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“Like a faithful daughter she cherishes and nourishes
in herself the remnants of Holy Jerusalem, her mother”:
Acre as a Center for Church Practices
in the 12th and 13th Centuries

ABSTRACT

In the history of Acre, located on the Syrian coast, the 12th and 13th centuries were of particular importance. Under the rule of the Crusaders, the city experienced a period of rapid demographic, economic, cultural, and religious growth. As the main port of the Kingdom of Jerusalem—and in the 13th century its capital as well—it was an important stop on the route of Latin pilgrims. Nevertheless, it was mentioned extremely rarely in the pilgrimage writings of that period, where information about the sites of worship in the city is scarce. This problem was noticed by Aryeh Graboīs and David Jacoby, but their attempts to explain this state of affairs need to be partly reexamined. The most important reason for the “silence of pilgrimage sources” about the city and its religious life seems to be the marginal presence of Acre in the pages of the Bible and its negligible place in the history of salvation.

KEYWORDS: Holy Land, Acre, pilgrimages, crusades, Middle Ages

STRESZCZENIE

„Jak wierna córka, która troszczy się o to, co pozostało po jej matce, świętej Jerozolimie”. Akka jako ośrodek praktyk pątnicznych w XII i XIII stuleciu

W dziejach położonej na wybrzeżu syryjskim Akki okres XII i XIII stulecia miał znaczenie szczególne. Pod panowaniem krzyżowców miasto przeżywało szybki rozwój demograficzny, gospodarczy, kulturalny i religijny. Jako główny port, a w XIII wieku także stolica Królestwa Jerozolimskiego było ważnym punktem na szlaku ówczesnych łacińskich pielgrzymów. Mimo to w piśmiennictwie pielgrzymkowym tego okresu wspomniano o nim niezwykle rzadko, a informacje o znajdujących się w mieście ośrodkach kultu mają charakter marginalny. Problem ten został zauważony przez A. Graboisa i D. Jacoby’ego,

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ale przedstawione przez obu badaczy próby wyjaśnienia przyczyn takiego stanu rzeczy wymagają częściowej rewizji. Najistotniejszym powodem „milczenia źródeł” pielgrzymkowych na temat miasta i jego życia religijnego wydaje się marginalna obecność Akki na kartach Biblii i jej niewielkie znaczenie w historii zbawienia.

SŁOWA KLUCZE: Ziemia Święta, Akka, pielgrzymki, krucjaty, wieki średnie

Located on the Syrian coast, Acre (Akka)—also referred to in medieval sources as Ptolemais—is a place with an exceptionally long tradition of settlement. Over the course of about 4,000 years, the settlement has experienced periods of intense development as well as crises (France, 2018; Artzy, 2015; Grabois, 1983). After the Muslim conquest of Syria in the 7th century, it was one of many port cities. However, it was not as economically important as, for example, Caesarea Maritima or Arsuf. Even then, however, it played a major role as a naval base, which allowed the Umayyads, and then the Abbasids, to maintain their influence in the eastern Mediterranean (France, 2018). In the second half of the 9th century, the port was rebuilt and fortified (Edgington, 2018). The 11th century was quite a turbulent period for Acre, as for other Syrian cities. The havoc caused by the weakening of the Fatimid position and the advance of the Seljuks added to the list of elemental calamities that hit the entire province throughout that century. The earthquake in 1063 was especially acute for Acre (Pringle, 2009; Rubin, 2018b).

The arrival of the armies of the First Crusade to Outremer opened another, incredibly important chapter in the history of the city. After the capture of Jerusalem, the Crusaders quickly realized that without seizing the ports, their situation in the Holy Land would be very difficult. The survival of the members of Latin Christendom was directly dependent on maintaining constant contact with Europe, which was not only an economic partner, but also a base and a source of the influx of warriors and settlers. Moreover, the capture of the ports on the Syrian coast may have mitigated the threat posed by Egypt's Fatimid fleet (Edgington, 2018). It is no wonder then that Baldwin I of Jerusalem devoted much of his energy to seizing and fortifying the ports. Jaffa, although the closest to Jerusalem, did not become the kingdom's principal harbor, as larger ships could not navigate through the narrow entrance and unload at that port. Jaffa itself was a small settlement far from the main trade routes (Grabois, 1983; Mylod, 2013). Therefore, Acre—located about 100 kilometers north—was the first objective for Baldwin I. The city had a fairly convenient harbor and was relatively well-connected to significant trade routes converging in Damascus (France, 2018). As early as 1099, the Crusaders were passing

near this city, but as they were hurrying to Jerusalem, they made no attempt to capture it (Edgington, 2018). The first siege of Acre, which took place in 1103, was unsuccessful. Only the following year, with the support of the Genoese and Pisan fleets, was the city on the peninsula captured.¹

