

CHRISTIAN LEGENDS OF THE TERRACE OF MOUNT CARMEL

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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

As in the case of the Cave of Elias below the terrace, those legends associated with the terrace itself, are best understood against their physical and historical background.

Mount Carmel is triangular in shape, its base running south, parallel to the coastal plain, from Haifa to el- Husam (HaHotem), for a distance of 34 k. The sides, each 22k, converge toward a blunted apex, Keren Hakarmel. The north-western angle of the mountain advances into the sea to constitute a promontory, limiting the bay of Haifa to the west. The plateau on the promontory, where stand today the lighthouse, the cableway station and «Stella Maris» monastery, is known as the terrace, perhaps the site in Haifa most charged with historical associations ¹.

That a pagan cult was practised on the promontory was confirmed by the accidental discovery in the garden of the monastery of an ex-voto stone foot (ankle and toes) dedicated to Jupiter Carmel of Heliopolis ². No temple was connected with the cult ³, an affirmation of Tacitus borne out by the absence of monumental remains from the Roman period on the site.

The first edifice on the terrace was a byzantine monastery (5th-6th cents.), probably named after St. Marina and burnt down, presumably by the Persians in 614 ⁴. Its abun-

¹ E. FRIEDMAN, *The Latin Hermits*, Rome 1979, pp. 38ff.

² AVI-YONAH, *Israel Exploration Journal* 2 (1952) 118-124.

³ TACITUS, *Historiarum Libri*, II,78; K. GALLING *Oer Gott Karmel*, Festschrift A.Alt, Tübingen 1953, 105-125; E. FRIEDMAN, *The Latin Hermits*, 147.

⁴ FLORIAN, *Fouilles opérées au Mont-Carmel en Palestine*, in «Etudes Carmelitaines» 4 (1914) 109; E. FRIEDMAN, *The Latin Hermits*, p. 84f.; A.

dant remains sufficed to remind later generations that a «monastery of the Greeks» ⁵, or a «church of the Greeks» ⁶, as it was also called, had once occupied the spot. Naturally the Greek-Orthodox attributed its construction to St. Helena, as they did many other byzantine monasteries in the country.

A watch-tower was erected by the Templars in the ruins of the byzantine monastery, remarked on by Theodoricus as early as c. 1172 ⁷. It was pulled down by Abdallah Pasha in 1821, to give place to his summer residence, which he proudly designated, his «Palazzo» ⁸. The Greek-Orthodox supposing the watch-tower to have been part of the byzantine monastery, knew it as the Tower of St. Helena. The Catholics took over their terminology and legend ⁹.

During the Crusades, the Greek monks built a small monastery where the «Stella Maris» monastery presently stands, and which they dedicated to St. Marina; where as the Crusaders knew it as the Abbey of St. Margaret, Marina's name in the West ¹⁰. Giambattista di S. Alessio O.C.D., in 1766, drew the ground plan of the Greek monastery, before erecting a large Carmelite monastery in its place. The plan shows 1) a cistern-like tomb 2) a small square oratory, presumably funerary, adherent to the rock wall of the tomb, of the sort known as «Makam» 3) a cloister 4) a wall which Giambattista postulated had been that of a church enclosing the makam, but which was more probably, an enclosure wall ¹¹.

OVADIAH, Qadmoniot 33 (1976) 6-15 [he does not include this monastery in his list of bizantine monasteries].

⁵ ALI BEY EL-ABBASSI, *Viajes por Africa y Asia*, Barcelona 1943, p. 425.

⁶ FLORENCIO DEL N.J., *El Monte Carmelo*, Madrid 1924, p. 309; E. FRIEDMAN, *The Medieval Abbey of St. Margaret of Mount Carmel*, in «Ephemerides Carmeliticae» 22 (1971) 314 [he wrongly assigns the «Church of the Greeks» to the chapel of the Madonna in front of the cistern tomb of the makam].

⁷ TOBLER, *Theodorici Libellus*.

