

## Travel throughout Syria

En effet, tandis que sur le littoral et dans les grands centres de l'intérieur les monuments antiques, utilisés comme carrières, ont été livrés à une destruction d'autant plus active que la prospérité était plus grande, dans la région centrale, au contraire, les édifices ont été sauvés de la ruine par l'abandon et la misère. Restés debout quand tout disparaissait dans les autres parties de la Syrie, ils nous font connaître l'état de cette province pendant les premiers siècles de notre ère.<sup>[1]</sup> [1865]

How and why would a Western traveller decide whether to visit Syria, perhaps in conjunction with Asia Minor<sup>1</sup> or Egypt?<sup>2</sup> And how would he (or she – plenty of women travelled there<sup>3</sup>) pick his way amongst the delights mentioned by De Vogüé in the above quotation? Where to go and how to get there naturally varied with the years, the rise and fall of trade, and the development of archaeology, but a constant was pilgrimage from the early centuries of our era,<sup>4</sup> and the monuments thereby produced.<sup>5</sup> With the growing pressures of modernisation during the course of the 19th century, travellers, tourists and pilgrims increased, as did trade with those Western countries which could supply modern goods (some of which, as already mentioned, undercut local production).<sup>[2]</sup> Archaeology, the growing understanding of the past through its physical artefacts, initially as an off-shoot of the study of art and architecture, helped paint a picture of monumental and lesser survivals which encouraged travelling.

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1 Salmon 2010 for earlier 19thC travel in Syria; Salmon 2013 for earlier 19thC travel in Asia Minor.

2 Berchet 1985, 589–816: 19th-century travellers to Syria and Palestine.

3 Hodgson 2006: the practicalities of travel for women – dress, harems, baths, etc.

4 Bowmann 2011: visiting the Holy Land in the fourth-century Itinerarium of the Bordeaux Pilgrim.

5 Farioli Campanati 2008: late antique and Byzantine Syria, by site, with a bibliography for each important one.

## Where to Go and How to Get There

Down the centuries, the Ottoman Empire attracted Westerners,<sup>6</sup> and the types of traveller to Greater Syria changed. In the 14th to 16th centuries these were (in descending order) state functionaries, religious, nobles, businessmen, bourgeois, and *littérateurs*, with the reasons for travel being official missions, pilgrimage, commerce, military expeditions, and science. In this period, 25% of itineraries went to Jerusalem.<sup>7</sup> Remission of sins was one impulse for pilgrims, and Guylforde asserted that “to every pylgryme at the firste fote that he setteth on londe there is graunted plenary remysion.”<sup>[3]</sup> Subsequently scholars and students travelled, as did more traders<sup>8</sup> and, from the 19th century, with easier communications, sightseeing became popular, as again did pilgrimage, soon organised into the kind of group tour we have today. The Venetians had control of the organised pilgrim trade until the conquest of Cyprus by the Turks in 1570, after which they generally made their own arrangements, often via Tripoli.<sup>9</sup>

Ben-Arieh divides the 19th-century rediscovery of the Holy Land from 1799 to 1877 from travellers in disguise (1799–1831), then the short period of liberal Egyptian rule, when exploration was safe, next the return of Turkish rule, and finally the beginnings of modernisation (1865–1877), with some healthy exploration funds and expeditions by scientific teams.<sup>10</sup> Such exploration continued into the 20th century, but much of it was concentrated in Palestine, not in other areas of Syria. Tourists often combined travel to Syria with visiting Egypt, and could reach Palestine either across Sinai or via Suez, or take the steamer from Alexandria to Beirut.<sup>[4]</sup> It is indeed likely that it was the steamship which resuscitated pilgrimage, which had been in decline for centuries, although “Palestine/Israel has also been viewed as a part of the romantic, chivalrous medieval tradition that began with the first crusades.”<sup>11</sup>

Chateaubriand, writing in 1812, gives very low figures for pilgrimage when he made his journey,<sup>[5]</sup> and the (re)development of such religious travel has its beginnings in the 1860s, prepared by the work of scholars such as the American

6 Pignot 2007: the 17th century.

7 Yerasimos 1991, 9–22 for overview of travellers in the Ottoman Empire, 14th to 16thC: nationalities, social class, reasons for travel, itineraries with exact dates (where available), and adventures along the way (such as imprisonment).

8 Gharaybeh 1950.

9 Yerasimos 1991, 69–72.

10 Ben-Arieh 1979, 19–64, 65–108, 109–156, and 190–228.

11 Rogers 2011, 125.

Edward Robinson (1794–1863), sometimes called the Father of Biblical Geography, who studied Palestine in the late 1830s, and published important books in 1841 and 1856.<sup>12</sup> As we shall see, the development of the Holy Land (in all senses) had several consequences good and bad which might cancel each other out. The region became more prosperous because of pilgrimage, and archaeological attention (and money for digging) focussed on the area. In 1865, at the Palestine Exploration Fund's first meeting, the Archbishop of York stated that "there can be little doubt that under the sacred city, monuments of the greatest value and importance would be found in every foot deep of the ground."<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, an expanded population meant pressure on antiquities which were frequently used as building materials, and whole sites thereby obliterated. Again, if the attention, expertise, digging and funding dedicated to "proving" the Bible true had been spread evenly around all of Syria, many more antiquities would have been preserved – for outside the Holy Land, pressure of population into the 20th century spelled disaster for many sites.

In the later 18th century the Grand Tour extended beyond Italy to Greece and, for the intrepid, further east and south, so educated travellers with money (for such projects could be expensive) could take their choice at the eastern end of the Mediterranean.<sup>14</sup> As a result, many travel books were published,<sup>15</sup> and largely unregulated publication, undermined by frequent translation, meant that travel writing developed into an industry to service those who went abroad for leisure, health or religion. Each area had its advantages and disadvantages. Asia Minor offered a Westernised town and trading centre at Smyrna/Izmir, in a safe bay, but the interior was large, and badly supplied with roads (let alone maps), though not necessarily dangerous. Syria had Aleppo, which had prospered with its European traders; but this town, for various reasons, was in decline by 1800, and access was via an unhealthy port. Indeed, until the 1870s there was no port down the Syrian coast for even moderate-sized ships to dock (passengers for Beirut were carried ashore piggy-back, or in small rowing boats). As explained in detail below, Syria suffered greatly from

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12 Aiken 2010, 18–56: *A History of Scriptural Geography*.

13 Bar-Yosef 2005, 178: "The idea that the 'real' Jerusalem was not the city which appeared on the surface, but rather the one hidden beneath it, underground, soon became current, manifested in titles like Warren's *Underground Jerusalem* (1876) or George St Clair's *The Buried City of Jerusalem* (1887)."

14 Mansel 2011: *The Grand Tour in the Ottoman Empire 1699–1826*. Excellent overview, including Syria.

15 Hachicho 1964 for detailed, accurate and informative accounts of 18th-century English travel books in the Arab Near East, with routes and short biographies.

wandering robbers (usually nomadic bedouin); and its inhabitants also suffered from fixed robbery in the form of taxation from a government distant and also local, interwoven with endemic corruption, nonchalant and disorganised, and in most decades unwilling to do anything decisive about crime.

Further south, Alexandria was easily accessible and, like Cairo, Europeanising during the later part of the 19th century, incurring an immense debt, and occasioning the British occupation from 1882. Reaching Syria was often done by travelling south from Asia Minor, sometimes overland but usually by sea; or by combining Syria with a visit to Egypt. In 1843 Napier noted that “Omnipotent steam has now so completely destroyed the glorious uncertainty of navigation,”<sup>[6]</sup> so that from the mid-1850s the traveller could take a steamer from Smyrna and stop at several ports down the Syrian coast, although how they got from ship to shore depended on the ship’s size. Or they could stay on board and arrive at Alexandria eleven days later.<sup>[7]</sup> By 1862, a mailship arrived in Beirut twice a week, and steamers ran regularly between Liverpool and Beirut, which received 113 British ships in 1855, against a mere 39 two years previously.<sup>[8]</sup> Another route was from Egypt, either overland by camel, or by steamer.<sup>[9]</sup> For British travellers, this part of the world was often (and especially before the digging of the Suez Canal) a stop-off point on the way to or returning from India. Just as happens today, 19th-century authors tried to persuade their readers that, with all this modernisation, nothing had changed in the East.<sup>[10]</sup>

For those specifically interested in monuments and Antiquity, Egyptian architecture was outside the classical canon, and neither Syria nor Asia Minor boasted Greek architecture of the classical period, considered the acme of stylistic excellence. But Roman architecture was in evidence in all these three destinations, because her empire was broad and her monuments strongly built.<sup>16</sup> Egypt was easy to visit, because everything clung to the Nile. The majority of towns and sites in Syria were nowhere far from the coast, the majority accessible via passes through the mountains, until the area marked on old maps as Arabia Deserta (with Palmyra) was reached. In Asia Minor plenty of sites (Ephesus, Didyma, Pergamon) could be accessed from the sea, but strenuous trekking was required for some inland sites such as Aphrodisias, Sardis or Ankara.<sup>17</sup> Few of these had been extensively investigated before the mid-19th century, but many sites were large and very splendid, making full use of the extensive marble quarries, often nearby (as at Aphrodisias). And apart from a few villagers, most such sites were deserted. What is more, unlike the situation

16 Ulrich & Quenemoen 2014 for an overview.

17 Apostolou 2009, 103–123 *Les voyageurs français et les monuments de l'Asie Mineure*; *ibid.*, 149–160 *A la recherche de l'Asie Mineure*.

in Syria, what nomads there were in Asia Minor were neither aggressive, nor at war with themselves and the world.

Few Syrian sites could compete with those in Asia Minor in splendour, such as Ephesus, which probably re-used materials from the Temple of Diana for the Church of S. John, as Gédoyne suggested.<sup>[11]</sup> Asia Minor had several marble quarries, exploited to full effect for the building of Roman cities. Syria, however, had no native marble; some stones were imported, along with granite from Egypt; but the main building stones were limestone (some of which could be stained and polished to look marble-like) and basalt, which was solid but dour and un-prepossessing. We shall find many travellers comparing what they saw with monuments back home; but until almost the 1870s few learned much about Muslim religious architecture, because infidels were forbidden from entering (or, in some instances, even gazing upon) the main holy sites, if not more modest mosques. Egypt was an adjacent country also without native marble, but with many imports re-used in her mosques, as Ariosto observed in the 15th century in Memphis.<sup>[12]</sup> In 1653 Boullaye-Le-Gouz observed the same use of column shafts as through-ties (for strengthening fortification walls) as were seen in Syria,<sup>[13]</sup> and in 1855 at Alexandria Prime reported digging for materials under way: “disclosing beautiful Corinthian capitals and handsome white marble columns . . . laborers, men, women, and children, were at work; some of them with barrows, and others with baskets, even little children who could carry but a few handfuls being as busy as the rest.”<sup>[14]</sup>

The Egypt/Syria combination (which fed the growing interest in antiquarianism, as well as in biblical lands<sup>18</sup>) attracted more travellers once Egypt was established as a chic wintering destination for rich Westerners, with antiquities an added bonus. This combination increased again from the 1870s, when Biblical tourism became very popular, and pilgrimage revived with (naturally) Jerusalem and area as a focus, although Northern Syria was also attractive, not least because of the westernised Aleppo.<sup>19</sup> All here was explicable (or at least explained) by reference to the Bible and the landscape, towns and acts it described. Pilgrimage<sup>20</sup> and associated tourism were responsible for the renewed prosperity of Jerusalem, and revived some of the formalised excursions of devotees of previous centuries.<sup>[15]</sup> Part of the charm of 19th-century

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18 Hachicho 1964, 142: “They saw, therefore, every place and corner of the Near East through the eyes of classical and biblical authorities.”

19 Tchalenko 1953, 1: map of archaeological explorations in N. Syria, from De Vogüé to Lassus in 1936.

20 Uggeri 2013, 79–83: Syria and Phoenicia.

accounts lies in the description of largely empty landscapes, and of sites today either radically depleted or completely destroyed.<sup>21</sup>

### Languages, Dress and Descriptions

The European traveller, who wishes to visit these countries in safety, and see things to advantage, must dress himself in the fashion of the country, let his whiskers grow, and endeavour to learn a little of their language, or else they will impose upon him.<sup>[16]</sup> [1783]

These three apparently disparate elements are in fact intimately linked in the work of the successful traveller. Speaking their language naturally helps intercourse with the locals and, if they are not necessarily charmed by Westerners wearing local dress, the device often got the stranger along the route without being molested or robbed. A traveller blending more-or-less into the landscape might then be expected to produce more cogent, accurate and even detailed descriptions of the sites visited. In 1815–1816 Richter told of the death of a Frenchman along the Orontes, but he was not fully equipped: “Il prenoit l’habillement des gens du pays, dont il ne savoit pas assez la langue.”<sup>[17]</sup> Born 1792 in Livonia, Otton-Frédéric de Richter, like Burckhardt died young (Smyrna 1816), and had Greek, Persian and Arabic, all of which helped his writings.