The Crusaders' conquest of the city in 1104 began a new period in the history of Acre. The city and the port began to develop very rapidly. Both the population and the economic/political importance of this center grew. In a short time, Ptolemais became the chief port town of the Kingdom of Jerusalem and retained this status even after the Crusaders seized Tyre and Caesarea (Gretwagen, 1996; Mylod, 2013; France, 2018; Jacoby, 2001, 2005, 2016, 2005; Graboïs, 1983). So many ships were anchoring in the harbor that soon it was difficult to accommodate all the vessels within (Gretwagen, 1996). The Latin, Greek, and Muslim authors who described the city unanimously painted a picture of a populous and lively hub of economic life whose inhabitants represented various ethnic and religious communities (Phocas, 1889; Pringle, 2009; Theodorich, 1891; Jacoby, 2005; Graboïs, 1983).

The situation changed considerably in 1187 after the Battle of Hattin and the defeat of the Frankish army. Acre, like Jerusalem and most of the cities of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, fell to the Muslim army of Saladin. The Latins who lived there decided to emigrate, despite the guarantee of protection granted by Saladin (Rubin, 2018b). For the next few years, the city was the center of attention for Latin Christians. In the summer of 1189, Guy of Lusignan commenced a siege of Acre, and in the following months, the troops of Frankish knights of Outremer and crusaders from Europe arrived there. Among those who fought at Acre were Richard the Lionheart and Philip II Augustus. After many months, in August 1191, the city was successfully captured by the Crusaders (Painter, 1969; Hosler, 2018; Jensen, 2018). As the attempts to recover Jerusalem in the following months failed, the most important people and institutions of the Kingdom of Jerusalem established a temporary—as it was believed—seat in Acre. In fact, not only the royal court, but also the patriarch of Jerusalem and many religious communities forced to leave the Holy City were located in the new capital. The bishops who had lost their cathedrals in Bethlehem, Tiberias, or Hebron also found shelter here (Jacoby, 2005; Pringle, 2009; Rubin, 2018b; France, 2018; Boas & Melloni, 2018; Forey, 1977; Lotan, 2019). In the 1210s, the first houses of burgeoning mendicant orders were built in Outremer (Graboïs, 1983; Rubin, 2018b). It was

1 The course of this second siege was further evidence of the great importance of the fleet and ports for the Latin states of Outremer (Jacobus de Vitry, 1597; Artzy, 2015; Rubin, 2018b; Edgington, 2018; Jacoby, 2005).

to Acre that artists were brought and it was here that intellectual life flourished (Rubin, 2018a; Mylod, 2013; Kühnel, 2006). The settlement of so many prominent people and institutions made Acre the most thriving city in the Kingdom of Jerusalem, renewed after the Third Crusade. It is not surprising that many scholars use the term “the Kingdom of Akka” when describing the history of Latin states in the 13th century.²

The 13th century was a time of rapid development for the city serving as the capital of the Kingdom. Not only was Acre quickly rebuilt after the destruction that took place in the turbulent period of 1187–1191, but it also had its suburbs incorporated and it experienced major demographic growth (Rubin, 2018b; Jacoby, 2004, 2005; Grabois, 1983). Ptolemais very quickly recuperated its role as one of the most important centers of economic life in the eastern Mediterranean (Edbury, 2015; Jacoby, 2005). Among the reconstructed and newly erected buildings were many temples, with a prevalence of churches of Latin rite. In 13th-century Acre, only 10% of the churches and chapels were in the hands of non-Latin Christians. Also, there is no evidence that there was even a single mosque in the city at that time (Rubin, 2018b). For comparison, in the 12th century in Jerusalem—the capital of the Crusaders—Latin temples accounted for only 45% of the city’s religious buildings (Rubin, 2018b). Surely, in the 13th century, the Franks dominated religious life in Acre.