⁸ E. FRIEDMAN, *The Villa of Abdallah*, in «Teresianum» [EphemCarm], 35 (1984) 403-421.

⁹ FLORENCIO DEL N.J., *El Monte Carmelo*, passim (esp. p. 4).

¹⁰ J.C. LAURENT, *Peregrinatores Medii Aevii Quattuor*, Lipsiae 1873, p. 21; E. FRIEDMAN, *The Latin Hermits*, p. 89; C. KOPP, *Elias und Christentum auf dem Karmel*, Paderborn 1929, 105f.

¹¹ GIAMBATTISTA DI S. ALESSIO, *Compendio Istorico*, Torino 1780, 306f.; C. KOPP, *Elias und Christentum*, 105f.; E. FRIEDMAN *The Medieval Abbey*, p. 326f.

The makam was pre-Crusader, to judge from Yakut¹² and post-byzantine according to Kopp¹³. The cloister dated from after the Third Crusade since it is not mentioned by earlier travellers, such as, Benjamin of Tudela, c. 1165¹⁴ Joannes Phocas, c. 1170¹⁵, Theodoricus, c. 1175¹⁶, nor Ralph of Coggeshall, 1187¹⁷. True, the last-named does refer to «the church of S. Elias the Prophet, on a high rock which faces Acre, but he runs together the watch-tower of the Templars on the edge of the terrace and the hermitage of S. Elias at his cave below the terrace¹⁸.

The cistern-tomb contained, inter alia, a flat shelf of rock on which the body was laid. The Carmelites, following local tradition, knew it as the «Bed of Elijah»¹⁹. The original entrance into the tomb was through a hole in the roof closed by a stone²⁰. This structure unusual for a tomb gave rise to the legend that Elijah had hidden there from the pursuits of the wicked queen, Jezebel²¹, though Cotovicus tells us that Elijah hid in his cave below the terrace²², a most unlikely place in which to hide, since it was open to the public.

The elianic legend of the terrace transferred from the Cave of Elijah below. Crusader sources are unanimous in placing the ordinary abode of Elijah on Mount Carmel in the cave that bears his name, below the terrace²³; they are equally unanimous in locating St. Margaret to the terrace

¹² YAKUT, *Mudjam al-buldan*, Beirut, t.IV, 1957, «Karmil»; E. FRIEDMAN, *the Medieval Abbey*, p. 320; C. KOOP, *Elias und Christentum*, p. 93f. (where C. Kopp offers an alternative account of the makam).

¹³ C. KOOP, *Elias und Christentum*, p. 106.

¹⁴ Y. D. EISENSTEIN *Otzar Masa'ot* (Hebrew), Tel Aviv 1969 (reprint).

¹⁵ J. PHOCAS, *The Pilgrimage of Joannes Phocas in the Holy Land*, in P. P. T.S., vol.5, p. 35.

¹⁶ TOBLER, *Theodorici Libellus*.

¹⁷ RALPH OF COGGESHALL, *De Expugnatione Terrae Sanctae Libellus*, Rolls Series, vol.66, p. 231; C. KOOP, *Elias und Christentum*, passim (esp. 82); E. FRIEDMAN, *the Medieval Abbey*, 295-348 (esp. 316-317).

¹⁸ C. KOOP *Elias und Christentum*, p. 96.

¹⁹ IDEM p. 31; E. FRIEDMAN *the Medieval Abbey*, p. 328; GIAMBATTISTA Di S.A., *Compendio Istorico*, p. 307.

²⁰ E. FRIEDMAN *The Medieval Abbey*, p. 308.

²¹ A. ROCCHETTA, *Peregrinatione di terra Santa*, Palermo 1630, p. 369.

²² J. COTOVICUS, *Itinerarium Hierosolymitanum et Syriacum*, Antwerpiae 1619, p. 128.