An important element in dealing with any country is a knowledge of its languages<sup>22</sup> (in Syria, principally Arabic, Turkish and Greek), without which one was thrown on the unassessable talents of interpreters and guides. Whereas most travellers were thus dependent, a few shine because they know languages, can interact with the locals, and often transmit more cogent and detailed reports with authoritative information locally gathered, which could lead them to near-invisible ruins buried in the sand, as Breuvery noted in 1848.<sup>[18]</sup> Whereas universities in Paris and Berlin taught oriental languages, in Britain such formal education was sparse. Fortunately, most earlier travellers learned their languages through trade and extensive residence abroad. In Syria Turkish was the language of the rulers (used by merchants as well in Asia Minor); but south of Antioch Arabic was the current language, understood

21 Kennedy 2004, 21–22: the history of exploration in (Roman) Jordan. 21: “development has transformed almost everything and destroyed many sites.” Ibid. 23B: “many of these 19th century scholars [mentions Seetzen, Doughty and Tristram] are a delight to read for their own sake . . . evocative as well as informative.”

22 Kappler 1988: travellers, languages and interpreters.

by everyone including the Greeks.<sup>[19]</sup> The best-equipped travellers, such as the Chevalier d'Arvieux understood “la Turquie, l'Arabe & la Grecque vulgaire. Je n'étois point embarrassé, j'entendois & je répondois à tout le monde dans la Langue qu'on m'avoit parlé,”<sup>[20]</sup> an accomplishment which was very useful when dealing with Bedouin. Burckhardt, in Arabic dress but without requisite papers, had to be careful of his route; but it was talking to the locals that highlighted monuments: “I was particularly desirous of visiting Wady Mousa [Petra], of the antiquities of which I had heard the country people speak in terms of great admiration.”<sup>[21]</sup>

Ill-equipped travellers such as Van De Velde (1854) had to rely on language experts, confessing “the difficulty that I myself have experienced from ignorance of the language” and considering “two such men as Eli Smith and Robinson as the most auspicious circumstance that could have happened for Biblical geography. We may well thank God for its occurrence.”<sup>[22]</sup> Van De Velde was correct, and the Palestine Exploration Fund confirmed Robinson's importance: “he went, therefore, knowing what to look for and what had been already found.”<sup>[23]</sup> Evidently not reducing his reliance on the Bible, Van De Velde in a sense increased it by now taking Robinson's account around with him, for example at Beersheba, where he examined “the important antiquities which Robinson has so copiously described,”<sup>[24]</sup> but also the fortress, which he described elegantly as “a heap of rubbish.”<sup>[25]</sup> Even with the language, Baedeker reckoned that travellers “will speedily be wearied in the East . . . by the stereotyped questions and artificial phraseology of the people with whom he comes in contact.”<sup>[26]</sup> Language fluency enabled travellers such as Edwin Palmer<sup>[27]</sup> and Colonel Tyrwhitt Drake<sup>[28]</sup> “to travel without escort, or servants, or baggage, to “mess” with the people, to do everything for themselves, and to talk their language as the Bedawin talk it,” as the Palestine Exploration Fund (a beneficiary of their work) put it in 1873. But the PEF evidently considered such travellers as freebooters, trampling on the sacred turf of archaeology, and they discouraged

small expeditions into that tempting country east of the Jordan, where so many treasures lie hidden . . . They result in a small amount of plunder, and each one makes the next more difficult and costly.<sup>[29]</sup>

Arabic dress could also help the acquisition of knowledge.<sup>23</sup> Some foreign consuls evidently thought so, for Bankes met one at Jaffa “wearing powdered hair,

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23 Rodenbeck 2011: as well as being useful and comfortable, it was often a statutory requirement to wear local dress. 67: in 1838–9 David Roberts allowed to work in a mosque only

and a gold-laced cocked hat, with the flowing oriental habit, a grotesque combination that afterwards became more familiar to me in the consular houses at Aleppo.”<sup>[30]</sup> If we are to believe the story, Claudius James Rich [1787–1821, consul in Baghdad] succeeded in entering the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus because “his knowledge of the Turkish language and manners was so thorough that while in Damascus not only did he enter the grand mosque in the disguise of a Mameluke, but his host, an honest Turk, who was captivated with his address, eagerly entreated him to settle at that place, offering him his interest and his daughter in marriage.”<sup>[31]</sup> Richardson also dressed as an Arab, got onto the Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem twice, into the al-Aqsa and the Dome, and even up the latter’s wooden stairs to view the wooden beams from up close.<sup>[32]</sup>

Buckingham in 1822 seems to have covered all bases for his travels:

We were now all dressed in the costume of the country; Mr. Bankes as a Turkish soldier, Mohammed in his own garb as an Arnaout, and I as a Syrian Arab. Our guides wore their own dresses, as Bedouins of the desert.<sup>[33]</sup>

Who would dare to attack such a group?<sup>24</sup> And Seetzen<sup>[34]</sup> travelled light, wearing “the habit of an Arab Shech of the second rank,” but also packing a gun and two pistols.<sup>[35]</sup> Hospitality was to be accepted, and there was sometimes a certain stoicism required, as when Schumacher was in a Bedouin tent in 1884:

The night was bitterly cold, and – what between the wind and the fleas, and the extremely confiding nature of the ewes, who, for warmth’s sake, were always trying to insinuate themselves beneath our blankets – sleep was fitful. Further, and as usual, till far into the night, our Arab friends discussed in strident tones politics and finance.<sup>[36]</sup>

These were evidently not the kind of locals Baedeker was so sniffy about. Travelling light was part of Schumacher’s success: no tents or servants, little baggage, shabby horses, and triumph that he had paid nothing to the importuning local sheikhs, “both personages generally but too well known to those who have left Jerusalem for a trip into the Land of Gilead.”<sup>[37]</sup> The fleas were

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if he wore Turkish clothes and did not use hog’s-bristle brushes. 75–76 for Westerners in Eastern dress in earlier 19thC, then 85–6 for later. 80–81: improvements in safety, and use of European dress, under Mehemet Ali.

24 Rée 2011, 169–178, for Buckingham’s travelling biography.



part-conquered by slinging a string hammock high up, which fascinated the locals.<sup>[38]</sup>

Detailed descriptions of sites were also easier for the well-equipped. The well-read Prussian Consul in Damascus, Wetzstein, tried to help local agriculture in a scheme which failed,<sup>25</sup> but was much more successful in his 44 days of travels, and told his readers that he had taken 880 pages of notes in four notebooks, and written down 30 Bedouin songs, so that (here a pat on his shoulder) “ein grosser Theil meiner Zeit auf die Untersuchung von fast hundert Ruinenorten und die namentlich in weitläufigen Städten zeitraubende Aufsuchung von Baudenkmalern und Inschriften verwendet werden musste.” And his work encompasses several disciplines: “Die Ergebnisse dieser Reise umfassen mehrere Zweige der Wissenschaft, wie Geognosie, Geographie und Archäologie (Baugeschichte und Inschriftenkunde).” How did he manage to do it all? Answer: by writing while on horseback, and also at night.<sup>[39]</sup> He claimed a lack of architectural knowledge, but drawings and notebooks were the answer: “nur durch eine Menge Zeichnungen erzielen können. Ich verspare mir daher die weitere Behandlung dieses Gegenstandes für den Druck meines Tagebuchs.”<sup>[40]</sup> Such serious scholars were miles apart from most tourists. In 1855 Kennard mocked the enthusiasm of incompetents for drawing what they saw, each “seems to consider it his duty to carry with him a great box full of black lead pencils, a twelve month’s supply of india rubber, and such reams of drawing paper as would enable him to make a panorama of his whole tour”; but Egypt would exhaust his enthusiasm, and by the time he reached Palestine, “he will have become disgusted with his multitudinous abortive efforts, and will have consigned his paper, pencils, and india rubber to the lowest depths of his portmanteau.”<sup>[41]</sup>

A knowledge of local languages also helped travellers fix a better picture of the needs and attitudes of the locals. When Walpole was strolling through Byblos he exclaimed aloud in Arabic (NB one-upmanship) “Curse these people; why do they use these columns in such a way?” a Turk responded “I curse them, too, for making them so large; had they been smaller, we might have put them to a hundred uses.”<sup>[42]</sup> The main opportunity for using them vanished after the Crusades, D’Estourmel noting their used as tie-bars in the town’s towers, a device he had also seen in Greece and Asia Minor:

Nous remarquâmes, le long du chemin, de belles colonnes de granit rouge et gris; un plus grand nombre est encastré dans la maçonnerie des tours.

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25 Hudson 2008, 45–49. See 45: his experience “illustrates the terrain of the Damascene agricultural system and the obstacles to a direct transformation through the infusion of Western capital.”

En Grèce et dans l'Asie Mineure, nous avons vu souvent de riches débris employés pêle-mêle comme matériaux; en Syrie, il semblerait que c'est à titre d'ornement qu'on a placé, en travers et symétriquement.<sup>[43]</sup>

### Scholars in the East

One of the charms of Eastern travel consists in the constant appeal which is made to the historical conscience and archaeological instinct of the pilgrim... there is always something new to be seen amongst the remains of so long a sequence of centuries, and where so many and various populations have passed and repassed over the historical field of view.<sup>[44]</sup> [1891]

The best way to appreciate scholars' qualities is to read extracts from their books; some of these are included here as endnotes, and occasionally commented in the bibliography of sources. More recent scholars are also looking back at the achievements of their forbears, such as Waddington, who published plans and elevations of Hauran buildings.<sup>[45]</sup> A glance at this will reveal several authors whose works are merely imitative, or which plagiarise what has gone before, as plaintive footnotes make clear.<sup>[46]</sup> But there are several scholars whose published work set both the tone of enquiry and the breadth of knowledge of Syria and the Holy Land in the 18th and 19th centuries. Some, such as Abraham von Noroff, offered succinct and decent summaries of the sites he visited, especially down the coast.<sup>[47]</sup>

Their backgrounds were varied, and short biographies of the most important amongst them appear in the Appendix. Arvieux' father was French Consul at Sidon, and was at one time Consul at Aleppo, which made it easier for the son to learn Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Hebrew and Syriac. Baron Taylor was interested in archaeology, and travelled in the East as Laorty-Hadji. Volney was a French philosopher and politician, pondering the decline of empires as he saw them in the East. Burckhardt, a meticulous Swiss writing in English, dressed in Arab robes and disguised as an Arabic-speaking Muslim, would have produced larger quantities of valuable material had he not died aged thirty-three. His itineraries and notes were published in 1822. The naval officers Irby and Mangles produced the next thorough account of the region the following year. Christian antiquities were also noted by some travellers,<sup>[48]</sup> but by surprisingly few of them.

Divines could also be numbered amongst the scholars, as for example Pococke, who ended up as a bishop, and whose *Description of the East* (1745) was very

popular, and translated into French, German and Dutch, rightly so, for he visited sites omitted from most accounts.<sup>26</sup> By the mid-19th century, excellent accounts of the landscape and its relation to the Bible were published by the Americans Robinson and Smith, who travelled and wrote extensively, equipped as they were with the necessary languages, to cater for a growing American readership and tourism.<sup>27</sup> Robinson was said to have prepared himself by studying for fifteen years, and “he it was who first conceived the idea of making a work on Biblical Geography, to be based, not on the accounts of others, but on his own observations and discoveries.”<sup>[49]</sup> Several missionaries also wrote of what they found in the region, notably Porter, an Irishman, who produced three important books and numerous encyclopaedia entries. Indeed, Porter in 1868 produced the best and most careful guide to Syria for its date for our purposes. In the two volumes, there are 280 mentions of columns, 104 of marble, 73 of limestone, 242 of churches, 159 of mosques, 795 of ruins, 39 of danger, and 453 of temples (although there can of course be several mentions for each monument).

The best 19th-century assessment of these and other scholars is by Vivien de Saint-Martin, General Secretary of the Société de Géographie, and a vigorous and detailed publisher of travel accounts, especially his own study of Asia Minor, in which he includes those travellers who also visited Syria proper. (Burchard’s contribution to knowledge was covered by a colleague.<sup>[50]</sup>) Scanning the work of earlier centuries as well,<sup>[51]</sup> he assesses Seetzen and Botta as well as the scholars noted above.<sup>[52]</sup> He showcases proudly the French contribution to oriental knowledge, praises the initiative shown by the French government in funding scholars’ journeys, and laments the inevitable problems which caused delay or failure, such as the 1830 revolution,<sup>[53]</sup> and the death of one scholar in Aleppo, which left his companion, Callier, with work for three years.<sup>[54]</sup> He recommends reading Volney’s travel account, and leaving on one side “les regrettables écarts de ce qu’on nommait alors l’esprit philosophique.”<sup>[55]</sup>

### The Bible as a Guidebook

Even to a casual traveller in the Holy Land the Bible becomes, in its form, and therefore to some extent in its substance, a new book. Many an

26 Hachicho 1964, 38 for the area around Lake Tiberias, and Safad; Christian antiquities around Ma’arrat-en-Nu’man; trade between Aleppo, Urfa and Diarbakr etc.