As Frederick II regained control of Jerusalem in 1229, of course, some people and institutions were transferred to the Holy City. However, after the fall of Jerusalem in 1244, Acre regained its status as the capital of the Crusader Kingdom (Hardwicke, 1969; Runciman, 1969).

We may surmise that in the middle of the 13th century, a plan was born to make Acre an important pilgrimage site, which could at least partially replace the lost Jerusalem, whose walls were now harder to enter than ever before. The idea probably originated in the circles of the local clergy. Scholars link this initiative with the failure of the crusade of Saint Louis IX and the loss of hope for a quick recovery of the Holy City (Jacoby, 2001, 2014, 2016; Lotan, 2019; Fleck, 2015). Between 1253 and 1262, Pope Innocent IV and Pope Alexander IV granted indulgence privileges to churches in Acre. The faithful could receive partial remissions of sins for visiting the churches or supporting them financially (Jacoby, 2014; Pringle, 2012). Part of the plan was likely also to create a pilgrimage or procession route, described in a small text entitled *Pardonus d’Acre*, which will be discussed below (Jacoby, 2005).

2 Even volume 3 of the monumental *A History of the Crusades* by Steven Runciman bears such a title.

In 1291, despite a fierce defense, Acre was seized by Muslim forces. Its fall marked the symbolic end of Latin rule in the Holy Land, although the Crusaders still occupied some Outremer enclaves for some time (Lotan, 2012; France, 2018; Crawford, 2018; Runciman, 1969).

As we can see from this brief excerpt of Acre’s history, in the 12th and 13th centuries the city was experiencing an economic, demographic, cultural, artistic, and religious boom. A careful analysis of the contemporary writings on the pilgrimage movement reveals an intriguing regularity. Both the authors of the guides for pilgrims and the pilgrims themselves paid little attention to Acre. This is surprising insofar as the vast majority of pilgrims from Western Europe then traveled through the city. The pilgrims’ ships arrived at the city port; it was probably here that they found guides for their journey and hired pack animals (Jacobus de Vitry, 1597; Jacoby, 2001; Rubin, 2018b; Limor, 2006; France, 2018). Information about the temples in the city and the importance of this center for religious, political, and economic life can be found in European chronicles (Mattheus Paris, 1866–1869). The Acre workshops also produced the *ampullae*, which pilgrims filled with relics from the Holy Land, such as water from the Jordan River and Holy Sepulchre lamp oil (Mylod, 2013; Jacoby, 2005).

Aryeh Graboïs is one of the scholars who drew attention to the “silence of the sources” about the temples and the pilgrimage practices in the city and its temples. He attempted to explain this mystery in an article published in 1983 (Graboïs, 1983). Wondering why Acre was marginalized or completely ignored by the authors from the 12th and 13th centuries, he concluded that the city, and especially its religious life, could not be fully described for many reasons. Firstly, the inhabitants of the large and bustling metropolis were probably not very pious (Graboïs, 1983). Medieval port cities attracted not only merchants (whose pursuit of profit might have raised the concerns of moralists), but also people of other, much more suspect professions. To corroborate this opinion, the researcher cited an excerpt of one of the letters of Jacques de Vitry, who was the bishop of Acre between 1216 and 1225. He lamented that the city was full of vice and by no means holy (Graboïs, 1983; Lotan, 2019; Mylod, 2013). Secondly, for some medieval authors, Acre was a city situated outside the Holy Land, though directly at its border (Jacoby, 2001, 2004; Mylod, 2013). Ptolemais was also not the scene of noteworthy events recorded in the Bible or in hagiographic texts. That is why pilgrims seeking direct, often physical contact with the sacrum did not regard it as a particularly important place on the route of their journeys (Graboïs, 1983). The silence of the sources from the second half of the 13th century can also be explained by the fact that the pilgrims may not have approved of the efforts to create a pilgrimage center in Acre, which would have offered the chance to

receive numerous indulgences. In Grabois's opinion, worshippers looking for profound religious experiences may have been disappointed when they saw the corrupt conduct of the clergymen from Acre. Their efforts to gain the right to grant indulgences also served to increase their revenue and raise their personal prestige (Grabois, 1983; Lotan, 2019). According to Grabois (1983), only the loss of the city in 1291—which rose to the rank of a symbol of the fall of Frankish rule in Outremer—pricked the consciences of Latin Christians and contributed to a growing interest in this port city.