²³ C. KOOP, *Elias und Christentum*, pp. 78-83, esp. 81.

above ²⁴. How then did it come about that a rival place of cult for the prophet was established on the terrace. Since all (legendary) accounts linking Elijah to the terrace date from post-Crusader times, Kopp was justified, indeed, he showed perspicacity, in postulating that Elijah had been transferred from the cave below the terrace to the cave above, now under the High Altar of the «Stella Maris» church. He was also aware that such a transfer could only have occurred after the Christians had been dislodged from the Cave of Elijah and the memory of St Margaret on the terrace had fallen into oblivion ²⁵. These two conditions for the transfer of the legend are met by the situation created after the fall of Acre in 1291.

«After the triumphs of the Mamluks» writes Michaud, in his usually brilliant style, «not only the Christians who lived in Phoenicia and Palestine were annihilated or forced to flee, but, in addition, the number of Christians in all the neighbouring regions, wherever the Crusaders had passed, were reduced to less than half. The war against Islam had irritated the Muslims, who, taking advantage of their victories, did not allow the Christians to live among them anymore, and regarding them as their most cruel enemies, condemned them everywhere to exile, slavery and every kind of misery. Most churches built in the towns of Damascus, Aleppo, Cairo, Edessa and Iconium, were demolished or abandoned. The grottoes of Lebanon and the mountains of Judea, the cells of Sinai and of Carmel, the solitudes of Memphis and Scete, lost their pious dwellers and ceased to echo their prayers» ²⁶.

Where the coastal region of Palestine was concerned the Mamluks adopted a «scorched earth» policy, destroying the coastal towns for fear they might be used again by the enemy in a future Crusade. After the capture and destruction of Acre in 1291, the Muslim troops overran Haifa and Mount Carmel, taking over the Cave of Elijah from the Christians and destroying the monastery of the Greek monks on the terrace ²⁷. The Carmelites in Wadi'ain es-Siah

²⁴ E. FRIEDMAN, *The Latin Hermits*, p. 88ff.; IDEM, *The Medieval Abbey*, pp. 298-300.

²⁵ C. COOP, *Elias und Christentum*, p. 122.

²⁶ J.T. MICHAUD, *Histoire des Croisades*, III, Paris 1856, p. 339.

²⁷ MARINUS SANUTUS, *Liber Secretorum*, Jerusalem 1972 (reprint), p.

abandoned the site and fled, probably via Athlit, not to return to Haifa until three hundred and forty years had passed.

It appears that it took more than a century before the elianic legend could install itself on the terrace, since it is not reported by any European traveller during the fourteenth cent., such as, for example, Marinus Sanutus (1321)²⁸, Humbert de Dijon (1332)²⁹, Jacques de Verano (1335)³⁰, John Maundeville (1336)³¹, Ludolph von Suchem (1348)³².

De Lannoy, c. 1401, could still recall a place on Mount Carmel where St. Margaret had been martyred³³, a legend dependent on the earlier one of the Greek-Orthodox monks of the 13th cent., who claimed that her relics were conserved in their monastery on the terrace³⁴.

Roberto di Sanseverino (1458/9) recounts that the Blessed Virgin, St. John the Evangelist and St. Luke met some disciples of Christ on the promontory of Mount Carmel, the first association of the Virgin Mary with the place. It may be that he also linked the episode of 2 Kings 1, 9-14 to the promontory³⁵.

Nicola Calciuri (c. 1461-1466), mistook the Fort of St. Margaret on the edge of the terrace for a medieval convent of Carmelites, but makes no mention of St. Elias on the terrace; on the contrary, he situates him in the cave below³⁶. It should be recalled however that he was not an eye-witness,

86; E. FRIEDMAN *the medieval Abbey*, p. 306-307.

²⁸ HUMBERT DE DIJON, in RB 62 (1955) 518.

²⁹ J. DE VERANO, *Liber Peregrinationis*, in «Revue de l'Orient Latin» 3 (1895) 155-302, esp. 299.

³⁰ J. MAUNDEVILLE, *The Book of Sir John Maundeville, A.D. 1322-1356*, London 1848, pp. 127-282, esp. 142-143.

³¹ LUDOLPH VON SUCHEM, *Description of the Holy Land*, in P. P. T.S., vol. XII, p. 64.