27 Long 2003, Chap 2, 43–87: Starred and striped Holy Lands.

allusion which hitherto had no meaning, or had lain unnoticed, starts into prominence and throws a light over a whole passage.<sup>[56]</sup> [1865]

Palestine, both east and west of the Jordan, may be fairly regarded as the divinely prepared tablet whereon God's messages to men have been graven in ever-living characters. This fact invests even the geography and topography of the Holy Land with special importance.<sup>[57]</sup> [1886]

The title to this section is ironical, since today few would think of using the Bible as a guidebook, any more than they would rely only on Pausanias or Herodotus for parts of the region. But it is historically accurate for the 19th century, and many accounts give the strong impression (some state it explicitly) that travelling to some parts of Greater Syria without the Bible is to be satisfied with a lesser experience. Similarly, the focus of archaeology was on Palestine, not on other parts of Greater Syria.<sup>28</sup> Porter asserted in 1864 that the Bible “when rightly interpreted, must be in absolute accordance with fact.”<sup>29</sup> In other words, although the Holy Land occupies but a small proportion of Greater Syria, this account of the Bible and its uses appears early in this book because its use and influence structured the travels of many visitors. Large numbers would not have arrived had it not been for the Bible's influence, and dangerous regions such as Moab were first explored by scholars eager to elucidate that text and its references to physical locations. Peer pressure was certainly important, and many authors catered to readers' desires by featuring a profusion of Biblical quotations. One reason for this is the overwhelming number of published accounts of the area. As Bliss wrote in 1907:

To those acquainted with Röhricht's *Bibliotheca Geographica Palaestina*, with its 3,515 names of writers on the Holy Land, from AD 333 to 1878 – writers who were for the most part actual travellers – we need not say that we have attempted no comprehensive bibliography.<sup>[58]</sup>

In 1836 Laborde, who had travelled widely in Asia Minor as well as in Syria,<sup>30</sup> attempted to link the Bible with the countryside by tabulating prophecies

28 Díaz-Andreu 2007, 147–166: The search for the Holy Land: the archaeology of Palestine.

29 Aiken 2010, 95: “This is a typical piece of polemical Scriptural Geography. Earlier didactic Scriptural Geographers would not have felt the need to make an apologetic argument like this, and later contextual Scriptural Geographers would have tended to question the absolute accordance of the Bible with fact.”

30 Maupoix 2013; Cotinat 2010, with numerous extracts from his account; Laborde 2013, 108–285: catalogue of 138 plates from Laborde's book.

against travellers' accounts which would confirm them.<sup>[59]</sup> Naturally, he found what he was looking for,<sup>31</sup> triumphantly declaring "Let the words of the prediction be compared with the reports of those who have borne testimony to its fulfilment."<sup>[60]</sup> Delight in biblical vengeance seems antithetical to delight in ancient ruins, yet several authors indulged in such incantations. One writing in 1852 said little about the ruins of Amman, noting only that "every step which a traveller advances in that devoted land is confirmative of the truth of the Bible history."<sup>[61]</sup> Tristram corroborates this view in 1865, convinced that "every investigation of even the minor details of the topography and the natural character and features of the land has tended to corroborate the minute accuracy of the Inspired Record."<sup>[62]</sup> This applies even when he visits the Umayyad Mosque for, seeing a Greek inscription referring to the Kingdom of Christ, he exults:

There stand the words, unread by the Muslim. We will take them as a silent prophecy that the day is coming when this dark land shall be Christ's once more, and He shall reign for ever and ever. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!<sup>[63]</sup>

Just how this could be done by Beke, for example, looking to confirm the location of Harran, is indeed a sacred mystery.<sup>[64]</sup> It was evidently in vain that Stanley in 1856 could protest that biblical prophecy was misunderstood, missing the important truth that "the warnings delivered by "holy men of old" were aimed not against sticks and stones, but then, as always, against living souls and sins, whether of men or of nations."<sup>[65]</sup> But little changed, Porter in 1882 still harping on ruins as a result of the "graphic details of the Record," and "I could not resist the conclusions which a careful comparison forced upon me."<sup>[66]</sup> Little changed even in the early 20th century, when one author noted for Tyre that "the piratical attacks of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries at length fulfilled the words of the Hebrew prophet."<sup>[67]</sup>

Fixation on the Bible, and its use as a guidebook, leads to egregious errors in consideration of the country of Syria. The misplaced delight in finding ruins just where the Bible says they are is compounded by ignorance of the fact that many places have been ruined over and over again, and others abandoned. Blinkered Biblical vision, however, suggests to the (too many) authors unaware of history that the country has been in ruins since Biblical times, which is not of course the case. The end result is that the many mid- and late-19th century authors search for and see only the Biblical past, thereby abolishing over

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31 Hachicho 1964, 150–161: The use of Near Eastern travel for the interpretation of the scriptures and of Homer's poetry. Obenzinger 1999, 39–60 chap 4: Reading and Writing Sacred Geography; *ibid.* 22–38 Chap 3: "Christianography" and Covenant.

1,500 years of history. If reading the Bible might be expected to broaden the mind, the reactions of many travellers to the landscape demonstrates that, on the contrary, it encouraged tunnel vision, making them mindless of historical context, and incurious about events since Jacob herded sheep. Thus do the monuments on which they concentrate bear more weight than they are able to stand. Curiously, few of them are interested even in the plentiful remains of churches from the first centuries of Christianity although surely they were aware of the importance of Syria in the development of that religion, and had the opportunity to study surviving monuments and their decorations many of which were soon to disappear. In other words, they near-ignored what they could see in the landscape, as well as centuries of history, in favour of what the Bible related. They were, therefore, far more fixated on Jewish themes, and where possible tried to attribute buildings to David or Solomon, even complexes such as Baalbek, let alone the Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem, the immense substructures of which are Herodian. An index of this perverted focus is the dearth of references to S. Simeon Stylites, surely one of the most famous of sites in the Mediterranean, and a large complex with a still-standing church and surrounding monastery buildings. There were plenty more.<sup>32</sup> (Another entertaining fixation, equally revealing of historical ignorance, is on ruts in ancient roads, identified in several quotations through this book as due to chariot wheels rather than heavy carts.)

Concentrating on the importance of Biblical times truncates the past, so that those authors who refer even to the long period of the Crusades let alone visit their monumental remains are few and far between until the later 19th century. The Crusades form an important part of the fortunes of Christianity in the West, and their writings, deeds and relicts demonstrate that Syria formed an integral part of Western consciousness for centuries. It is all the more surprising, therefore, that so little impacts on 19th-century travellers. The main deeds and battles are of course mentioned, but there is little interest in the physical remains. That might be satisfactory for American travellers and tourists, whose “fix” on the Bible is perhaps understandably a direct one; but it is strange that the historical context informs so few French, German or even British accounts, given that Crusade-period fortifications were an unavoidable feature of their home landscape, as indeed they are in Syria, which (in its largest configuration, including Jordan) boasts over thirty of them, the majority naturally very conspicuous.

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32 Castellana 2011, 125–146: Antichi monasteri nella regione nord-occidentale della Siria; *ibid.*, 37–61 Una chiesa bizantina a ‘Alia nella regione dell’Oronte – with two reliquaries, Tav VIII & IX.

If travel without languages could spell danger, those who stayed at home often got even their information at third hand, which the French call (*haute vulgarisation*). Thus was knowledge filtered down to schools. In 1907 Eugène Gallois (1856–1916), chargé de mission par l’Instruction publique, and already the author of books and articles on Spain, Portugal, New Zealand, Burma, Indo-China and Japan, as well as Algeria and Tunisia, claimed knowledge of Asia Minor and Syria by virtue of “divers voyages accomplis en cette contrée, que nous avons parcourue pendant de longs mois.” This task, “sans la moindre prétention, cela va sans dire, nous ne faisons que poursuivre l’oeuvre de vulgarisation à laquelle nous nous sommes voués depuis des années.”<sup>[68]</sup>

If many acquired knowledge of Syria from school books (some of which included intensive biblical question-and-answer sections<sup>[69]</sup>), and others such as Buckingham from looking at site illustrations in printed books,<sup>[70]</sup> the majority did so via their reading of the Bible which, offering Gospel truth, diverted and dissipated accurate and detailed investigation of the landscape of Syria for decades, as we shall see. For some, just as being English allowed them to feel superior to the locals,<sup>[71]</sup> so did the Bible, since the Koran was said to have borrowed heavily from it, and to have “the cunning to discern that the Christian revelation contains a system of morality and of order infinitely superior to all the boasted ethics of the heathen or of infidel philosophy.”<sup>[72]</sup> And many would have echoed Turner’s endorsement of 1820, that “I genially carry the Bible in my hand, and read the history of the places as I visit them.”<sup>[73]</sup> In 1877 Potter asked whether it was worth visiting the Holy Land because “very much of what one sees in Palestine is so painful and disillusionizing,” and “is it not something more to be able to preserve our ideal Holy Land unspoiled by any rude disclosures of a degenerate age and people?”<sup>[74]</sup> In other words, he was fixated on one version and one element of the past. He answered his own question:

Everything in Palestine that at all shocked me, or jarred upon my sense of reverence, has, somehow, faded out of my memory, while Olivet, and Bethany, and the hill-sides of Bethlehem are to-day a living vision of luminous and beautiful reality.<sup>[75]</sup>

For American divines such as Harman, visiting Europe and the Orient was essential: “I felt that my education was incomplete, that there was a vacuum that must be filled up.”<sup>[76]</sup> His experience in the Holy Land enabled him to throw around vacuous then-and-now Eternal Orient comparisons with the best of them.<sup>[77]</sup> Other authors were more judicious (or cunning), Jahn suggesting in 1823 that his own book would help “in throwing one’s self back into the age, in which the writers lived, and into the situation of those, for whom they wrote.”<sup>[78]</sup>



For in an inversion of travel- or guidebook-writing, the Bible stood for centuries not just as a vade mecum of religion, but also as a guide to the Old and New Testament sites, monuments and deeds in Palestine. Thus when Jahn in 1823 placed the sources of biblical archaeology as first, the scriptures, and second, the ancient monuments,<sup>[79]</sup> surely he got his priorities wrong. What is more, as the pair of quotations at the start of this section reflect, this belief (for it was not a fact) did not diminish but actually increased in reaction against the waves of scientific rationalism espoused by evolution, archaeology, and various sciences.<sup>33</sup> Such beliefs were bolstered by centuries of pilgrimage, and by the huge amounts of blood and treasure expended during the Crusades, although some were indeed undermined by changing attitudes to the sacred texts.<sup>34</sup>

Belief in the continuing existence of biblical sites is understandable, not only because of the book's importance, but also because the Bible so often associates geography with deeds, and because there are no other similar books of such acknowledged antiquity or authority such as (for example) Pausanias could provide for Greece.<sup>[80]</sup> Forgetting that belief had nothing to do with landscape ("I believe because it is absurd," wrote Tertullian), the aim of devout travellers was to prove that the Bible was true by bolstering its accounts with the very sites it mentioned (as misguided an enterprise as would be using similar means to prove the truth of the *Arabian Nights*). This usage is nevertheless an inversion, occasioned of course by faith, of any accurate *modus operandi* for such work, which should start with the sites, and then write the book. The mistake, inevitable in any text taken as gospel truth, is not only to privilege the text over the site but (even more dangerously) to allow travellers to scramble over the countryside to link a heap of remains or a building with the text, and sometimes to extract a souvenir. Certainly, many travellers write with the aim of illustrating the Bible from towns and monuments on the ground; what they should have been doing was investigating the landscape and its monuments and only then seeing what sites might match biblical descriptions.

Since travel books feed on each other as well as on predecessors, writers encouraged this mis-use of the Bible. In D'Estournel's words, approaching Nazareth in 1844, and of course catering at least in part to expectations back home, "à dater de ce jour, je commençai à voyager la Bible à la main: elle devint mon guide."<sup>[81]</sup> And Macbrair near Beirut in 1839 complained of the roads, and (perhaps the allusion is ironic?) "several passages of scripture came to my

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33 Bar-Yosef 2005, Cf Chap 2, 61–104: The Land and the Books – “exploring the production, construction, and consumption of this distinct discourse – ‘academic Anglo-Palestine Orientalism.’”

34 Lee 2013.



mind, as being here finely illustrated.”<sup>[82]</sup> For Herschell in 1845 his publication was to help those at home who lacked the leisure to peruse the mountain of available publications: “I feel it right, for their sakes, to mention something about those places that are interesting to every one who loves the word of God.”<sup>[83]</sup> And places should be interesting even if not yet located: thus Porter’s 1868 *A handbook for travellers in Syria and Palestine* contains an *Index of places mentioned in scripture, but not yet identified*. Presumably anyone identifying them all could then shout “Lotto!” - but verification would always be a problem.