The importance of Acre as a pilgrimage site in the 13th century was also the subject of David Jacoby's research, which referred to some of Grabois's findings. He emphasized, for example, the opinion of some medieval authors that Acre was not part of the Holy Land (Grabois, 1983; Jacoby, 2001, 2004). At the same time, the scholar stressed what he believed to be a significant role of Acre as an independent and important center of the pilgrimage movement in the second half of the 13th century. In his opinion, this period culminated in the transformation of the port city, which for decades had been merely a gate to the Holy Land, into a sacred space in its own right (Jacoby, 2001). The author goes on to argue that this change took place as a result of the expansion of the Acre temples that were tied to religious institutions forced to leave Jerusalem and other lost places in the Holy Land. These centers of religious worship initially served as substitute pilgrimage sites (Jacoby, 2014; Fleck, 2015). Over time, when the hope of regaining control over original holy centers faded, they became independent sites of religious cult. It was all the easier to accept, as many priceless relics were stored in Acre, having been transferred from various corners of the Holy Land (Lotan, 2019; Jacoby, 2014). Indeed, many of the cult centers created *in situ* could not boast of such valuable artifacts as fragments of the Holy Cross, a cross made of the bathtub in which the infant Christ was bathed, the blood of the Savior collected from under the Cross, fragments of the Holy Sepulcher, and the relics of many saints—including the first martyr, Stephen, and St. Helen, as well as a diadem set with precious stones which King Melchior was said to have received directly from Christ (Pringle, 2009). According to Jacoby, the process of Acre becoming independent as the center of religious worship and the development of the practice of processional visits to the local churches by pilgrims at that time is corroborated by the creation of the above-mentioned *Pardonus d'Acre* (Jacoby, 1993, 2001, 2014; Lotan, 2019). It lists 40 pilgrimage sites, most of which were associated with churches (Anonymous, 1882; Jacoby, 2001). According to the historian, they marked the route of pilgrimages—processions along which Latin pilgrims traveled individually or in groups led by priests. This practice was to take place throughout the year, and to culminate during periods of increased influxes of pilgrims, i.e., during the spring

and autumn cruises between the ports of Europe and Outremer (Jacoby, 2001, 2005). The spread of the custom of visiting temples in this city was supposed to be a response to the expectations of pilgrims who could not go to Jerusalem because of the unstable political situation, although they had put in a lot of effort and incurred the costs of traveling from Europe. Acre and its temples could, at least in part, meet the need to interact with the sacrum in the Holy Land (Jacoby, 2001, 2016).

The findings of both authors regarding the function and status of Acre in the pilgrimage movement of the 12th and 13th centuries widely circulate in the academic community (Lotan, 2019; Myold 2013). Meanwhile, a careful reading of the contemporary guides for pilgrims and accounts of peregrinations prompts us to re-examine some of the theses presented above.

It is difficult not to agree that cities offering many secular and even sinful pleasures were often not given much attention in the 12th and 13th century pilgrimage writings. The habit of glossing over memories and experiences of non-religious experiences is clearly visible in many medieval works of this type.³ However, this practice was not used in each case or by all authors, and some texts contain descriptions of secular attractions. Therefore, it is difficult to fully accept the view that the city was almost completely omitted on account of its dominant secular character. However, this is the situation in many of the texts under analysis. It was common for Acre to be mentioned only casually as a transit city or a landmark. Rorgo Fretellus, the author of one of the earliest, perhaps even the earliest, guidebook for pilgrims compiled after the First Crusade (dated around 1137), cited the name of this city only once in the entire book. He did so by stating that the town of Sepphoris—where St. Anne, the Mother of Our Lady, was born—is located two miles from Nazareth, “on the road that leads to Acre” (Fretellus, 1980; Hamilton, 1994; Davis, 1990). Similarly sparse were the accounts of John of Würzburg, the anonymous author of the accounts of the pilgrimage of Louis IX, Riccoldo of Monte Croce, and many others (Anonymous, 14th century/2012; Godfrey of Beaulieu, 2012; Ricoldus de Monte Crucis, ca. 1290/1864; John of Würzburg, 1890). At the same time, it should be remarked that invoking Acre as a point of reference for the location of other towns and sacred places in Palestine seems to prove that both the city itself and its location were widely known. We can find confirmation of this thesis in *Descriptio Terrae Sanctae* by Burchard of Mount Sion, for example, which contains a comprehensive description of the Holy Land. In order to make his work more lucid, the author decided to divide the land into four quarters and devote a separate chapter

3 For more on this problem, see Mruk (2017).

to each of them. To this end, he chose a point, through which he drew two arbitrary demarcation lines. One of them ran from the north to the south, and the other from the east to the west. Acre was where these lines intersected. As Burchard wrote, the city is not situated in the center of the Holy Land, but it is better known than other cities (Burchard of Mount Sion, 1864).

