traditions. It is divided into two separate halves, which are designed to be read either together or discretely. This principle of organisation has been determined as best reflecting the historical reality of monasticism in the region.[1] Although there were undoubtedly points

---

[1] The first part of the book, on Latin monasticism, is the work of Bernard Hamilton, while the second half has been written by Andrew Jotischky. Bernard Hamilton died in May 2019, when the book was largely complete but before it went to press. We have tried as far as possible to observe spelling conventions appropriate to the original source material, whether Latin or Greek, but in

1

of contact between Latin and Orthodox communities, especially at the major feasts in Jerusalem, and although in some places, particularly in Jerusalem but also at some remote sites such as Mt Tabor, both Latin and Greek monasteries could be found in relatively close proximity to one another, on the whole the two traditions kept themselves apart. This was in part a function of the nature of monasticism itself, since most Latin and Greek monks took vows of enclosure, and monasteries were intended to have as little to do with the outside world as possible. It was also because, unlike in Sicily and southern Italy, the Latin ruling aristocracy in the Crusader East did not found or show an interest in Greek monasteries, which had long historical traditions and sources of patronage of their own.

Early monasticism in the Holy Land developed its own distinctive forms. Partly as a result of the topography of the semi-desert, the 'laura' form of monastic life became characteristic of the region. A 'laura' consisted of a group of individual or shared cells associated with a church or oratory and other service buildings such as the bakery. Monks joined for communal liturgies on Sundays but spent most of their time alone or in pairs. The cells were often, as for example at the 'Great Laura' founded by Sabas in the Kidron valley at the end of the fifth century, cut out of rock-face and difficult of access.[2] Besides these laurae, there were also cenobitic monasteries in which the communal life was emphasised. Both the governance and general tone of monastic life were set by the founders, who often appear in the sources as charismatic figures with inspirational qualities of leadership. Whether laurae or cenobitic monasteries, the communities founded by Sabas, Euthymios, Chariton and others were run along lines determined by the characters, ideological tendencies and will of the founders themselves.[3] This could lead to tensions, such as those experienced by Sabas in the early sixth century when theological fault-lines in the Church came to be reflected among monastic communities. Sub-foundations by the same founder had the effect of spreading monastic life across the desert: in effect, filling regions inhabited only by wild beasts or demons with prayer and contemplation. The physical appearance of monasteries, with walls and towers, emphasised not only their vulnerability to predators but also their symbolic value as planters and defenders of Christianity in the wilderness. Conversion of native Beduin was a feature emphasised in the hagiographical literature of desert monasticism. Relationships between monasteries often took their tone from personal connections or friendships between founders, and this led in some instances to transfer of monks between different monasteries. Those new to monastic life could be trained in a cenobitic community before, if they made the grade, adopting a lauritic life; similarly, discipline could be exerted through expulsion or transfer.

Many of these essential elements of 'original' monasticism in the Holy Land and Syria continued to be true of the pursuit of monastic life in the crusader period, especially in Greek Orthodox monasteries. But the Latins brought with them a different set of traditions, woven and developed in the very different conditions of the first millennium in the West. They also brought a monastic culture that was itself in flux. Unlike in the Byzantine world, Western

---

cases where terms or names are common across both source languages, we have observed the form commoner in English translations.
[2] J. Patrich, *Sabas, Leader of Palestinian Monasticism* (Washington, DC, 1995), especially 51–168.
[3] J. Binns, *Ascetics and Ambassadors of Christ: The Monasteries of Palestine, 314–631* (Oxford, 1994).

monasticism – particularly in the regions from which most of the crusaders and settlers came – was dominated by a single method of living and operating: the Rule of Benedict. However, the Western settlement of the Near East came at a time when this method was itself subject to interrogation and vigorous new study by monks and ecclesiastical leaders. A wide range of responses emerged to questions posed by reformers in the eleventh century about how best to live the monastic life. Many reformers thought that the answer lay in a closer adherence to the Rule of Benedict, but others developed new forms of living independent of the Rule. Most shades of reforming opinion, from the Cistercian interpretation of the Rule to individual eremitical communities, found expression in the creation of new foundations in the Holy Land alongside traditional Benedictine communities. In most of western Europe, cathedrals were staffed by communities of Canons Regular who followed the Rule of Augustine and, since many of the most important shrines in the Holy Land were housed in cathedrals, the Canons Regular were a very strong presence in the monastic life of the Crusader States.