As the above paragraphs indicate, the use of the Bible as a guidebook is both partial and blinkered. Travellers (some of them pilgrims) thereby spend so much time trying to identify its sites that other piles of ruins go unexplored except by those who either take heed of information in classical texts, or are interested in ruined monuments for their own sake. To be sure, pilgrims were schooled since at least the Renaissance to follow strict days of visits in Jerusalem and surroundings, so that sites (naturally) took on a ritualistic aspect, with visitors concentrating on those sanctified by the characters of the Bible. When we throw into the mix the common belief (see below) of the Unchanging East, then biblical sites become that much more alive, because nothing has changed (has it?) in nearly two thousand years!<sup>35</sup> Literal belief in the words of the Bible led to a traveller “considered as an infidel, or at least a rationalist,” because he explained that “where the healed paralytic takes up his bed, and explaining that the bed was, probably, nothing more than the carpet or light mattress” – and got the triumphant retort, “We believe our Bible.”<sup>[84]</sup>

In spite of the problems detailed above, it is certain that without such a strong focus on the Bible there would have been far less scholarship directed at Palestine. This is clear from the original 1865 *Prospectus* for the Palestine Exploration Fund. Herein it was acknowledged that “no country should be of so much interest to us as that in which the documents of our Faith were written, and the momentous events they describe enacted.” Ancient sites were to be identified, especially those associated with Holy Writ, but also “the course of the ancient roads . . . the discovery of coins, inscriptions, and other relics.”<sup>[85]</sup> Although they were not specified in the statement mentioned above, it cannot be said that the PEF neglected Roman remains, any more than it can be maintained that the Society would have been established (let alone funded)

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35 Rogers 2011, 14: “Pilgrims could view Arabs as unchanged and living history, easily ignoring the dramatic political, social, and cultural changes that had swept across the Palestine landscape over two thousand years. The posited lack of development was thought to only enhance the grim views, or overall tourist experience, wherein one could view an unchanged landscape.”

without the draw-card of Holy Writ. Hence some scholars today can accuse the PEF of skewing research directions in order “to restore faith in the Bible, which was being eroded by Darwinism.”<sup>36</sup> Its publications continually expressed alarm at the speed with which antiquities were disappearing, in part because improved sanitation led to lower mortality rates and hence a pressure on building, among other consequences.<sup>37</sup> Confusingly, even in mid-century excellent accounts of topography such as that by Graham are produced to further the Bible: “we may be quite sure that every certain extension of our knowledge in this respect will afford us additional conviction of the scrupulous accuracy of the Holy Scriptures.”<sup>[86]</sup>

### Changing Horizons Meet the Unchanging East

One remark especially, which occurs to the reader, and which is the more striking as it results from all our researches in the East, is the slightness of the difference, or rather the resemblance, the perfect conformity, that exists between all the details of that [Biblical] period, and those of our own time . . . the stationary nature of the usages and habits which form the general character of the East.<sup>[87]</sup> [1836]

As the bibliography of source materials for this volume demonstrates, there were plenty of knowledgeable authors writing about Syria and her antiquities without being misled by biblical excursions. Their works dealt with the impact of Crusaders, Muslims and Turks on the country, and did not privilege the period of Christian origins. Just as did archaeologists, so biblical scholars found what they expected to find: blessed were they who saw and believed, and wrote it all down; more blessed still were those back home who had not seen – only read – and yet believed. Of course, without the attractions provided by Jerusalem, Bethlehem and the Bible, there would have been fewer eyes to scrutinise the monuments and towns of Palestine, and less funding for serious exploits such as the Palestine Exploration Fund; but a more balanced

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36 Pollock & Bernbeck 2005, 66: “But the bond between the Bible and the Middle East goes back far beyond the 19th century. Religious attachments of Jews, Christians, and Moslems to the holy places have long been a primary motivation for the exploration of the Holy Land and its antiquities.”

37 Rafeq 2002, 119: “The expanding population, however, became a major threat to public order, as social tension between the poor majority and the rich minority increased in the nineteenth century in the wake of the integration of the Syrian economy into the world market.”

appreciation of the country might have been achieved without such a focus. If we need further convincing that this was indeed the case, compare the adjacent countries of Asia Minor and Egypt, where it was knowledgeable travellers who wrote the guidebooks, and where attention to the monuments depended on access and climate rather than on religion.

Archaeology was perceived as helping the Bible, as when Layard “had brought home evidence that the Old Testament was based on real people, places, and events.”<sup>38</sup> However, the financials indicate that, whereas the British and Foreign Bible Society attracted plenty of funding, the PEF did not: belief did not at first require excavation, and was triumphant over those Doubting Thomases who wished to dig; but then the Bible Society had a revenue of some £100,000 per annum, against the £2,700 of the PEF.<sup>39</sup> Only with the cohorts of Darwin were the “biblicals” forced to support digging, in order to bolster their position, using science as their shield. Even accepting the energy, knowledge and dedication of Biblical scholars, we might wonder why serious work on the startling number of Christian churches to be found in Syria was not started until the mid-20th century – by which time, of course, many had already disappeared.

Cartography was often the key to unmuddled exploration, including the mapping of the Holy Land itself,<sup>40</sup> with new expertise in surveying, instruments, and topographical mapping and printing. This was a great improvement on 18th-century and earlier 19th-century mapping,<sup>41</sup> and relieved scholars, for example those doing research on the Crusades, from the “pauvreté des renseignements recueillis jusqu’à ce jour sur la géographie intérieure des principautés chrétiennes en Orient.”<sup>[88]</sup> But just what names should sites and settlements have? Certainly, 19th-century travellers had no secure answer.

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38 Murray 2007, 210, Layard in Mesopotamia: “Here was proof that the Bible was the truth, and its veracity was the subject of continual debate during the mid-Victorian age. Layard had brought home evidence that the Old Testament was based on real people, places, and events.”

39 Bar-Yosef 2005, 167: “In its heyday, the PEF had about 120 local societies in the UK, with an average of ten members per society; and the total receipts from 1865 to 1914 were £138,650. By comparison, the British and Foreign Bible Society (established in 1804) had, by mid-century, 460 auxiliaries, 373 branches, and almost 2,500 local associations, with annual revenue of well over £100,000.”

40 Long 2003, Chap 5, 165–202: Mapmakers and their Holy Lands.

41 Gavish 2005, 3: “Explorers, travellers, and military officers began to delineate the land by modern surveying methods rather than from their impressions, secondhand reports, or interpretations of the sacred texts.” Ibid. 5 for a sketch of earlier surveying and mapping in Syria.

Nevertheless, Conder could protest in 1887 that travellers were muddying the waters especially about ancient topography:

The confusion caused by Crusading and early Christian traditions which have been engrafted in a precisely similar manner, forms already a most serious difficulty; and if in addition we are to have modern foreign theories disseminated among the peasantry, identification will be impossible.<sup>[89]</sup>

There were just a few doubters of the efficacy of the Bible as a guidebook, and if some earlier travellers were sceptical (as severe a fault as credulity, we are reminded<sup>[90]</sup>), why drive away readers and reduce royalties by saying so? Who, after all, was going to tell readers back home that there was little left of recognisable biblical sites, because the world had indeed changed? Thomas recommended in 1900 that travellers should look to the Crusader castles which were a panacea for Biblical dodgings: “the mind, tortured and wearied with perpetual contradictions as to the traditional sites of Biblical places, gladly takes refuge in the contemplation of the more trustworthy relics of their exploits.”<sup>[91]</sup> But for the majority, “the nagging uncertainties created by Modernism seemed soothed by the historical “proof” provided by pilgrimage narratives written by contemporaries.”<sup>[92]</sup> Best keep off the subject of religion, counselled Baedeker, “as expressions of opinion on these subjects too often lead to serious misunderstandings and even quarrels.”<sup>[93]</sup>

One might suggest that in earlier centuries, given the absence of guidebooks let alone of concepts of archaeology and factual exactitude, such misuse of a sacred text was inevitable. Even in the 20th century and today, the Bible retains some prestige for the information it provides on early life in Syria, not least because its very existence as a centrepiece of Judaism and Christianity promoted the travel and tourism which helped bring some prosperity. Archaeology must of course take hints from whatever sources it can find over where to dig and what it expects to unearth; yet frequently 19th century and later excavations seem intended, or are interpreted, as attempts to prove the veracity of the Bible, a long-lived notion still an article of faith. Under such a dispensation, every link between sites on the ground and words in the Bible helps this process. As already noted, the amount of attention lavished on the Holy Land and its monuments by travellers and authors was greater than that accorded the rest of Syria, and biblical connections certainly increased funding for research and excavation; but these were directed to (supposedly) biblical sites at the expense of pagan ones, and authors were feeding a known and identifiable market for biblical material back home. Thus when Guérin confessed that after fifteen years studying (“en Italie, en Grèce, en Asie

Mineure, en Egypte, en Tunisie et en Algérie”), “j’ai été attiré comme invinciblement vers l’antiquité biblique, dont la Palestine possède les restes les plus précieux,”<sup>[94]</sup> one might be permitted to wonder whether this had something to do with available funding. Cynics may be assured that no such base motives affect academic trajectories today.

Because it was believed that the Bible was under attack, affirmation of its complete veracity was very much alive in an age pushing ever backwards the date of Creation, and also when believers themselves tried to “make use of the prestigious sciences of cartography, archaeology, history, and photography.”<sup>42</sup> (The last fed myriad popular magazines before they were technically able to reproduce actual photographs.<sup>43</sup>) But without excavation (of houses, field patterns, garments – all then impossible), the Unchanging East was simply a leap of faith.<sup>44</sup> When Thomson wrote in Lebanon in 1886 that “the manners and customs of the peasants and farmers appear to have changed but little from very ancient times . . . and the stall of the ox and the manger were then, as now, in the house,”<sup>[95]</sup> this was simply guessing. But the unstated corollary was that, if ox and manger were indeed still in the house, then the Bible was true! Just how far such comparisons can stretch is demonstrated by comparing bedouins with Homer’s writings.<sup>45</sup>

One reason for treating Bible Lands as exact versions of the Old and New Testaments was the common belief in the Unchanging East:

Elsewhere we can but dimly discern the actors and the scenery of the Elder World through the curtain of obscurity drawn over it by Time; but

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- 42 Rogers 2011, 32: “The “fifth gospel” (i.e., the Holy Land) became a way to skip centuries of ecclesiastical corruption and excess (a crucial theme for Protestantism) to return to the basic, original, and undeniable truths of the Gospel, and at the same time make use of the prestigious sciences of cartography, archaeology, history, and photography.” Camp 1852 for 125 photographs, largely of Egypt, but Jerusalem and Baalbek are included.
- 43 Lagarde 2006: *Le Tour du Monde*, founded by Edouard Charton in 1860. He also looked after *Le Magasin Pittoresque* (founded 1833) for over 50 years, and helped create *L’Illustration* in 1843.
- 44 Bar-Yosef 2005, 83: “While the indigenous population was not entirely absent even from the dominant Orientalist discourse, its role was constructed to conform to the English perception of the Oriental space: in the changeless East, the natives functioned as a living museum.”
- 45 Hachicho 1964, 108 on Robert Wood’s Essay on Homer: “In Syria, he finds many characteristics among the Bedouins, which, according to him, remaining constant throughout the ages, very much correspond to Homer’s utterings on Oriental manners. In Wood’s opinion, this fact verifies Homer’s characterization to a great extent, and speaks much for his veracity and precision.”

here, the Past is so faithfully reflected in the Present, that the drama of ancient life seems never interrupted.<sup>[96]</sup>

Or again, in a precious expression of Western arrogance:

C'est qu'en effet ces contrées, berceau de l'humanité, antique rendez-vous de tous les peuples, et théâtre des plus augustes mystères, recèlent pour l'observateur, tant par la richesse de leur passé historique que par l'immobilité séculaire de leurs mœurs et de leur physionomie, une mine inépuisable de trésors archéologiques aussi précieux pour l'historien que pour le théologien.<sup>[97]</sup>

Whereas innovation ruled in the West, and old manners and customs were swept away,

the curious traveller will observe among these people the most wonderful and intact preservation of ancient manners . . . he finds himself, as it were, carried back to the earliest ages of which we have any record . . . and observes a faithful transcript of many customs described in the Old Testament, and many copies of pastoral scenes there vividly depicted.<sup>[98]</sup>

There was more sense in contrasting imported Turkish attitudes with those of desert dwellers. Graham affirmed in 1858 that “no European element can be detected amongst the Muslims of Damascus,” but that

Among the Druzes such is not the case, nor amongst the Arabs of the Desert. These are totally unchanged. They have the same black tents, the same curtains to fence off the woman's portion of the tent, the same period for crossing the great Desert, the same order of march, the same feuds, and even the same arms and utensils that they had in their father Ishmael's day.<sup>[99]</sup>

To some, it appeared that church architecture was as unchanging as liturgy and vestments.<sup>[100]</sup> Pilgrims were in a dilemma about the locals: “sometimes they saw them as dirty and uncivilized, while at others, they found them to be conveniently biblical-looking and providing useful authentic scenery.”<sup>46</sup>

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46 Rogers 2011, 3: “enhancing the tourist experience by posing for a multitude of remarkable photographs labeled as Bible scenes that have survived to this day. They are at the very heart of these popular pilgrimage narratives.”