It is also worth noting that several 13th-century authors described the city, but their attention was focused almost exclusively on its geographical location, size, inhabitants, and secular buildings, especially the port. Even if they wrote about the patriarch's seat and the many church institutions in Acre, the amount of information that they conveyed about religious practices organized there is negligible. Around 1212, Wilbrand of Oldenburg characterized Acre as “a faithful daughter who cherishes and nourishes in herself the remnants of Holy Jerusalem, her mother”, i.e., for the patriarch, the king, the Templars, and the bishops and abbots (Wilbrandus de Oldenburg, 1864, p. 163).⁴ It is noteworthy that he mentioned only one place of worship and the magnificent liturgy celebrated there, and that the information he provided is unique in the context of all the pilgrimage writings in the 12th and 13th centuries (Wilbrandus de Oldenburg, 1864; Pringle, 2009). This is puzzling since Acre was the seat of a Latin bishopric from the 12th century and boasted a number of temples erected by the Crusaders.⁵ They were places of public worship and undoubtedly could have attracted the attention of contemporary authors and become the subject of description—especially since some of these practices, such as the processions led by the Templars with a cross made of Christ's bathtub, may have been truly impressive (Pringle, 2009).

It is bewildering that a city saturated with temples and relics was perceived by the authors of pilgrimage literature mainly as a stronghold of power and a bustling port (if they wrote about it at all) and not as a site of religious cult. However, the explanation that Acre was considered a city outside the “proper” Holy Land, therefore not seen as a religious center, also needs to be re-examined.

Firstly, the opinion that Ptolemais was not within the borders of the Holy Land was found only in some of the surviving texts on pilgrimages. It is also difficult to consider it as universally present in the minds of Latin Christians at the time, for whom the Holy Land—perceived through the prism of the Bible—extended “from the river of Egypt to the great river

4 “reliquias sancte Hierusalem, sue matris, videlicet dominum patriarcham, dominum regem, templarios et alios viros religiosos, episcopos et abbates, sicut fidelis filia in se fovet et enutrit.”

5 The most complete list and description of the history of the temples erected by the Crusaders in Acre can be found in the monumental study by Denys Pringle (2009).

Euphrates” (Genesis 15:18), or more narrowly speaking, “from Dan to Beersheba” (1 Samuel 3.20) (Fidentio de Padua, 1913; Burchard of Mount Zion, ca. 1290/1864). In both cases, it is difficult to consider Acre to be located outside of the Holy Land. Moreover, the most influential chroniclers of the period of the Crusades, such as Albert of Aachen, Fulcher of Chartres, William of Tyre, and others, described Ptolemais as one of the many important cities in the Holy Land that the crusaders fought for (Albert of Aachen, 2007; Fulcher Carnotensis, 1913; William of Tyre, 1943, Jacobus de Vitry, 1597; Mattheus Paris, 1866–1869). The reactions of various Western communities to the fall of the city in 1291 also seems to suggest that the city was then considered an integral part of the Holy Land (Gilmour-Bryson, 2018; Connell, 2018). The writings of Thadeus of Napoli, Riccoldo of Monte Croce, and many of their contemporaries clearly confirm this (Thadeus Neapolitanus, 1873; Ricoldus de Monte Crucis, ca. 1290/1884; Shargir, 2012, 2018). Therefore, the “silence of the sources” likely has other reasons than the supposed belief of 12th and 13th century authors that the capital of the Kingdom of Jerusalem was not located in the Holy Land. Of course, this does not undermine the credibility of the examples indicated by Aryeh Graboïs.⁶