The nature of the evidence for writing about Latin and Greek monasticism in the Crusader States is very different. The first half of the book, which deals with Latin monasteries, is arranged in accordance with the Rules followed in monasteries. Separate chapters deal with the different foundations of the Augustinian Canons Regular; Premonstratensians; hermits; monasteries and convents for women following the Rule of Benedict; communities inspired by the eleventh-century Italian reform; and Cistercians. The mendicant orders in the Crusader States in the thirteenth century – the Carmelites, Franciscans and Dominicans – are then considered in turn. Finally, a separate chapter considers two Antiochene monasteries whose rite is uncertain. We do not discuss the churches of the military orders, a specific development of the crusader settlement, which have already been well described by others in their studies of the Templars, Hospitallers, Teutonic orders and other minor orders such as that of St Thomas of Canterbury; nor the work of the minor orders which ran hospitals, such as St Ivo at Acre.[4] The intention is to provide as full as possible a history of each of the monastic communities from an institutional perspective. Particular emphasis, as provided by the nature of the sources, is laid on the extent of monastic property ownership and the roles of the abbots and other members of the communities in the ecclesiastical and political life of the Crusader States. A word should also be said about gender. Some monasteries were founded for women by the Western settlers; indeed, some of the most significant monastic communities were women's convents. The same was not true of Greek Orthodox monasticism in the regions covered by this book. Although monasteries for women are a feature of the cenobitic reform of eleventh- and twelfth-century Byzantium, and although some convents for women functioned throughout the period in the Levant, most of the evidence concerns monks and their

---

[4] M.-T. Bulst-Thiele, *Sacrae Domus Militiae Templi Hierosolymitani Magistri. Untersuchungen der Geschichte des Tempelordens 1118/19–1314*, Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Phil.-hist. Klasse, series 3, 86 (Göttingen, 1974); J. S. Riley-Smith, *The Knights of St John in Jerusalem and Cyprus 1050–1310* (London, 1967); Riley-Smith, *The Knights Hospitaller in the Levant, c. 1070–1309* (London, 2012); M.-L. Favreau-Lilie, *Studien zur Frühgeschichte des Deutschen Ordens*, Kieler Historische Studien 21 (Stuttgart, 1974); N. Morton, *The Teutonic Knights in the Holy Land, 1190–1291* (Woodbridge, 2009); A. J. Forey, 'The Order of Mountjoy', *Speculum* 46 (1971), 250–66.

communities. It remains, unfortunately, difficult to write comprehensively about women religious in the Crusader States.

The types of evidence for Latin monasticism are varied, but fall mostly into two categories: charters and deeds recording the ownership of property and jurisdictional rights; and papal documents recording judgements or confirming rights and privileges. In addition, considerable evidence is provided by pilgrimage accounts and contemporary narrative chronicles dealing with specific crusades or the history of the Crusader States. Inevitably, there is considerable disparity in the availability and survival of sources. Some communities, principally the Holy Sepulchre[5] and Our Lady of Josaphat, are well documented because their cartularies have been preserved. Material on the Mt Tabor monastery is found now in the archive of the Knights of St John in Malta; the Knights took over the house and its documents in the thirteenth century. Other foundations, however, are more randomly documented, and a particular problem is raised by the monasteries in the Principality of Antioch where the general level of documentation of any kind is sparse. For the thirteenth century, two bodies of material are particularly important as sources for monastic foundations: the papal registers and the archive of the Knights of St John.

Written evidence can be supplemented for many foundations by archaeology. All of the monasteries and churches in the Kingdom of Jerusalem have been fully examined by Denys Pringle, and his archaeological corpus is cited extensively in the footnotes as the most authoritative guide to the building history and the evidence that it can supply.[6] Similarly, much of the surviving ecclesiastical art from the crusader period has been studied by Jaroslav Folda and others. We have not attempted to duplicate evidence which they have already dealt with magisterially.[7] The topographical coverage of this study is determined by the survival of source material. The majority of foundations were in the Kingdom of Jerusalem, though some lay in the County of Tripoli and the Principality of Antioch. None were in the County of Edessa, so although this region lay under Latin domination for parts of the period, it is scarcely covered in this book. Cyprus, however, plays an important role. Some Orthodox monasteries, such as St Sabas, had landed interests on the island throughout the period, and monks and monasteries from the Holy Land and Syria were in close touch with Cypriot foundations. Latin monasteries, likewise, founded dependent communities in Cyprus after 1191. The history of daughter houses of communities on the Frankish mainland which were established in Cyprus has been considered here, but not new Latin foundations made in Cyprus under Frankish rule, because these have already been fully examined in studies by Nicholas Coureas.[8]