³² PIERRE DE PENNIS, *Libellus de Locis Ultramarinis*, in «Revue de l'Orient Latin» 9 (1902) 378; E. FRIEDMAN *the medieval Abbey*, p. 307.

³³ G. LANNOY, *Voyages et Ambassades (1399-1450)*, 1840, ed. Mons, p. 66; C. KOOP dates his visit to 1422.

³⁴ E. FRIEDMAN, *the medieval Abbey*, p. 298; C. KOOP, *Elias und Christentum*, p. 121.

³⁵ ROBERTO DE SANSEVERINO; for the Text, see N. GEAGEA, *Maria Decoro del Carmelo*, Roma 1988, p. 93.

³⁶ N. CALCIURI, *Vita Fratrum*, in «EphemCarm». 6 (1955) 241-531, esp. 384-385; E. FRIEDMAN, *Nicola Calciuri*, in «Carmelus» 32 (1985) 60-72.

not having gone on pilgrimage to the Holy Land himself.

Anselmo Adorn (1470/1) knew that on the southern slope of Mount Carmel Melchisedech met Abraham returning from the slaughter of Malech (sic) offering him bread and wine; but has nothing to say about the terrace ³⁷.

Santo Brasca (1480) gives an excellent description of Wadi'ain es Siah; but is silent about the terrace ³⁸.

Bernard de Breytenbach (1483/4) writes well about Athlit and Wadi'ain es-Siah, but overlooks the terrace completely ³⁹.

Francesco Suriano (1485) is the first author, according to Kopp, explicitly to connect Elijah to the makam on the terrace. He writes:

«At the top of the said mountain (Mount Carmel) there is a church built in honour of the Prophet Elias and in that place he did penitence. This church is all painted and historiated and here the Order of the Carmelites had its beginning» ⁴⁰.

William of Harlem (1489) visited the same church and reported that the ceiling was covered with mosaics, than which he had seen nothing finer ⁴¹. William adds that «in this church there is an altar for Mary, the Mother of God, consecrated by St. James the Apostle, after the Assumption of the Virgin» ⁴². William is the first clear witness to the consecration of the oratory of the makam to the Blessed Virgin Mary, using the Greek term «Theotokos» for the expression «Mother of God». It suggests that the Greeks had returned to the terrace and were making use of the makam by the time of his pilgrimage.

Suriano, a contemporary of William, strangely attributes

³⁷ J. HEERS - G. DE GOER, *Itinéraires d'Anselmo Adorno en terre Sainte, 1470/71*, Paris 1978, p. 314.

³⁸ SANTO BRASCA, *Viaggio in Terra Santa di Santo Brasca (1480)*, Milano 1966, p. 135.

³⁹ B. ZIMMERMAN, *Le Sacré Mont Carmel et les Carmes*, in «*Analecta OCD*» 6 (1931) 80-114, esp. 88.

⁴⁰ TH. BELLORINI-E. HOADE, *Treatise on the Holy Land*, Jerusalem 1949, p. 175; C. KOOP, *Elias und Christentum*, p. 167.

⁴¹ W. OF HARLEM (*for Text*, see GABRIEL DE S. MARIE-MADELEINE in «*Analecta OCD*» 5[1931]210.4); E. FRIEDMAN *Te Latin Hermits*, pp. 206-207.

⁴² C. KOOP, *Elias und Christentum*, 167-168.

the church on the terrace to Elijah, contrary both to William and to all subsequent travellers, who dedicate the makam to the Blessed Virgin Mary; but we should note that, as Suriano himself states, where Haifa was concerned, «I never dared alight on that ground for fear of that bestial people» ⁴³. His information is therefore not all that accurate.

One can already draw the conclusion that by the end of the 15th. cent. the Greeks had returned to the makam and had installed Elijah in the tomb and the Blessed Virgin in the oratory, substituting her for St. Margaret, long since forgotten.