Secondly, even if we assumed that the authors of narratives describing peregrinations commonly recognized Acre as a city outside the Holy Land, therefore paying little attention to it, it is impossible not to notice that we can find numerous examples of medieval texts talking about cult centers located far beyond the territory delineated by the Nile and the Euphrates. The above-mentioned Rorgo Fretellus devoted much less space to Acre than to St. Jean de Maurienne in Sabaudia where the relic of John the Baptist’s finger and the remains of three innocents murdered on the order of Herod were venerated (Fretellus, 1980). On the other hand, Wilbrand of Oldenburg described a journey through Armenia and did not hesitate to mention the liturgy of the Armenians inhabiting it (Wilbrandus de Oldenburg, 1864). Some of the authors crossed not only the borders of the Holy Land, but also religious barriers. Thietmar, who neglected to mention the Christian temples in Acre, devoted a great deal of space to the description of the mosque in Damascus and the religious practices of Muslims (Thietmar, 2011).

The third reason for waving aside Acre in the considerations on pilgrimages also deserves a comment—if we presume a critical attitude towards the local clergymen seeking indulgence privileges and using obtrusive (but only from today’s perspective) promotion of local places of worship. Certainly, drawing more pilgrims could temporarily boost the

6 Graboïs referred to Burchard of Mount Zion, for example (see Burchard of Mount Zion, 1864).

prestige and revenue of the temple guardians. In the period under analysis, however, the measures used for this purpose were common practice and were accepted by the majority of contemporary Christians (Sumption, 1975). Moreover, establishing new pilgrimage sites and various ways of advertising them were often a response to the expectations of the faithful. In the case of the Holy Land, we can clearly see that the gradual shrinking of the lands controlled by the Crusaders, which had been underway since the end of the 12th century, led to the development of worship and a specific “concentration” of holy places and venerated relics in the areas that were still occupied by the Latins.⁷ Finding or identifying some of them, even those that had been forgotten for centuries and were suddenly “discovered,” did not raise any doubts among the pilgrims. This was the case, for example, with the site where the nails with which Christ was nailed to the cross were forged. The cult of these instruments of the Lord’s Passion in a village situated at the foot of Mount Carmel is only mentioned in texts from the 13th century (Anonymous, 14th century/2012). An analysis of the descriptions of medieval peregrinations clearly shows that the pilgrims were ready to recognize as authentic and worthy of veneration almost all sacred places, relics, and memorabilia, even those whose authenticity was blatantly implausible.⁸ During the long, difficult, dangerous, and costly pilgrimage to the Holy Land, the desire to have one’s expectations fulfilled probably very often took precedence over criticism.

In the surviving texts, it is also difficult to find the authors’ critical opinions about the worldly splendor or the richness of the temples visited. The idea of the poor and modest Church, which appeared in the 12th and 13th centuries, was not widely accepted enough to allow the hypothesis that most of the authors of these pilgrimage texts omitted the description of religious life in Acre on account of their reluctance towards stately sacred buildings and the wealth of the local clergy.

A separate comment is also required on the view expressed by David Jacoby that *Pardonus d’Acre* constitutes evidence of the living practice—already visible early in the second half of the 13th century—of processional visits to Acre temples by pilgrims coming to the city. The authenticity and dating of the work (to the years 1259–1263) do not raise serious doubts among scholars today (Jacoby, 2001; Pringle, 2012). It is currently known from one manuscript, dated to the 14th century and kept in the British Library (reference no.: Harley MS 2253; Jacoby, 2001; Pringle,

7 For more on the impact of the shifting of the borders of the Crusader states on the practice of pilgrimage, see Mylod (2013).

8 For example, the Inn of the Good Samaritan or the house of Lazarus from Jesus’s parable were considered to be real places (Anonymous, 1874; Baldi, 1982).

