

## A Pilgrimage to Jerusalem in the Year of Our Lord 1925

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**Keywords:** *pilgrimage, Romanian Orthodox Church, Jerusalem, Romanians believers, Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan*

**Abstract:** *The pilgrimage to the Holy Land was perceived in the Romanian Orthodox area as having a special significance and importance, although for security or financial reasons, was replaced with the pilgrimage to the monasteries. This situation underwent a major transformation after 1918 (precisely the period the paper focuses on) when, in Transylvania, the Romanian Metropolitan Nicolae Balan organised the first great pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1925, an encouraging model for those who followed after. The 1925 pilgrimage had specific characteristic, not only because it was the first collective pilgrimage from a country who greatly contributed to the fight for saving the Orthodox creed and its heritage, but also for especially demanding some – even if belated – recognition for this effort. The pilgrimage has subsequently encouraged the development of collaborative relations with the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. In the same time, it was important for the involvement of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Jerusalem by building a Romanian religious settlement there.*

Perceived as a religious and moral duty for the Romanian Orthodox, the pilgrimage to the Holy Land (Jerusalem in this particular case), has always faced various obstacles. Although less accessible to a large number of believers, there were numerous individual cases mentioned during the pre-modern period of people, mainly with a religious background, attempting to achieve it.

Although the patriarchs of Constantinople and of the Holy Land who had come to these places (current Romania) to escape the Turks' pressure or ask for the only possible (material) help were well known to Romanians, there were still many those who ventured to go on pilgrimage for the honour of being considered palmers for the rest of their lives<sup>2</sup>.

The first Romanian hierarch to arrive to Jerusalem was the metropolitan bishop Varlaam, in 1690; during the following years, there is an increasing number of

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<sup>2</sup> See Ieronim Crețu, "Așezămintele românești de la Ierusalim, Iordan și Ierihon [Romanian Settlements in Jerusalem, Jericho and Jordan]," in *Românii și Țara Sfântă* [The Romanians and the Holy Land], edited by Gheorghe Vasilescu and Ignatie Monahul (Brăila: Istros, 2007); Ioanichie Bălan, *Mărturii românești la locurile sfinte* [Romanian Testimonies about the Holy Land] (Roman: Roman and Huși Bishop Publishing House, 1986).