Joos van Ghistele (1572) ignores the terrace and its makam, though he mentions the Cave of Elijah below and has precise remarks to make about Wadi'ain es-Siah, where, incidentally he locates the first chapel consecrated to the Immaculate Virgin Mary by the disciples of the Lord ⁴⁴. As we shall see, this legend was later transferred to the terrace.

André Thevet (1575) offers the first documentary evidence of the return of the Greek monks to Mount Carmel, though he is not clear about where on the mountain he met them. He, incidentally took them for Carmelites of a kind, which is not to credit, since they were evidently Greek monks. However, what he writes about them is of great interest: «There is a monastery on the mountain where I remained for two days. I saw religious there, who live very solitary lives, cultivating the soil, tending gardens and fishing. They are good men, subject to the Patriarch and Bishop of Antioch... They told me that the Bishops of Greece and Armenia send them a little money every year to help them get by... My friend, Candiot, has informed me that two years ago, Arab thieves of the country massacred these poor religious. I also know that in 1566, their Patriarch sent others, who, to live in peace, paid tribute to a certain Faras Tared, one of the most redoubtable Arabs of the country» ⁴⁵. Since Thevet mentions that the monks lived in a monastery on the mountain, we tentatively presume that they had re-installed themselves in the monastery of St. Marina (Abbey of St.

⁴³ F. SURIANO [see TH. BELLORINI-E. HOADE, *Treatise on the Holy Land*, p. 175].

⁴⁴ JOOS VAN GHISTELE, *Tvoyage van Mher Joos van Ghistele*, Te Ghent 1572, p. 65.

⁴⁵ A. THEVET, *Cosmographie Universelle*, Paris 1575, pp. 187-188.

Margaret) on the terrace. In any case, the Greek monks were not to be found on the site when the Carmelite, Fr. Prosper took it over in 1631. It is interesting, nonetheless, to note that the Greek Orthodox monks in Damascus, demanded full payment (? compensation) from Fr. Prosper before agreeing that he should take over the terrace from them ⁴⁶.

Giovanni Zuallardo (1584) confirms the account of previous travellers. He writes: «On top of it (Cape Carmel) one sees an old castle and a church dedicated to the Madonna, under which there is another of the Prophet Elijah, where he hid in his flight from Jezebel» ⁴⁷.

Giovanni Francesco Alcarotti (1596) in turn confirms Zuallardo's account. He writes: On the top of it (the promontory) we saw some edifices, quite ruined and we were told that it had been a good fortress which faced the shore and there a fine church and monastery are to be seen, built in honour of the Most Blessed Virgin Mother of God, but neither here nor elsewhere on this shore did we land, so as not to run into trouble with bad people, though we learnt from our Fathers (the priests with them) of the existence of the very cave in which Elijah the Prophet hid, when he fled from the hands of the most cruel Jezebel» ⁴⁸.

Aquilante Rocchetta (1599), echoes the preceding witness. He writes: «There also is Mount Carmel, above which one sees an ancient fort and a church dedicated to the Madonna, under which there is a cave of the Prophet Elijah, where he hid in his flight from Jezebel; and on that mountain he prayed God to send rain in Israel; he sent his servant seven times to the seaside to see if a little cloud should appear and the seventh time a little one arose» ⁴⁹. We may presume that Elijah prayed on the terrace, since he sent his servant seven times to the seaside.

Joannes Cotovicus, whom we have had occasion to mention, made his pilgrimage in 1598/9; he visited Mount Carmel, recounting that «on the western slope of the mountain (the promontory) a ruined fort can be seen; near it is an ancient sanctuary called after the Blessed Virgin (as some

⁴⁶ BATTISTA DELLA MISERICORDIA, *Il Monte Carmelo*, Milano 1925, 53.

⁴⁷ G. ZUALLARDO, *Devotissimo Viaggio di Gierusalemme*, Roma 1595, p. 269.

⁴⁸ G. F. ALCAROTTI, *Del Viaggio di Terra Sancta*, Novara 1596, p. 189.