2012). Many different texts were copied in this codex: a guide to the Holy Land was placed alongside *Pardonus d’Acre*.⁹ Both works were copied one after the other, but there is no evidence to suggest that they were created as two complementary parts of one work. The fact that both were transcribed in the Anglo-Norman version of the French language allows for a cautious hypothesis that the texts existed together before being copied into the codex. The use of vernacular language may suggest that they were addressed to a wider audience, but—from the perspective of Western Christianity—to a narrower circle than would be the case with the use of the more universal Latin. The first of the texts is a rather typical 13th-century guide to the Holy Land. The route of peregrination described in it begins, of course, from Acre, but it would be fruitless to look for any information about the city and its temples (Anonymous, 1882). The second text, *Pardonus d’Acre*, is an enumeration of the churches located in the city and its suburbs and the indulgences that could be obtained for visiting them (Anonymous, 1882). There is not even the slightest mention of the exterior of temples, their location relative to each other, or the distance between them. Moreover, sanctuaries are identified with a laconic, usually abbreviated, name or enigmatic indication of the institution that owned them.¹⁰ Such a list of indulgences is in fact completely incomprehensible to a reader who does not know the city and its churches. Therefore, it can be assumed with a high degree of probability that *Pardonus d’Acre* was written by an author who knew Acre very well, probably by a clergyman, and that it was likely addressed to readers who were also closely associated with the city. If we adopt such a hypothesis, we should look at this text as a document intended for internal use, and not for wide distribution among Christians outside the Holy Land. This may provide partial explanation of why only one surviving copy is known today.

However, the question of the extent to which *Pardonus d’Acre* remains unambiguous is evidence of the established custom of processional visits to the temples in Acre. The silence of the sources related to the pilgrimage movement mentioned above may indicate a marginal, at least in the minds of pilgrims, significance of this practice. At the same time, the compilation of the list of 40 pilgrimage sites in one city indicates the creation of a large-scale religious project in Acre. The existence of such a plan is also supported by the above-mentioned findings of David Jacoby, who showed that the order in which the temples were listed corresponds to the possible

9 The codex consists of 142 cards and includes many different texts, in both Latin and vernacular languages. *Pardonus d’Acre* is on cards 70r–70v; see the British Library catalog for more details.

10 For example, *a Seint Nicholas, as Alemanys, a Sepulcre, a Iosaphat, a La Latyne, a la Magdalene, or a Bedlehem* (Anonymous, 1882).

route of the procession designed as so to visit, in a certain logical order, the most important centers of religious life in the city (Jacoby, 2001). Taking into account these observations, the thesis can be formulated that *Pardonus d'Acre* is the proof of the development of a project among the Acre clergy to revive religious practices in the city, which was one of the last centers where the Latins still lived in the Holy Land in the second half of the 13th century. In view of the abandoned hope for a prompt recapture of Jerusalem, it was probably decided to make Acre an important hub of religious activity, where pilgrims arriving from Europe would be able to receive indulgences and participate in attractive religious practices, like processions that imitated the ceremonies known from Jerusalem and Bethlehem.¹¹ Such measures could undoubtedly be aimed at boosting the number of Latin pilgrims visiting the city. This, in turn, could bring not only a temporary increase in the prestige and revenue of the local clergy (as pointed out by Graboïs), but in the long run it could raise the rank of Acre as a religious center in Outremer and thus stir up fervor for crusades among Western Christians (Lotan, 2019)—particularly because it was well-known that the survival of the Frankish states in the Holy Land was contingent on constant assistance from the West.

The endeavors made at the beginning of the second half of the 13th century, such as the efforts to obtain indulgence privileges, the preparation of *Pardonus d'Acre*, and the alleged organization of the processions did not likely yield any spectacular gains. The silence of the sources related to the pilgrimage movement is the best proof of this. It should be emphasized, however, that the chances of making Acre a major pilgrimage site were then severely constrained. Firstly, Jerusalem and other holy sites located in Muslim-controlled territories were still accessible to pilgrims coming from the West, although to a limited extent.¹² Thus, Acre could not become the most important destination of their peregrination. Secondly, the struggles to raise the profile of the city as an independent center of worship only gained momentum around the mid-13th century. It was not a favorable time for such activity. The news of the military operations of the Mamluks under Baibars reached the West and, while mobilizing society to limited crusade operations, they may have also discouraged pilgrimages (Maier, 1998). Moreover, these efforts lasted only a few years. Admittedly, Acre did not fall until 1291, i.e., about 30 years after *Pardonus d'Acre*, but the subsequent defeats of the Franks in Outremer (Nazareth in 1263, Antioch in 1268, and Tripoli in 1289) made people painfully aware of the weakness

11 For more on the importance of processional practices in Jerusalem and other sites in the Holy Land, see Lotan (2019).

12 For extensive information on this issue, see Mylod (2013).

of the Latins’ presence in the Holy Land, calling into question the purposefulness of any far-reaching plans and quenching the enthusiasm for such plans (Runciman, 1969). That is probably why the three decades turned out to be too short a period for the authors of medieval pilgrimage guides to develop a conviction in the importance of Acre as a pilgrimage destination.