Unfortunately, the East was not as clean as the West, so Hamilton in 1875 concluded that “one such trip did away with all the grandeur one was wont to associate with the Holy Land, and that religious fervour soon subsided after witnessing the dirt and misery accumulated there.”<sup>[101]</sup> Distance did indeed lend enchantment to the view. In 1898 Baedeker let fly on the sordid effects of Jerusalem:

The combination of wild superstition with the merest formalism which everywhere forces itself on our notice, and the fanaticism and jealous exclusiveness of the numerous religious communities of Jerusalem form the chief modern characteristics of the city... the contempt with which the orthodox Jews and Mohammedans look down on the Christians is only too well deserved.<sup>[102]</sup>

But the view was also hindered by later accretions, so that Pigeory could suggest in 1854 that the Via Dolorosa should be returned to its early state, as an inspiration for artists and architects.<sup>[103]</sup> However, the distaste Baedeker evinces in 1898 for the current corruption of the Holy City is goes back at least decades. Midshipman Anderson, for example, travelled there in 1837: “You see pedling Jews, beggars, and Turks as in every other place and the sanctity of ones feelings is marred very much by the fatigue necessarily incurred in getting there.”<sup>[104]</sup>

Poujade, in 1860, having noted both the supposed Tomb of Noah (guarded by no less than a descendant of the Prophet) and the spot on which the whale disgorged Jonah, explained:

Ce sont partout des Musulmans, des descendants du Prophète qui ont la garde de ces marabouts et qui en marchant rentrée aux Chrétiens ou aux Israélites. Ces traditions locales ne sont-elles pas de véritables commentaires de la Bible, ce livre d'où sont sortis le judaïsme, le christianisme, l'islamisme, si profondément dissemblables dans leurs conséquences, malgré leur point de départ commun?<sup>[105]</sup>

In other words, he did not disbelieve the legends, instead using them to prove the veracity of the Bible. The Tomb of Noah was “occupied by a stone trunk or sarcophagus, upwards of twenty feet long, which they hold to have been the dimensions necessary for containing the body of the restorer of the human race.”<sup>[106]</sup> Such Muslim veneration was the mirror-image of pilgrim management by Christians in Jerusalem (a town which lived off nothing else), where the itineraries often read like the cunning setup by some early Heritage

Management organisation. Here, indeed, from the Middle Ages the visitors were provided with enough biblical sites hallowed by mass acceptance and millennial convention, to prolong their time there to well over a week. Such arduous itineraries were necessary to full up local coffers. Getting and spending, they did indeed lay waste their powers.

### Biblical Monuments “Identified”

The villages [on the way to Jerusalem] are also, in general, a collection of huts of recent origin, and seldom connected with any interesting point in ancient or modern history. When, however, it may chance that they relate in any wise to the facts of the Scriptures, I have endeavored to make accurate mention of everything of a kind which I supposed would be worth your attention.<sup>[107]</sup> [1857]

Certainly, as already observed, travellers to Palestine would have been fewer (and our knowledge of Syria therefore the poorer) had many of them not gone armed with the Bible, for this was “a fresh and fertile field . . . for the operations of our Christian missionaries.”<sup>[108]</sup> (Indeed, a version of biblical archaeology had operated in earlier centuries.<sup>47</sup>) And as Spencer’s quote above indicates, sites were only interesting when they are mentioned in the Bible. Yet again, reliance on the “pictures” in the Bible helped visitors view the country as fixed in aspic for many centuries, and later additions, such as Muslim buildings, as destructive intrusions into the biblical landscape. This closed eyes to important Muslim architecture, such as those the Ayyubids, studied in detail by Korn.<sup>48</sup> This is not a constructive attitude with which to visit any country, although it is reflected in supposed connections between aggressive horse flies and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah,<sup>[109]</sup> and even in the reports of H.C. Butler’s archaeological work in the first decade of the 20th century, writing of Tarba with creaking academic humour that “conditions here are still similar to those described in the Book of Job.”<sup>[110]</sup> Indeed, the locals were easily disparaged: when Porter in 1868 saw donkeys carrying stone to Jerusalem,

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47 Tigay 2000, for biblical “archaeology” in earlier centuries, and the material finds, many of these accidental, and recorded as such.

48 Korn 2004, 15–19 for a survey of information from early travellers; 75–89 for palaces, waterworks and baths; keyed plans of Jerusalem (103–108), Damascus (108–118) and Aleppo (118–122), vol 11 for catalog of Ayyubid buildings: Jerusalem 61–78; Palestine/S Syria 79–98; Damascus 99–169; Mid-Syria 171–208; Aleppo 209–258; N Syria 259–282.



he uses the Bible as a measure of decline, commenting “What a change from those days of prosperity and power, when Solomon laid the foundations of his palace and temple with “costly stones, even great stones; stones of 10 cubits, and stones of 8 cubits!”<sup>[111]</sup> He has of course never seen a Solomonic building – he has simply read about them in the Bible. In 1862 Beke set out to find the place where Jacob had kept Laban’s flocks:

we could not but be struck by the sight of some large flocks of sheep, with their lambs only a few days old . . . As Abraham’s servant must have approached from Damascus, which lies west of Harran, he would have met the women as they went out to draw water.<sup>[112]</sup>

It is possible that the eternal Protestant-Catholic enmity produced light as well as heat, including some teaching in Ireland of Catholics in Protestant schools.<sup>[113]</sup> Indeed, it was suggested that the “emissaries of the Papal Power in Syria” were buying up Bibles from the Bible Society in order to burn them,<sup>[114]</sup> but then the Protestants could be presented as sceptics flooding into Syria with theodolite, chronometer, barometer, and thermometer. Hahn-Hahn tried to characterise their attitude. They

always begin their researches with the preconceived notion that they must meet with what is false, and they of course do meet with much that is false, and more that is questionable; but whether they themselves arrive at the true and correct decision, remains to be proved.

A good example supporting his criticism was the “Protestant clergyman who disputes the locality of the Holy Sepulchre without ever having been at the place!”<sup>[115]</sup> Certainly, there was dispute over the status of some sites, but Guérin believed that problems could be solved by archaeology.<sup>[116]</sup> If, for some “treading in the very footsteps of Christ and the Bible worthies” made them better evangelists,<sup>[117]</sup> for others more was needed, namely “also the further and more sacred interest in everything which can help to illustrate and make more plain the language, customs, allusions, and history of the Bible.”<sup>[118]</sup>

Scepticism was painful but necessary. Fuller did the sites of Damascus in 1829, found “not a vestige” of Greek or Roman antiquity there, but also chased up the S. Paul connection:

A window in a tower in the eastern wall is said to be that from which he was let down in a basket and made his escape; although a lion and fleur-de-lis, which surmount the arch, may seem to refer its construction to the romantic rather than the apostolic age.<sup>[119]</sup>

Yet apparently those who “had determined that the sacred histories themselves were but a collection of myths and fables” were to be converted, because

the ancient eastern world has been reawakened to life by the spade of the explorer and the patient skill of the decipherer, and we now find ourselves in the presence of monuments which bear the names or recount the deeds of the heroes of Scripture.<sup>[120]</sup>

Yes, but the spade of the digger (in this case Guérin in 1872) did not hesitate to divide the sites of Jerusalem into three: “les uns étant vrais, les autres douteux et les troisièmes apocryphes.”<sup>[121]</sup>

For the Bible-equipped, monuments and ruins were often seen with the eyes of faith. In the 1160s, John of Würzburg saw at Tyre the “the large marble stone upon which Jesus sat, which remained uninjured from the time of Christ to that of the driving out of the heathen from the city, but was afterwards broken by the Franks and Venetians.”<sup>[122]</sup> This was but one of several traditions taken over by the Muslims.<sup>49</sup> In the late 15th century, Brother Felix Fabri visited Gaza, where he saw “the ruins of a great house or palace,” the temple of Dagon, “which Samson threw down by breaking the middle pillars on which it stood, and killed himself, together with the lords of the Philistines.” Of course, “we saw two marble pillars, exceeding great, of a gray colour, which once supported the whole building; it was by breaking these that Samson overthrew the temple and laid low his enemies.”<sup>[123]</sup> Jacques Goujon also saw them two centuries later: “ces deux colonnes qui le soustenaient.”<sup>[124]</sup> Two decades later, Thévenot was shown the site, but “ce n'est plus qu'un monceau de terre.”<sup>[125]</sup> At an ancient monastery in the Hauran, “an ancient menhir was shown as the stone against which Job rubbed himself,”<sup>[126]</sup> while another menhir played a part in Jewish superstitions.<sup>[127]</sup>

Other sites were equally blessed. D'Aramon, travelling 1549 and French Ambassador to Constantinople in the 1550s, saw on the way to Damascus the well in which Joseph was thrown by his brothers.<sup>[128]</sup> And he also admired Jacob's bridge over the Jordan, with “quelques vestiges de la maison dudict Jacob.”<sup>[129]</sup> At Beirut in the early 1500s, Varthema saw “an ancient building, which, they say, was inhabited by the daughter of the king when the dragon

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49 Talmon-Heller 2007, 188B: “Syria was indeed saturated with Jewish and Christian memories and holy sites, many of which were adopted by the Muslims . . . Some medieval historians openly admit that the aura of sanctity of quite a few pilgrimage sites in Syria originated in pre-Islamic times. A big marble seat from Hammam Mughan in Northern Syria, revered as the chair of Jesus, is one example.”

wanted to devour her, and where St. George killed the said dragon.”<sup>[130]</sup> Two 18th-century travellers, however, were inclined to quibble: their guide showed them two pillars near Damascus, where S. Paul had his vision; but the argument was with distance, not with fact:

but herein I believe he was greatly mistaken; for, at a small distance, we found several burial-places, to which these pillars probably might have belonged; for, according to the common tradition of European divines, the place where St. Paul had his vision, was about fifty paces nearer the city.<sup>[131]</sup>

Nor was this quibbling over slight distances a joke, but rather a demonstration of a desired (pseudo-scientific) accuracy, for the same author records seeing on the road to Baalbek “a small ruined building, having near it a pillar, said to be the grave of Abel, and the spot where he was slain by his brother.”<sup>[132]</sup> In the early 17th century at Tyre the “Moore’s” brought William Lithgow Sampson’s Pillar, which he rejected only because Sampson died elsewhere, and “I think the auncient Tyrians, sayd I, could not transport that Pillar so far hither: But they the more constantly affirmed it.”<sup>[133]</sup> This smart Scot was not going to be tricked by any locals! Lusignan in 1783 was told at Ashdod that in that town “was the house that Sampson pulled down; and to the south east, just out of the town, the water in which the eunuch Candakys was baptized by the apostle Philip.”<sup>[134]</sup>

Even less of a joke was when Louis-Félicien de Saulcy, the French archaeologist, visiting in 1850, believed he had nailed the true location of the ruins of Sodom and Zoar, because of his fieldwork measuring the distance between them, which “rendait parfaitement compte de toutes les circonstances du récit que la Bible nous donne, de la fuite de Loth, fuite qui dut s’accomplir dans le temps écoulé entre l’aube et le lever du soleil.”<sup>[135]</sup> Again, the Book proves the sites, and the sites confirm the Book.

Biblical history has more episodes of destruction than of construction, and these were capable of turning Syria’s monuments into a morality tale. Sites are often contemplated with apparent pleasure by travellers who we might expect to concentrate on any survivals. Thus the ruins of Tyre demonstrate in 1701 “the instability of things here below,”<sup>[136]</sup> while in 1696 Maundrell noted “how God has fulfilled his word concerning Tyre, viz. That it should be as the top of a rock, a place for fishers to dry their nets on – Ezek. xxvi. 14.”<sup>[137]</sup> The monuments of Jerash, conceivably the city noted in the Prodigal Son, impressed Buckingham in 1822 as “a city built only for luxury, for splendour, and for pleasure.”<sup>[138]</sup> Indeed, the whole of Palestine was affected, because “chaque

pierre est un symbole de la révélation divine, chaque ruine un monument de la colère céleste.”<sup>[139]</sup> After reading several such accounts, the reader becomes fatigued. Tyre is promoted as “a monument of prophecy; one of the strong proofs of the truths of the Bible,”<sup>[140]</sup> while the whole of Bashan “was an ocular demonstration of the literal fulfilment of the curse pronounced on the land by Moses, more than three thousand years ago.”<sup>[141]</sup> Even if a modern scholar can see general poverty and disarray as “a sensible interpretation for these verses,”<sup>50</sup> this was not the case in earlier decades.

Literal-minded travellers seem often to delight in such destruction as a proof of the Bible. This is puzzling, for we might have expected them rather to be disappointed by heaps of ruins, to view which they had made such a long journey. Yet, as Shaw remarked in 1808, “every heap of ruins points out to us the weakness and instability of all human art and contrivance,” whereas Christians are “seeking a city not like these, subject to the strokes of time and fortune, but which hath everlasting foundations.”<sup>[142]</sup> As a result of searching for that Eternal City, actual ruins rarely get examined with assiduity. Or, rather, their ruination is exulted, especially if referred to directly or even allusively in the Bible. Van de Velde in 1854 actually welcomed the destruction and dispersal of Tyre’s remains by speculators, for such diggings “serve to throw a new light on the judgments of God on Tyre, and add their testimony to the Lord’s having performed all that he had spoken.”<sup>[143]</sup> Amman also fulfilled God’s word; “I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and will deliver thee for a spoil to the heathen.”<sup>[144]</sup> Biblical prophecies were fulfilled at a time when “Syria was a great, rich and powerful country.”<sup>[145]</sup> Again, monuments do not have to be mentioned in the Bible for travellers to exult at their downfall, for handy quotations are always available. The “idol’s temple of Baalbec” was brought down by a succession of earthquakes, yet Van De Velde in 1854 still recollects the words, “The Lord will destroy (tear down) the house of the proud.”<sup>[146]</sup> Petra gets the same treatment from Porter in 1868, where “who can fail to recall the words of Scripture; and who can hesitate to hear testimony to their truth?”<sup>[147]</sup>

Tourists simply using the Bible as a guidebook were no blight on the landscape, but attempts to explore biblical and other sites by unearthing them (a blight already mentioned) certainly were, and such private enterprise drew

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50 Rogers 2011, 112 on Biblical prophecies: “The general poverty and disarray offered a sensible interpretation for these verses, and even when conditions improved, Palestine still lacked what was taken for granted in Western countries. Phillips Brooks noted in 1915 that in Samaria countless columns lay in ruins and the population was tortured by swarms of fleas, so that “the prophecy seems strangely fulfilled.”

a reproof from the Palestine Exploration Fund in 1873 in italics for emphasis, that “*Nothing is useful, for Biblical purposes, but a scientific exploration.*” In any case, such actions upset the natives and put up the prices for any antiquities they wished to sell:

Some additions it may make to our geographical knowledge, some illustrations of ruins; but what is gained in this way is lost in another, for the cupidity of the natives is aroused, prices are raised, jealousy excited.<sup>[148]</sup>

As time went on, indeed, the archaeologists took over, destroying sites professionally.