⁴⁹ A. ROCCHETTA, *Peregrinatione di Terra Santa*, p. 369.

want); today it is ruined and abandoned. Not far off, there is another sanctuary dedicated to the Blessed Prophet Elijah, where he hid and they offer to show his cave» ⁵⁰. Cotovicus confirms the dedication of the makam to the Blessed Virgin Mary, but ignores the elianic legend of the cave under the makam. He only knows of the Cave of Elijah below the terrace, where he says Elijah hid. The makam was abandoned and ruined, confirming that at the end of the 16th cent., no Greek monks were to be found there, who could have informed him about the legend of the cistern-tomb connected with the makam.

The Franciscan, Antonio, de Castillo, (1628) visited the promontory of which he gives quite a detailed description, just three years before the arrival of Fr Prosper. After inspecting the Cave of Elijah, which he found in charge of a «big santon, who took care of the place», he climbed up to the top of the mountain, where he observed «some edifices of great sumptuosity, certain proof of a church of great proportions». He must have been referring to the remains of the byzantine monastery. He goes on to say: «It is there that the Prophet stood when he brought down fire from heaven which burnt up and consumed the soldiers of King Ahab. ...Inside is a great convent which belonged to the Carmelite Fathers. It was founded in the place where the four hundred and fifty prophets were killed»... By «great convent» Castillo was not probably referring to the watch-tower of the Templars, which Doubdan (1652) considered capable of housing thirty to forty persons and which he took for a monastery, though admitting that it looked more like a fortress ⁵¹.

Castillo makes no mention of the makam and its legends, probably because there were no Greek monks anymore on the spot to inform him ⁵².

The Carmelites return to Mount Carmel (1631) ⁵³. When, in the 17th cent., the Carmelites re-established their monastic life on Mount Carmel, they brought back with them a number of conceptions, or, should one say, misconceptions,

⁵⁰ J. COTOVICUS *Itinerarium*, p. 128.

⁵¹ J. DOUBDAN *Le Voyage de la terre Sainte*, Paris 1665, pp. 476-477.

⁵² A. DE CASTELLO, *El Devoto peregrino*, Madrid 1656, pp. 126-127.

⁵³ FLORENCIO DEL N.J., *El Monte Carmelo*, pp. 284ff.

concerning their origins on the mountain, developed during the three hundred and forty years of exile. They knew, or should have known that Albert, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem had instructed the Latin Hermits, their forerunners to build an oratory near the Spring of Elijah on Mount Carmel ⁵⁴. The Bull of Urban IV (28th August 1262) ⁵⁵ was there to inform them that the Father Provincial of the Carmelite Province of the Holy Land had embarked on a project for the construction of a sumptuous monastery on Mount Carmel, where the Order had its origin (i.e. in Wadi'ain es-Siah) ⁵⁶.

The Carmelites also carried with them to Europe the «Golden Legend» of their hereditary succession from Elijah, of which the First Rubric of the Constitutions of 1281 offers the classical expression. It reads:

«Certain Brothers, new to the Order, are unable to reply correctly to those who enquire from whom and how our Order originated. We desire to indicate to them in these terms how they should answer:

Therefore, we render witness to the truth in saying, that from the days of the pious dwellers of Mount Carmel, Elijah and Elisha, an uninterrupted succession of holy men, of the Old and New Testaments, sincerely in love with a life of solitude on the mountain, without a doubt, had lived there, near the Spring of Elijah, in holy penitence» ⁵⁷.

In spite of historical sources available to them, there were Carmelites who began to compose pseudo-histories of their origins ⁵⁸. It may be that the Black Plague, which killed off one third of the population of Europe was responsible for the break in tradition. The worst offender among these

⁵⁴ H. CLARKS-B. EDWARDS, *The Rule of St. Abert*, Aylesford-Kensington 1973, p. 85.

⁵⁵ BULLARIUM CARMELITANUM, I, 28.

⁵⁶ B. BUGATTI, *Relatio de Excavationibus archaeologicis in Monte Carmelo*, in «Acta OCD» 3 (1958) 277-278; 6 (1961) 66-70; 7 (1962) 127-130 [for reports on the excavations].