The evidence available for Orthodox monasticism is very different in nature. The second half of this book has, therefore, been written along quite different lines to the first half. Unlike the situation for Latin monasteries, it is impossible to identify or say very much

---

[5] The term Anastasis is used to refer to the church built by Constantine in the fourth century and destroyed in 1009; subsequently it is referred to as the church of the Holy Sepulchre.

[6] D. Pringle, *The Churches of the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem: A Corpus*, 4 vols. (Cambridge, 1993–2009).

[7] J. Folda, *The Art of the Crusaders in the Holy Land, 1098–1187* (Cambridge, 1995), and Folda, *Crusader Art in the Holy Land: From the Third Crusade to the Fall of Acre, 1187–1291* (Cambridge, 2005).

[8] N. Coureas, *The Latin Church in Cyprus, 1195–1312* (Aldershot, 1997), and *The Latin Church in Cyprus, 1313–1378*, Cyprus Research Centre Texts and Studies in the History of Cyprus LXV (Nicosia, 2010); see also C. Schabel, 'Religion', in A. Nicolaou-Konnari and C. Schabel, eds., *Cyprus: Society and Culture 1191–1374* (Leiden, 2005), 157–218.

about the important personnel in the major monasteries, still less to reconstruct in anything other than the most anecdotal fashion landholding or property owned by the Orthodox monasteries. Whereas charter collections, chronicles and papal registers form the main sources of evidence for Latin monastic communities, they have very little to say about Orthodox monasteries except in cases where Latin ecclesiastical or legal governance touched on their activities. The main sources for Orthodox monasteries are pilgrimage accounts, both Latin and Orthodox, in which monasteries are described, the typika or founders' Rules of new and revived monasteries, hagiographical literature, and the surviving body of manuscripts produced in the monasteries.

The second half of the book is therefore organised in such a way as to utilise these sources to their best advantage, in four main chapters. Some important principles of selection in terms of coverage and chronological range have been observed. As should be apparent from what has already been noted above, the date 1095 is of less significance in writing about Orthodox monasticism than Latin, because it does not mark a new beginning in quite the same way. Indeed the 960s, which saw the period of renewed Byzantine control over northern Syria, and 1009, the date of the destruction of Constantine's Anastasis Church by al-Hakim, or the incursion of the Seljuqs in the mid-eleventh century, mark more significant starting points for a study of Orthodox monasticism in the Holy Land in the central Middle Ages. Without taking either of these as a single opening date, this book considers evidence from the eleventh century as part of the same phenomena being discussed as that from the twelfth to fourteenth centuries. Although Cyprus became part of the Crusader States only in 1191, it was a Byzantine province before that, and the relationship between Orthodox monasticism in the Holy Land and Cyprus can be witnessed from at least as early as the late eleventh century. For this reason this study will consider Cypriot monasteries that pre-date 1191. The geographical scope of the second half of the book is even wider than this: one Orthodox monastery outside the Crusader States, St John on Patmos, has been included as evidence for the themes discussed in the book. This is because its founder, Christodoulos, not only learned his monastic profession in the Holy Land, but also consciously exported many of the principles for his foundation on Patmos from his experiences as a monk at St Sabas in the first half of the eleventh century. Likewise, where the histories of Orthodox monasteries in the Crusader States intersect with or can best be explained in reference to careers or foundations outside that region, similar geographical liberties have been taken.