In the literature to date on the marginal presence of Acre in pilgrimage writings, relatively little attention (apart from a small mention by Grabois) has been devoted to one, in my opinion, important element. For the pilgrims travelling to the Holy Land, the areas of Palestine, Syria, and Egypt were foremost the scene of biblical events. Therefore, their attention was focused on souvenirs and places directly related to the stories described in the Old and New Testaments.¹³ The guidebooks for pilgrims and the travelogues of pilgrims influenced by them were constructed as a narrative about visiting places, the existence of which every reader (or, more often, listener) knew: the stories about the lives and experiences of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. Characteristically, in these works, reaching the scene of the event and interacting with the relics were emphasized, while less significance was given to the location or appearance of the venerated souvenirs. As a result, most of the currently known pilgrimage texts are laconic lists of places, temples, and relics that are worth visiting (Mruk, 2005). They identify individual holy places while describing them almost exclusively with references to the Bible. For example, a reader of the work of Philip of Savona would learn that two miles from Mount Tabor lies the town of Nain, where Jesus resurrected a widow’s son (Philip of Savona, 2012). In turn, Rorgo Fretellus, depicting the town of Cedar located five miles from Korozain, used a direct quote from Psalm 119 from the Septuagint: “Cedar excelentissima civitas illa, de qua in psalmo: Cum habitantibus Cedar multum incola fuit anima mea” (Fretellus, 1980). Written this way, the texts did not evoke a vivid image of the Holy Land, but they conveyed, in a comprehensible way and by referring to common knowledge, the most important information from the reader’s point of view. In such descriptions of the Holy Land, Acre had to be pushed to the margins. As stated before, Ptolemais was not center stage of major biblical events and was mentioned only a few times in the Old Testament. As we learn from the Book of Judges, Asher did not drive out of Acre the Canaanites and “the Canaanites who lived around Israel” (Judges 1:31–32). The city is also referred to in Maccabees 1 and 2, and—as is written in the Acts of the Apostles—St. Paul stopped there on his way from Tyre to Jerusalem (Acts 21:7; Horbury, 2006). None of these events, like the alleged visit of

13 For more on this issue, see Mruk (2017).

St. Peter, were permanently commemorated in Acre. Only in the above-mentioned work by Wilibrand of Oldenburg can we find an attempt to tie Acre with biblical history. In addition to the description of the fortified port and the populous city, the author offers a laconic portrayal of the temple of living worship, erected in the spot where the Mother of God rested when she visited Ptolemais.¹⁴ This information is not found in other 13th-century pilgrimage writings, which leads us to suppose that it reflects a legend that did not persist in the minds of contemporary pilgrims. Providing information about the temple located in the city and the worship organized in it only when it could be directly related to the biblical story (regardless of how credible it is) seems to confirm the assumption that the silence of the sources is primarily caused by the fact that, in the eyes of the authors of the time, Acre was not the site of important events described in the Holy Scriptures. Compared to Nazareth, Cana Galilee, and Mount Carmel—just a few kilometers away—Ptolemais was simply a city without a well-known and admired sacred past. In the 12th and 13th centuries, the “good monasteries” in Acre which were reported by the anonymous pilgrim of Piacenza in the 6th century (Antoninus Martyr, 1879) were probably no longer remembered. This is likely why for 12th-century pilgrims it was an important and bustling port city, but with a relatively short and not very attractive tradition of religious life. In the 13th century, it undoubtedly boasted magnificent temples, valuable relics, the seat of the patriarch, and the canons of the Holy Sepulcher, but it was still impossible to describe it by mentioning commonly known biblical events. Paradoxically, it was the location of Acre in the Holy Land, being in the vicinity of better-known, more imagination-provoking and more revered holy places, that stood behind the aforementioned “silence of the sources.” Thus, Acre was the faithful daughter of Jerusalem: she kept her most precious relics, but remained in the shadow of her holy mother.

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14 “Domina vero nostra intravit, et ubi ipsa requievit, illic ecclesia pulchra est edificata, que in magna habetur veneratione” (Wilibrandus de Oldenborg, 1864, p. 164).

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