The PEF was by definition (because of the nature of its readers) probably preaching to the converted, not to say treading very carefully, and culled the experiences of many travellers when it reported in 1873 from “a country where enthusiasm so often endangers accuracy, and a man perfectly and entirely truthful and honest sees what he wishes to see.”<sup>[149]</sup> We might also imagine that those travellers writing about matters biblical were doing likewise, in an effort to sell as many copies of their books as possible.

Archaeology presented many challenges to traditional religion. William Robertson Smith (1846–94) Professor of Oriental languages and Old Testament exegesis at the Free Church College, Aberdeen, from 1876, was thrown out of his chair in 1881. This was because

he began that series of theological investigations which, characterized as they were by learned research and the use of the most scientific methods, were destined to make his name famous. He was the pupil and personal friend of many leaders of the higher criticism in Germany, and from the first he advocated views which, though now widely accepted, were then regarded with apprehension.<sup>[150]</sup>

Smith was a proponent of new methodologies, and “archaeology’s increasingly vocal claims for evolution rather than creation) addressed the core of Evangelical belief in the literal revealed truth of biblical texts long seen as essential to Jewish evangelism.”<sup>51</sup> His lectures on the criticism of the Old Testament were well attended, and from 1883 he occupied a chair of Arabic at Cambridge, and became University Librarian. Clearly, the tide was turning.

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51 Marten 2006, 13.

### Other Guidebooks: Baedeker, Cook & Murray

Molti scrittori di viaggi fidandosi troppo alle menzogne altrui... La miglior cosa per un viaggiatore, è quella di scrivere tutto ciò di cui egli è stato testimone oculare, ne mai fidarsi alle voci d'un altro anco, se fosse amico sincero.<sup>[151]</sup> [1828]

As an antidote to the above, this section considers those guides which, without of course omitting references to the Bible where appropriate, give a more balanced account of the whole territory of Syria. None of these was written from scratch; all depended to some extent on earlier travellers acknowledged to be accurate as well as detailed, such as Burckhardt, praised by Lindsay in 1838 as “indeed a model for travellers, so accurate and precise... so cheerful, so uncomplaining under hardship and privation, that one cannot but love him.”<sup>[152]</sup>

John Murray produced the first modern guidebook to distant points abroad in 1840.<sup>[153]</sup> His *Hand-book for Travellers on the Continent* appeared in 1838, and there were available plenty of reliable books to the whole of Syria from the late 1850s. These supplied practical details (steamers, roads, food, consuls, hotels) as well down-to-earth descriptions of towns and sites. Baedeker's 1876 610-page volume is for *Palestine and Syria* (not the converse), with 56 references to the Bible in it, nine to the Old Testament, ten to the New Testament. With its no doubt captive audience, it nails its colour to the masthead when describing the literature available, 122–123:

The Bible supplies us with the best and most accurate information regarding Palestine, extending back to a very remote period, and should be carefully consulted by the traveller at every place of importance as he proceeds on his journey. The Handbook contains references to many texts, but it has seldom been thought necessary to make quotations.

By 1910 (German edition), references to the Bible are down to 22 occurrences, and it is assumed a Bible will be taken (xcv: “Als selbstverständlich wird die Mitnahme einer Bibel vorausgesetzt.”)

Baedeker guides catered for the individual traveller, not for package tourists. His *Palestine and Syria* (editions in English 1876, 1894, 1898, 1906, 1912) alerted travellers in 1876 to the poor state of the roads, noting that they would have to ride – there was no alternative.<sup>[154]</sup> The focus on individual travel was underlined by the nine pages of advice for suggested contracts for hiring

guides, guards, animals etc (needing a consular attestation and stamp) with a dragoman, including extensive notes.<sup>[155]</sup> The advice survives in a shorter form in Baedeker's 1898 handbook, and these stipulations persist in the 1910 German edition, indicating clearly that Baedeker guides were for individual travellers, not shepherded groups. There is no mention of conducted tours in the 1876 edition, although this was the year Thomas Cook produced their own guide, wherein they offer independent tours, personally-conducted tours, Nile tours (and others for Egypt), and Palestine itineraries, which are their own tours, from 10 days in length upwards to 30 and 40 days. Baedeker does deign to notice conducted tours in the 1898 edition, advising the independent variety, for otherwise (and sniffing at the prospect) with conducted tours "the traveller who joins the party is tied to society which he cannot choose for himself and must resign all claims to be master of his own time or to determine his own route." Unstated was the long-standing assumption that PLUDs (People Like Us, Dear) do not go on group excursions. The clinching argument from Baedeker was that it was no more expensive to do the trip on one's own.<sup>[156]</sup> This author may have read, without necessarily believing it, Cook's statement that "The most enjoyable way of visiting Palestine is by joining a party. The interest of camp-life is thereby much enhanced."

*Cook's tourists' handbook for Palestine and Syria* (London 1876, with only "Palestine" in bold), emphasises that this is indeed a guide for tourists (pushing the "benefits of associated travel"), and "it does not, therefore, attempt to give exhaustive information, or to unravel the multitudinous threads of controversy woven around nearly every sacred site. It points out all that is to be seen, and endeavours to give concise information upon all subjects in which the Tourist may find interest." (iii). Nor is it necessary to take along a Bible, for the guide contains "the full text of Scripture references, so as to avoid the inconvenience of having to turn to the passage in the Bible."<sup>[157]</sup> It contains 186 references to ruins, 72 to destroy/destruction, 33 to the Bible, 46 to scripture, and 32 to the Old/New Testaments.

Murray's *Handbook for travellers to Syria and Palestine* (London 1858, revised 1868, re-written 1875) was by J.L. Porter, and therefore antedates both Baedeker and Cook.<sup>[158]</sup> It mentions the Bible forty times, and the first line of its Preface (vi) reads "The Bible is the best Handbook for Palestine; the present work is only intended to be a companion to it." And then:

Palestine is the stage on which the most wondrous events of the world's history were enacted. Every nook and corner of it is "holy ground." I have, therefore, made an attempt to group on the old sites the chief actors in the

sacred dramas. I think no known Scripture locality has been overlooked, and no incident of Scripture history, which would tend to enhance its interest, omitted.

But then Porter was a missionary, ordained in 1846, and spending ten years in Syria from 1849, with further visits. In any case, such guidebooks were evidently for a niche market, for they did not sell well.<sup>[159]</sup> This one devotes the first volume to the Holy Land and the second to Northern Palestine and Syria, the publisher's calculation perhaps being that most would buy the first volume, which covered the majority of the holy sites. The second volume contains 19 references to robbers, 16 to danger, and 31 to safety. At this date there were several hotels listed in Beirut, but only one in Damascus, and none in Aleppo. Murray was evidently ecumenical in what he published, recognising different constituencies for different books: for he also published Darwin's highly controversial *Origin of Species*.<sup>[160]</sup> Guidebooks such as his were convenient for those numerous travellers who visited the sites, but did not wish to write their own descriptions: thus Berners in 1876 did indeed enter the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, but contented himself with citing Murray's description, rather than composing his own.<sup>[161]</sup>

The rivalry between Murray and Baedeker was fierce, because there was money to be made and prestige to be guarded. The former firm later claimed plagiarism for Baedeker's adopting the same red cover, and for substantial use of text without acknowledgment.<sup>[162]</sup> Certainly, the word 'Murray' is not mentioned in the 1876 or the 1898 Baedeker's *Palestine and Syria* volume. Murrays then played the "continentals" card, disdainfully noting that European Baedekers were filled in "with such information as he thought useful to Germans, as for instance by sedulously pointing out where the best Bierstuben were to be found."<sup>[163]</sup> But then Murray did *not* publish in German, and Baedeker *did* publish in English, providing competition. Murray's son, provoked by a *Pall Mall Gazette* article suggesting Baedeker had invented the travel-guide typology, wrote an account of the Murray business demonstrating their primacy.<sup>[164]</sup> He indicated the firm's success by his father's purchase of a country house;<sup>[165]</sup> but he gives no figures detailing copies sold, let alone income book by book, presumably because this was commercial in-confidence information.

One indication of the Murray's guides' likely success was Murray's financing of Layard's *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon* (London 1853), and he paid the author £1,500 in the first year.<sup>[166]</sup> (Babylonia and Mesopotamia were popular and much written about, in France as in Britain.<sup>52</sup>) Layard's

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52 Maupoix 2006 for accounts in *Le Tour du Monde*.



finds at Nineveh were spectacular. He had visited Mosul in 1840, and “as I wandered over and amongst these vast mounds, I was convinced that they must cover some vestiges of the great capital.”<sup>[167]</sup> He discovered that indeed they did, thanks to Stratford Canning, who also funded the exploration of the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus, and ensured that the finds went to the British Museum.<sup>[168]</sup> Ibn Hawqal wrote in the later 10th century about the ruins of great buildings at Babylon,<sup>[169]</sup> and his mention of Samarra<sup>[170]</sup> eventually led to aerial photography of the site and then to excavation. The existence of antiquities around Mosul was well known to 18th-century English travellers, Plaisted suggesting the town as a good place to await the next caravan, “for there are many remains of antiquity which will yield you an agreeable amusement, especially if you have a taste that way.”<sup>[171]</sup>

From the above, we unfortunately cannot tell just how popular any of the guidebooks to Syria and Palestine really were, for production run numbers and sales figures are lacking. A PhD topic beckons on the takeup of guidebook-fuelled tourism to the East (including French series such as the Guides Joanne), based on whatever hard facts are available from publishers’ archives. Other travel accounts deserve to be better known, such as those of Evliya Çelebi.<sup>53</sup> It is startling that, of the ten volumes surviving in manuscript, in Turkish, only the first two (plus extracts from the rest in these cited *Selections*) have been translated into English, plus other languages by geographical criteria, into Arabic, Armenian, Greek, Hungarian, Romanian, Russian and Serbian. Extensive travel accounts in Turkish are not so common that they can be ignored in this way, so surely their copious editing could entice yet more PhD theses in posse?

We have seen above that Cook wrote guidebooks for groups, and Murray and Baedeker for individuals. But for what kind of people they naturally do not try to specify. The Abbé Mariti, writing on Cyprus, Syria and Palestine in 1791, was sure that his work would appeal to all classes of society:

Elle offre à l’homme de lettres des recherches curieuses; au publicité, des idées neuves & approfondies sur les gouvernemens; au voyageur, des connoissances locales qui dirigeront plus sûrement sa marche; à l’artiste ou à l’amateur, des ruines précieuses à étudier; au négociant, d’utiles instructions & des encouragemens sur le commerce; à l’homme du monde quelques délassemens agréables.<sup>[172]</sup>

Porter was another author who wrote for individuals, counselling his reader not to hire a dragoman, because of the likelihood of being tricked. In his preface he presents the facts of travelling life, including dragoman rake-offs and

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53 Dankoff & Kim 2011, xxi–xxii: outline of the publishing history of Evliya Çelebi.

percentages, stories of robberies, and implores his readers not to be taken in by the rose-laden scents of the east:

Another hint may be useful for poetical travellers, who, becoming enamoured of their dragoman, deem him the very embodiment of truth, honesty, and devotedness. It may be very charitable and pleasing to entertain these feelings, but it is very dangerous to act upon them.<sup>[173]</sup>

### Confected Guidebooks: An Example

The innocent might, even today, expect that a guidebook's author had trekked over the ground proclaimed in the title and shown in the maps, in order to offer accurate descriptions and timely advice. However, modern examples where authors have clearly not visited what they are describing are not hard to come by; so that some guidebooks are more like a coral reef with the dead thoughts of other authors supporting a few live blooms. With the exception of pilgrims' handbooks, most travellers' accounts in centuries past were for armchair consumption only, and their readers were hardly ever expected to go to the country in question, let alone to use such accounts as guidebooks, a genre which is a 19th-century invention intended to cater for actual visitors. This fact alone should help ring alarm bells about how 19th century divines thought the Bible might be used in the Holy Land. It was not difficult for scholars to recognise which travellers had actually travelled, and which travel books were confected, but whether the general public knew when they were being fed rehashed material can only be guessed. Even some famous books of travels were largely invented, such as Sir John Mandeville's book, written in French between 1357 and 1371; his true identity is a problem but, as the *Britannica* (1911, q.v.) avers, so is "the equally complex one whether the book contains any facts and knowledge acquired by actual travels and residence in the East."