⁵⁷ R. HENDRIKS, *La Succession Héréditaire*, in «Etudes Carmelitaines» 35 (1956) 34-81, esp. 35-36.

⁵⁸ L. SAGGI, *Santi del Carmelo*, Roma 1972, pp. 23-108 (for a critical examination of Carmelite historical sources).

pseudo-historians was undoubtedly Philip Ribot, Father Provincial of the Carmelite Province of Catalonia (c. 1370); he succeeded in getting the products of his fertile imagination accepted by the Order as authentic accounts of the origin of the Carmelites on Mount Carmel ⁵⁹. Ribot, for instance, attributed the monastery in Wadi 'ain es-Siah to Aimery, Patriarch of Antioch, who, apparently, confided the execution to his brother, Berthold, whom he had appointed Prior of the Latin Hermits on Mount Carmel, in 1121. When Aimery died, Albert, Patriarch of Jerusalem undertook its completion, in 1199,renovating the oratory constructed in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary by the predecessors of the Hermits, after the Ascension of Christ (sic). In fact, Albert reached Acre only in 1206, and far from renovating the oratory, he instructed the Latin Hermits to build the first one ever to be seen on the site. Joos de Ghistele (1572), echoes Ribot when he writes that the first chapel to be consecrated to the Immaculate Virgin Mary had been built (in the wadi) by the disciples of Christ ⁶⁰.

Nicola Calciuri (d. 1466), locates the residence of Elijah in the wadi ⁶¹. These and previous legends would eventually find their way to the terrace.

Philippe de la Trinité (1639), is quite sure that the makam on the terrace was the first chapel in the world raised in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary ⁶², adding that this occurred after her death ⁶³. While he locates Elijah to his cave below the terrace, he observed on the terrace «the ruins of the monastery of the Carmelites from the time of King Louis of France» ⁶⁴, thus displacing the monastery built in the wadi by the Provincial in 1263, to the terrace, a mere three to four kilometers and, at the same time, confusing it altogether with the watch-tower of the Templars, built in the

⁵⁹ PH RIBOT, *Decem Libros de Institutione et peculiaribus Gestis Religiosorum Carmelitarum*, in «Speculum Carmelitanum», Antwerpiae 1680, I, pp. 7-114; R. HENDRIKS, *La Successiion Hereditaire*, p. 69; G. WESSELS, in «Analecta O.Carm». 3 (1914) 302-320.368-380.449-463.

⁶⁰ JOOS VAN GHISTELE, *Tvoyage*, p. 65.

⁶¹ N. CALCIURI *Vita Fratrum*, pp. 242-531, esp. 384-385; E. FRIEDMAN, *Nicola Calciuri*, pp. 60-72.

⁶² PHILIPPE DE LA TRINITÉ, *Voyages d'Orient*, Lyon 1669, p. 153.

⁶³ *Ivi*, p. 472.

⁶⁴ *Ivi*, p. 153.

12th cent..

Ambrosius of St. Arsenius, the first Carmelite to die on Mount Carmel, arrived at Acre., 14th August 1634. In a letter to his General, he tells how, after inspecting the Cave of Elijah below, he visited the terrace above it; where he saw the very first church in the world erected in honour of the Mother of God. Behind the altar was the cave where Elijah hid⁶⁵, apparently the only legend connected with the cistern-tomb of the makam at that time. Ambrosius was evidently recounting what Fr. Prosper had been telling him.. We learn from Giambattista di S. Alessio (1780) that Fr Prosper, on coming into possession of the terrace had wanted to rebuild the chapel (makam) standing in front of the cistern-tomb, but abandoned the idea for lack of funds⁶⁶.