It would not have been possible to organise the chapters on Orthodox monasticism so as to correspond with the first half of the book, because in the Orthodox tradition there were no divisions into different Rules or categories of Rules. For this reason, different organisational principles are followed. The first chapter in this section provides a survey of known Orthodox monasteries in existence in the Crusader States, including Cyprus, between c. 1050 and the early fourteenth century. The emphasis is on evidence for the circumstances of foundation, longevity and the sources of our knowledge. Subsequent chapters provide a thematic analysis of Orthodox monasticism in the Crusader States. The broad division of themes into the institutional workings, spirituality and textual activities of the monasteries offers a cross-section of Orthodox monastic life. The chapter on institutional life analyses

the internal governance of monasteries, their running of property, provision of accommodation, diet and non-liturgical practices. The evidence is largely taken from the founders' typika, supplemented in the case of some monasteries where such information is available by the observations of pilgrims or visitors.[9] This, of necessity, means that the discussion is based on those monasteries for which typika survive. Unlike in the Western monastic tradition, Orthodox monasteries generally followed Rules drawn up by their founders and, although most founders drew on established traditions in composing typika, no two are quite alike: they differ in length, quantity and type of detail, and the degree of information regarding the circumstances of foundation. Since most typika were written for new foundations, the weight of evidence for this chapter comes from new monasteries with founders who paid particular attention to the details of institutional life, notably Nikon's two monasteries in northern Syria, the Black Mountain and Roidion,[10] the two Cypriot foundations of Makhairas and the Enkleistra,[11] and Christodoulos' monastery of St John on Patmos.[12]

In so far as founders' typika also deal with liturgical life and practices, this body of material also provides some evidence for the character of spirituality of Orthodox monasteries in the Crusader States. Fuller evidence, however, comes from hagiographical material and the writings of the monks themselves. The chapter on spiritual life examines the evidence for the development and nature of liturgical observances in monasteries in Jerusalem and their influence on other monasteries in the Crusader States. The relationship between liturgy and contemplation is also discussed, followed by sections on other themes in monastic spirituality: death and commemoration, demonic possession, labour and discipline, the relationship between cenobitic and solitary living, sexuality, and the miraculous. A final section discusses the place of the Holy Land itself in the characteristic spirituality of Orthodox monasticism in the eastern Mediterranean. The themes themselves arise from the textual evidence of founders' legislation, biographical detail provided by founders or their biographers, and hagiographical and instructive literature deriving from the monasteries. The final chapter in this section of the book examines the textual evidence of the monasteries: the types of manuscript read, copied and authored in the monasteries, and the nature and extent of translation, compilation and original writing by Orthodox monks in the Crusader States. Such relationships between monasteries as can be discerned from codicological and textual study of the manuscripts, and the circumstances of manuscript production, are also discussed.

Although much of the evidence used in this book comes from known and published sources, this information has never been assembled in one place before. There are some

---

[9] *BMFD*; C. Galatariotou, 'Byzantine ktetorika typika: a comparative study', *Revue des Etudes Byzantines* 45 (1987), 77–138.

[10] *Black Mountain: Regulations of Nikon of the Black Mountain,* trans. R. Allison, *BMFD* No. 20, pp. 377–424; *Roidion: Typikon of Nikon of the Black Mountain for the Monastery and Hospice of the Mother of God Tou Roidiou*, trans. R. Allison, *BMFD* No. 21, pp. 424–59.

[11] *Foundation Rules of Medieval Cypriot Monasteries: Makhairas and St Neophytos*, trans. N. Coureas, Cyprus Research Centre Texts and Studies in the History of Cyprus XLVI (Nicosia, 2003); *Machairas: Rule of Neilos, Bishop of Tamasia, for the Monastery of the Mother of God of Machairas in Cyprus*, trans. A. Bandy, *BMFD* No. 34, pp. 1107–75; *Neophytos: Testamentary Rule of Neophytos for the Hermitage of the Holy Cross near Ktima in Cyprus*, trans. C. Galatariotou, *BMFD* No. 45, pp. 1338–73.

[12] *Christodoulos: Rule, Testament and Codicil of Christodoulos for the Monastery of St John the Theologian on Patmos*, trans. P. Karlin-Hayter, *BMFD* No. 24, pp. 578–94, 594–601.

excellent studies of individual monasteries, but no overall survey of the range of monastic houses, and no attempt has been made to consider Latin and Orthodox monasticism side by side.[13] As far as possible we have tried to present a comprehensive study of monasticism, but it is in the nature of historical research that new material comes to light and new interpretations are developed. We hope that this book will serve to stimulate future research and to shape new considerations of religious life and culture in the medieval eastern Mediterranean.

---

[13] H. E. Mayer, *Bistümer, Klöster und Stifte im Königreich Jerusalem* (Stuttgart, 1977).