The demand for travel books was voracious, pirated editions and translations frequent, and publishers' lists will demonstrate that by the 19th century there appeared to be more such books than likely travellers. This was indeed the case, and at a lower level than scholarly publications squabbling about site identifications, we find many books stitched together from the works of acknowledged travellers, with the sources named, sometimes quoted at great length, and often slightly disguised as if the current author was doing the writing. An example of the "honest" proclivity in Eyriès, who lists his sources on the title page (*Voyage pittoresque en Asie et en Afrique, résumé général des voyages*

*anciens et modernes, d'après* – then long list of his sources, Paris 1839), who simply strings together long quotes from Sestini, Volney, Wood, Chateaubriand, comte de Forbin, Lamartine, etc.

Straight description is the order of the day, without practical travel hints, accounts of meeting the locals, Bedouin, etc. There are also many travel books where the author has evidently visited some of the sites, but not others, filling them into the narrative from previous works. Anyone reading in detail several of the sources given in the bibliography will soon come across variations on the seen-it copied-it spectrum, and I have added comments to some entries indicating where caution might be required.

Here is an example from Russell's *Palestine, or the Holy Land; from the earliest period to the present time* (1832), which contains no indication anywhere that he actually travelled himself to the Holy Land. It is confected from previous descriptions, and naturally there are no personal accounts by the author of travails, excitement, food, etc. The content is very dry and circumspect, for obvious reasons. The text demonstrates how the description of one site, in this case Gamala in the Southern Golan, can be confected:

The portals of the eastern gate remain, from whence a noble street appears to have run through the whole length of the city, lined by a handsome colonnade of Ionic and Corinthian pillars. The pavement is formed of square blocks of black volcanic stone, and is still so perfect, that the ruts of wheel-carriages are to be seen in it, of different breadths, and about an inch in depth, as at the ruins of Pompeii and Herculaneum in Italy.<sup>[174]</sup> [1832]

And here is Buckingham's 1822 description, from which it was taken (and acknowledged) almost verbatim, but without any quotation marks:

The eastern gate of entrance has its portals still remaining . . . From hence a noble street ran through the whole length of the city . . . it had a colonnade of the Ionic and Corinthian orders, at intervals lining it in avenues on each side . . . The street was paved throughout with fine squared blocks of the black volcanic stone, and this pavement was still so perfect, that the ruts of carriage-wheels were to be seen in it, of different breadths, and about an inch in depth, as at the ruins of Pompeii in Italy.<sup>[175]</sup>

Hence when we read Russell on the theatre at Gamala,<sup>[176]</sup> we are really reading an almost verbatim transcription of Buckingham. Some kind of chain reaction

has Garnier adapting Russell's title in his *La Judée. Description de Palestine ou Terre Sainte, Considérations sur l'histoire de ce pays depuis les premiers temps jusqu'à nos jours*, where part of the Gamala account reads:

La porte de l'est subsiste encore: elle conduit à une grande rue qui traverse la ville dans sa plus grande largeur, bordée par une belle colonnade d'ordre ionique et corinthien; le pavé est formé de blocs de pierre volcanique; il est tellement intact, qu'on y remarque la trace des roues, comme à Pompeii et à Herculaneum.<sup>[177]</sup>

Guérin, on the other hand, actually visited this dangerous area, and gave precise notes on what he found there:

Elle était environnée d'un mur d'enceinte, dont quelques parties sont encore debout. Plusieurs beaux édifices l'ornaient; ils étaient décorés de colonnes monolithes, soit en basalte, soit en granit, aujourd'hui gisantes à terre avec leurs chapiteaux, les uns ioniques, les autres corinthiens. On y rencontre aussi les vestiges d'une ancienne basilique chrétienne à trois nefs, mais aucune trace de mosquée, ce qui m'incline à conclure que Gamala a cessé d'être habitée à partir de l'occupation musulmane.<sup>[178]</sup>

It is often difficult to discover what works are original seen-with-my-own-eyes, and which are confected from earlier accounts, because much work can be required to uncover such devices. Muslim authors were not of course immune from the practice, and an analysis of Ibn Battuta's account of his time in Syria was uncovered several untruths.<sup>54</sup>

### **Travel then Tourism: The Agony and the Ecstasy**

Setting out upon a journey in Syria is far different from anything you have ever known... I think a Syrian missionary would make a very good Western pioneer. / This morning we had no railroad tickets to buy, no depot to reach, no carriage to put in order, no harness to perplex us, and no smooth plank road before us to effeminate our tastes and unfit us for the steep ascents of life.<sup>[179]</sup> [1856]

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54 Allouche 1990, 287: "he may have stretched his imagination a bit too far."

Thus Jessup, an American missionary, wrote to his father near the beginning of his *Fifty Three Years in Syria*, as he entitles his book. The subtext is that travel conditions in America were far in advance of those in Syria, where a missionary was indeed a pioneer, perhaps with the locals taking the place of Indians. As Rogers notes, such men were influential and, “Over time, the natives of the land were thought to make up a pleasant, historical, and biblical backdrop that served to enhance what became the modern tourist experience.”<sup>55</sup> In the early 19th century, travelling in Syria was uncomfortable, and “the want of inns, theatres, museum, picture galleries, libraries, promenades, evening parties, and the ever handy and comfortable caffè, are privations which an European must ever regret.”<sup>[180]</sup> But conditions continually improved, Carne noting in 1838 that lodgings were “no longer so precarious or repulsive,” and travel itself faster.<sup>[181]</sup> Yet instructions on mounting a camel were still thought necessary half a century later.<sup>[182]</sup> This could be uncomfortable, it being suggested that rather than riding, it was better to take refuge in a panier, the other one balancing either with a companion (for conversation) or with one’s luggage.<sup>[183]</sup>

The usual method of travel by mid-century was to hire a dragoman who looked after all details and provisions,<sup>[184]</sup> at a cost of more than £1 a day. By 1875 this had risen to £2 a day, but the expenditure was worth it, for “he will give you the minutest details of memorable places and events, and is not unequal to the feat of indicating the exact spot where the Cock crew.”<sup>[185]</sup> Sites were not yet getting crowded, but tourists could count on seeing several companies of travellers, as Robinson found at Baalbek in 1856.<sup>[186]</sup> In 1872 Farley counselled headquartering at Beirut, praising the wandering life, but noting that this “is only suited to those who are in the enjoyment of vigorous health, and not at all adapted to ladies or invalids.”<sup>[187]</sup> Package tours were not for the rich: demonstrating the point, in 1885 Madame Le Ray set out with an entourage of 26 people including soldiers, and 36 horses and baggage animals to carry her five tents; even so, “sachant que le voyage était très pénible pour une femme, je l’avais abrégé d’un jour en me rendant en voiture à Atneh, situé à l’entrée du désert, où m’attendait mon campement.”<sup>[188]</sup>

It was travel books and also museums which fuelled tourists, and already in 1861 Joanne’s guidebook was publishing itineraries, neatly calculated to the arrival and departure of steamers.<sup>[189]</sup> By the 1880s large organised groups,

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55 Rogers 2011, 148: “Travel narratives were likewise small worlds unto themselves, crafted by religious leadership for widespread consumption that exerted a tremendous influence upon politics and culture in America for decades to come . . . enduring patterns for visiting and viewing the East were established by these early pilgrims, and their influence endured for decades.”

many organised by Cook's, were clogging Jerusalem's approaches with "flowing kefiyehs, horses, mules, tents, baggage, bundles without number, dragoman, muleteers, guides, cooks, servants, and all the rest." Indeed, between 1869 and 1885 Cook took 5,000 to Palestine, the total rising to 12,000 by 1891.<sup>56</sup> Travel was already subject to intercontinental pressures: in 1881, for example, fewer reached Jerusalem because

the great Centennial Exhibition is attracting the attention of every nation, and very many people, who otherwise would have visited the Holy Land, are turning their faces to the far West, while Americans, on their part, are staying at home. Jerusalem of to-day is bound to be represented there, and thousands of articles made of olive-wood are already on their way thither.<sup>[190]</sup>

And Walt Disney was not to be born until 1901.

### Taxes and Robbery

These two topics go naturally together, and not just in Syria, where some travelers were afraid that death and taxes were sometimes well-nigh simultaneous. The crux of the problem was an impoverished country with ill-paid functionaries and soldiers, profiteering local dignitaries, and a downtrodden peasantry, the settled areas fringed with threatening nomads who exacted their own form of taxation in the form of robbery from whomsoever they could overawe. Nomads we have already met in Chapter One. They were pastoralists, so naturally they exacted crops from the peasantry whenever they could, the more so since they often claimed to have owned the lands being settled since time immemorial. And central government and their ramshackle oversight and collection methods also added to the problem: "it is not the taxes of the Turkish government that are burdensome, but the rapacity of the understrappers in office."<sup>[191]</sup> These "understrappers" included contentious locals at the sites, as Kinnear discovered at Petra in 1841, when "we soon found that there had been a design either to exclude us from the valley altogether, or to hurry us away before we had time to examine any of the ruins in detail."<sup>[192]</sup> Travellers were proportionately less at risk than natives, but robbery was frequent enough not only to deter visits to some sites, but also to ensure that much of the note-taking was sparse, as the Europeans were hurried along by apprehensive guides.

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56 Bar-Yosef 2005, 64.

Robbery was a big problem in Syria due in part to the disparity between the desert and the sown (in Bell's book title) – that is, between nomadic Arabs and traders and farmers in town and country. To be fruitful, a settled life in a house, with agriculture and commerce, required stability through the seasons. Bedouin tribes, however, of which there were large numbers usually on the fringes of settled regions, moved with their animals where fodder or its lack dictated. Many lived by robbing travellers, and sometimes by scaring them simply by appearing on the horizon,<sup>[193]</sup> but it was easier and more profitable to raid towns and villages for food supplies, rendering agricultural investment and toil pointless if it could not be protected. In many areas, then “le pays plat est la région la plus fertile, mais la plus mal cultivée,” because its farmers had taken to the hills.<sup>[194]</sup> Resettlement amongst the ruins of towns where settlers tried to scratch a living was still impossible in the 1850s around Homs, because “cernés par les Bédouins, ils sont obligés de se racheter chaque jour du pillage par des contributions volontaires ou forcées.”<sup>[195]</sup> As well as around Damascus, at Apamea the fellahs were at the mercy of marauders, described as “le fléau qui dévaste toute cette zone.”<sup>[196]</sup> At one village between Homs and Hama (and surely at others), there was no sign of vegetation, because “les habitants m'apprirent tristement que leurs récoltes seraient infailliblement détruites et pillées par les Arabes des montagnes, s'ils avaient l'imprudence de les attirer par l'espoir du butin.”<sup>[197]</sup>

Perhaps dangers were, for some, part of the attraction of travelling in Syria? Porter in 1868 noted the interesting places, “all rose-tinted by a dash of danger and romance.”<sup>[198]</sup> In earlier years things seemed much more insecure. Perry in 1743 reckoned travelling Sidon–Damascus put travellers “not only in Danger of being plunder'd, but of being murdered into the Bargain.”<sup>[199]</sup> Capper in 1778 was importuned on the way to Palmyra by Bedouin, but they only wanted to try and sell him some camels.<sup>[200]</sup> Beke in 1862, about to travel to Harran, was alarmed when the severed heads of chiefs from the region were brought to Damascus, but “at length it was decided that the Consul should apply to Emin Pasha, Wali or Governor of Damascus, for an order to the Commandant at Kiswe to furnish us with an escort as far as Eshmiskin, the residence of Sheikh Ahmed-et-Turk, which he obtained for us just before our departure for Harran.”<sup>[201]</sup>

Yet the revenge of the persistent traveller could be sweet: Tristram recounts in 1865 a robbery near Caesarea, at which the wronged gentleman obtained a special firman (a laissez-passer from a competent authority) from the Porte, in execution of which the Pasha of Acre had to act, sending troops to the miscreant village: “Without trial the three chiefs were put in chains, and upwards of fifty men shipped off as conscripts to join the army in Asia Minor. The Pasha thus succeeded in raising his quota of recruits.”<sup>[202]</sup> The first defence was

always a firearm and a willingness to deploy it. The Druze were enterprising, and Butler and his American team in 1904–5 were about to be attacked but “they had changed their minds when told of our rifles, which could shoot ten shots to their one, and had retired to consider the matter. In reports of this kind our muleteers and even our servants took particular delight.”<sup>[203]</sup>