Louis de Ste Thérèse (1662), historian of the Carmelites in France, knew that Elijah had founded an Order and built an oratory on Mount Carmel, which was dedicated to the future Mother of the Messiah yet to come. It fell into ruin and had to be rebuilt by his successor in 38 A.D., in the very lifetime of the Virgin Mary. Since it was too small, they built another, this time on the top of the same mountain in the year 83 A.D., «juxta fontem Eliae», that is, in the wadi. It was still standing in 1209, when Albert, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, gave the Latin Hermits their Rule. Albert terminated the construction of the monastery initiated by Aimery, Patriarch of Antioch⁶⁷, and partially executed by his brother, Berthold, who wished to dedicate it to St. Margaret (sic); but Berthold died leaving it incomplete (not Aimery, as in other variants of the legend)⁶⁸. By the time Giambattista di S. Alessio reached Mount Carmel (1765), the monastery built by Berthold for the medieval Carmelites was firmly identified with the watch-tower of the Templars on the terrace⁶⁹.

Giambattista accepted as axiomatic that the cistern-tomb connected with the makam on the terrace, the remains of which subsist as a cave under the High Altar of «Stella Maris» church, had been the abode of Elijah and the flat

⁶⁵ FLORENCIO DEL N.J., *El Monte Carmelo*, p. 332.

⁶⁶ GIAMBATTISTA DI S. ALESSIO, *Compendio Istorico*, pp. 266-267.

⁶⁷ LOUIS DE SAINTE THERESE, *La Succession du Saint Prophète Elie*, Paris 1662, p. 273.

⁶⁸ *Ivi*, p. 461.

⁶⁹ GIAMBATTISTA DI S. ALESSIO *Compendio Istorico*, p. 269.

table of rock at the eastern end had been the «Bed of the Prophet». He set to clear out the cave and to modify the «Bed» so as to serve as a Latin altar, under divine inspiration, as he dramatically describes ⁷⁰.

Giambattista expatiates marvellously on the prehistory of the makam. After contemplating the little cloud (symbol of the Virgin) from in front of his cave on the terrace, Elijah gathered together his disciples and built for them a chapel on the spot ⁷¹. When the Carmelite hermits who had been baptized in Jerusalem, returned to Mount Carmel, they cut out, inside the chapel an altar and a side-altar from the rock, for the celebration of Holy Mass, now that they had become Christians. Further changes were made by them to the chapel in 83 A.D., after the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin ⁷². In no case did they alter the foundations laid by Elijah ⁷³. In the 4th cent, St. Helena enlarged the chapel and, subsequently, in the year 885 A.D., the Emperor Basil decorated it. In Crusader times, Berthold further embellished it, all his activities, by then having been transferred from the wadi to the terrace. In 1290 (corr: 1291) the chapel was ruined by the Muslims. In 1766, God inspired him, Giambattista, with a great desire to rebuild the chapel ⁷⁴.

Giambattista drew the plans, collected the funds, and supervised the construction of a large Carmelite monastery on the terrace over the site of the makam, first chapel ever built in honour of the Blessed Virgin Mary ⁷⁵.

On the foundation stone of the new monastery were inscribed these proud words:

D.O.M.

Under the auspices of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Our Holy Father Elijah, and the entire Holy Family, The Vicar of the place laid the first stone on the 15th November, 1767, for the restoration of her sanctuary, the first chapel in the whole

⁷⁰ *Ivi*, p. 304.

⁷¹ *Ivi*, p. 360.

⁷² *Ivi*, p. 363.

⁷³ *Ivi*, p. 364.

⁷⁴ *Ivi*, p. 365.

⁷⁵ *Ivi*, p. 312-313.

Christian world, built on top of Carmel, in her honour during her life-time, dedicated to the Most High by the followers of Elijah, completely destroyed by the Saracens in 1290 of the Christian era; and when Clement XIII was Pope, Joseph II, Roman Emperor, Louis XV, King of France, special protector of this convent and our missions, and Michael of St. Philip, Praepositus General of the Congregation».

While admiring the faith, zeal and achievements of Giambattista di S. Alessio, remarkable for their time and for their place, one has to recognize, that he, and with him the whole Order, had been inspired to build the monastery there, by the pious legend of the terrace.