Westerners, obviously rich because of the way they generally travelled (horses, tents, baggage train and servants), were a target for semi-legal exactions as well as for robbery; and locals, even given the traditions of hospitality, needed to be kept sweet with presents freely given or exacted. In 1829 Madden recommended maintaining “an unruffled temper and a cheerful demeanour,” but also pointed out that “it is a notorious fact, that English travellers are often particularly unfortunate, and this is but too frequently owing to a haughty carriage and uncompromising manners,”<sup>[204]</sup> no doubt in part because they did not understand or were unwilling to abide by the local rules of the travelling game. For guns were needed. Lindsay’s expedition to Palmyra in 1838 was well-armed, and kept the Bedouin away: “seven gentlemen, four servants, two muleteers, five soldiers, and four camel-drivers – bestriding twenty-one horses and mules, two donkeys, and five camels.”<sup>[205]</sup> One 1866 traveller needed 40 camels to get herself and her baggage from the coast to Jerusalem.<sup>[206]</sup>

However, even regular soldiers as tourist guards were an unknown quantity: in 1860 Skene was sent “a captain and two sergeants of the Sultan’s regular cavalry,” but they had to be bribed to execute their protection duties, “and we were obliged to purchase, at an exorbitant price, the freedom of the Sultan’s highway.”<sup>[207]</sup> The scent of treasure could, however, double the size of an escort, as Fuller found in 1829: expecting eight men to accompany him to Jerash, he found sixteen waiting: “the villagers were persuaded that we were going in search of treasure; and as all were anxious to share the benefit of our discoveries, our escort was thus unnecessarily augmented. A more ferocious-looking set of fellows I never saw collected together.”<sup>[208]</sup>

Do-it-yourself was an option for the confident, such as Edward Montague, a member of the US Expedition ship [Expedition to the Dead Sea] *Supply*, which arrived in Syria in 1848: “We have determined souls, enduring constitutions, plenty of provisions, lots of ammunition, swords, bowie-knife-pistols, Colt’s revolvers, carbines, and a blunderbuss which is able to scatter some fatal doses among any opposing, hostile tribe.”<sup>[209]</sup>

At Iskenderun Drummond was taxed in 1754, being told “it was a tax laid upon the English a great many years ago, with their own consent, for the privilege of going to Aleppo . . . a most scandalous indulto,”<sup>[210]</sup> only to be held up again and again at every pass until he paid a toll.<sup>[211]</sup> Visas were and continue to be a revenue-raising exercise; Berners got his passport back at Beirut in



1876 only by paying a fee: "This system is a regular trap to get money out of Europeans, for I learnt afterwards, that none of the officials could read anything but Turkish and Arabic."<sup>[212]</sup>

When travellers saw deserted villages with their ancient houses, they certainly linked such desertion with the exactions made upon the locals. It is to this that Browne in 1799 attributed the desertion of villages in favour of towns, where "the property is not tangible, so to speak; it is veiled from the eye of government, so as to be safe from the excessive exactions imposed on the peasants, whose property is of the most unwieldy and self-apparent description."<sup>[213]</sup> Griffiths in 1805 wrote of the pashas, "these temporary extortioners," tax-farmers who had purchased their position from the Porte, and then proceeded to profit from it – no wonder the peasants fled to the towns!<sup>[214]</sup> The pasha had troops with him, "a licensed banditti" who made their own exactions, so that

the state of agriculture is at the lowest ebb, commerce is fettered, and, indeed, nearly annihilated by a thousand restrictions and oppressive acts; their armies consist of an undisciplined and ferocious rabble, and their contempt of the arts is sufficiently apparent in the destruction of the finest monuments of antiquity.<sup>[215]</sup>

The Hauran was not safe, because plunderers visited the settlements regularly, and the protection of the sheikhs did not extend "even a mile beyond their dwellings."<sup>[216]</sup> Another dodge was where possible to avoid main routes. Here the 1830s were even worse, as added to feeding the soldiers and paying the Bedouin tribute, the amount to be paid to the pasha "depends on the sum at which the whole village is rated in the pasha's books, which must be paid so long as the village is inhabited, be the number of fedhans employed few or many" – a decided trigger for depopulation.<sup>[217]</sup> As late as 1895 the government decided on a new tax for the Hauran:

The people had risen in their wrath and slain two of the sheikhs, and the governor had saved himself by flight. The people then wreaked their vengeance on any emblems of Ottoman rule they could find. They tore down fourteen miles of the telegraphic wires, and all the officials fled for their lives.<sup>[218]</sup>

In 1838 Addison himself saw what happened when villages were raided: "excitement, terror and agony . . . when a press for soldiers is going on . . . horses and mules are seized for the use of the government, and . . . grinding exactions

made for an arrear of taxes.”<sup>[219]</sup> Such raids could empty whole villages, as Layard saw riding from Antioch to Aleppo in 1839:

owing to the conscription and the tax-gatherer, the villages were everywhere deserted, and we had much difficulty in discovering at some distance out of the high road some miserable huts, in which we could find a night’s lodging and food for ourselves and our horses.<sup>[220]</sup>

The result was agricultural paralysis, as Baron Taylor explained in 1854, describing the results of Ottoman exactions in the pachalik of Aleppo.<sup>[221]</sup> Lortet was still fulminating against tax-farming in 1881, suggesting Europeans should intervene against “ces tribus de bandits,” and proposing – to no-one’s surprise – that “le devoir de protéger ces paisibles et aimables populations qui seront pour elle, et surtout pour la France, une source sérieuse de richesse et de puissance.”<sup>[222]</sup> The results of such apparently inevitable intervention will be dealt with in Chapter Eleven, where the French Mandate to Syria will be discussed.

Travellers were therefore clear that several causes were involved in the physical survival of complete and usually deserted ancient towns and villages in Syria. One was the insouciance of the Government and its failure vigorously to promote agriculture in a land of rich and well-watered soils. Another was Government-imposed taxation, which sometimes made it uneconomic for peasants to function, and they supposedly percolated to the towns. At some periods there was conscription, another form of taxation, for labour was taken from the soil, and the conscripts were frequently to be fed by the peasants. A fourth was the age-old tension between settlers and nomads, with the latter “taxing” the former for protection money, otherwise leaving the countryside unsafe. Government inability to deal decisively with nomadic incursions blighted agricultural development, and left many travellers anything from apprehensive to duly “taxed” by the nomads until the later 19th century when, as we shall see several towns are permanently repopulated. It also blighted archaeological research: Conder, a military man, writing in 1891 about his survey of western central Jordan (Moab), expatiates on “the perils of our position,” being plagued by lawless Arabs and attacks by thieves, which showed “how difficult it was to carry through even that small portion of the great task which we completed, and how utterly impossible it was to do any more.”<sup>[223]</sup>

The “nomad problem” for settled communities is documented by European travellers from the 17th century. De Vogüé in 1865 asserted with some reason that the nomad problem was endemic since the Muslim invasions.<sup>[224]</sup>

It is certainly much older, and probably perennial, for we have already noted that some settlements required protection in Roman times.<sup>[225]</sup> Even travelling Damascus-Aleppo was dangerous in 1851, for “the Arabs were plundering and at open war with the Pasha.” The problem was solved by accompanying a whole regiment, on its way to Homs.<sup>[226]</sup> Nomads were sometimes at the root of a wider malaise: Europeans were amazed that a country with such rich and well-watered soils produced so little food; and they marvelled at the abandonment of large numbers of towns and villages amidst such potential richness. Thus in 1829 the Hauran “n’est presque plus habitée, parce qu’elle est exposée aux incursions des Bédouins.”<sup>[227]</sup> Porter reported in 1855 that in the spring everyone in Bosra lived in the fortress, “that they may protect their flocks and their property from the nightly depredations of the Bedawin. A massive gate, covered with heavy plates of iron, serves to secure them against all plunderers.” A company of soldiers once garrisoned Bosra, “but now there is no garrison, and the rapacious Bedawin roam freely over the fields of the poor peasants, who have to pay them black mail.”<sup>[228]</sup> The territory around Bosra was still infested with marauding Bedouin in the 1880s, confirming Porter in his reading of S. Luke about the man who fell among thieves.<sup>[229]</sup> Just as the Bedouin raided agriculture, so also they were on the look-out for clothing. In the early 1840s a traveller joined a caravan at Jerusalem, but fell behind and was stripped by robbers: “he was in some little difficulty how to return to Jerusalem, as the only article of dress which the Bedouins had left him was his hat, of which they could make no use.”<sup>[230]</sup>

No doubt the Bedouin were on occasion correct to be exasperated, for example in the 1820s by “Rev. Mr. S.,” an English clergyman, who toured Syria, “in the course of which, being little skilled in any language but his own, and moreover of an extremely warm and passionate temperament, ill-suited to the tedious progress of travelling in that country, he was involved in perpetual quarrels with almost every person with whom he came in contact, and was frequently reduced to circumstances of great embarrassment.” He was robbed at Baalbek, abandoned by his servant, left his horses and baggage on the way to Aleppo, and eventually “Mr. S. presented himself at the Consulate, with scarcely any dress but a Mashlakh of the coarsest materials, a large straw hat on his head, and a bag containing his provisions slung between his legs.”<sup>[231]</sup> Once again the Bedouin seem to have left little more than his hat.

Lack of a controlling authority which could deal effectively with nomad depredations, and often crippling taxation, was also a contributing factor to the abandonment of many settlements and a consequent decline in agricultural provision and development. The locals took the brunt of active robbery,

and naturally of taxation, which often appeared to them another form of robbery. Keeping marauding Arabs out of villages in the 17th century involved, around Samaria, digging ditches rather than erecting walls, and then planting them with crops, to ensure a horseman would break his own or his horse's bones.<sup>[232]</sup> Protection money was another type of robbery. At Homs in 1736 a traveller noted devastation and ruins, attributing it to "the Arabs of the neighbouring Deserts of Syria, or Arabia, who extort large Sums of Money from time to time from the Inhabitants."<sup>[233]</sup> In the 1850s settlements in the Hauran were being attacked weekly, and all Muslim villages paid blackmail, whereas the Druze made the Bedouin pay for watering their flocks.<sup>[234]</sup> In 1838 Robinson was scared off some sites near Bosra because "on nous assura que le pays qui l'environne était très-dangereux." He was naturally sorry to miss an area where there were "d'innombrables villages bâtis en pierre, mais tombant en ruine, ayant été abandonnés à cause des exactions des Arabes du désert auquel ce pays est contigu."<sup>[235]</sup> Those towns and villages around Aleppo will be dealt with in Chapter Five, and those in the south in Chapter Seven.

Robbery also contributed to the agony of travel, and it is not surprising that Deschamps in 1678 was convinced that Arabs were people "qui ordinairement ne vivent que de volleries & de rapines."<sup>[236]</sup> Wittmann in 1803 agreed, with settled folk and nomads equally culpable.<sup>[237]</sup> War (such as that involved in the expulsion of Muhammad Ali in 1840) also made the roads unsafe.<sup>[238]</sup> At Acre in 1875, in the courtyard of the monastery, Hamilton had to spend his time throwing stones at the muleteers trying to steal his grain, for "plunder, plunder is the order of the day throughout Syria, and you have to be perpetually on the alert to prevent it in every department of life."<sup>[239]</sup>

How, therefore, were travellers to proceed? Was it better to disguise oneself as a local, or to wave official papers and claim access that way? Reports varied. As we have seen, Eastern dress was less obtrusive and, for some, more comfortable. Cassas, for example, in the East in 1785, got to Tripoli and "se hissa, vêtu en Arabe, avec un interprète, sur un chameau, au milieu d'une caravane à destination de Bagdad."<sup>[240]</sup> Seetzen, travelling in 1809, disguised himself as an Arab, as did Burckhardt (as Sheikh Ibrahim). The latter was the first European to visit Wadi Mousa (Petra). But there was a disadvantage:

Both these travellers, indefatigable as they were, performed this trip alone and in disguise, and were consequently obliged to conceal their papers, and make all their observations by stealth, which must necessarily have rendered their remarks very brief and cursory, compared to what they would have been had the writers being unrestrained.<sup>[241]</sup>

Seetzen had a passport from Abdallah, Pasha of Damascus, but it was the conduct of his bullying guide (“taken for a soldier and a Mohammedan”) that smoothed his passage.<sup>[242]</sup>

Eschewing disguise, another way of perhaps proceeding safely was to utilise laissez-passer papers obtained in Constantinople, necessarily assuming the locals could read, and the traveller speak sufficient Arabic. Thus in 1697 Maundrell thought it politic “to get license of the governor” before he entered Baalbek:

Being taught this necessary care by the example of some worthy English gentleman of our factory; who visited this place in the year 1689, in their return from Jerusalem, and suspecting no mischief, were basely intrigued by the people here, and forced to redeem their lives at a great sum of money.<sup>[243]</sup>

In 1822, Buckingham had to bolster his letter’s effect with the local sheikh by presenting a soldier who “was in the service of the Pasha himself, and had been sent from Jerusalem to protect and accompany us to Sham [Damascus].”<sup>[244]</sup> But by the mid-19th century local pashas were probably fed up of seeing such documents from afar:

j’étais muni d’un firman du sultan, et je le croyais assez efficace pour m’ouvrir toutes les portes; mais il n’en a pas été ainsi: les pachas font peu de cas de ces lettres, qu’ils voient, d’ailleurs, entre les mains de presque tous les Européens.<sup>[245]</sup>

Near Mount Carmel in 1808, Shaw’s group had twenty armed servants, but still to avoid trouble “we then travelled through as many by-paths as our conductors were acquainted with; riding in this manner, without halting, sometimes twelve, sometimes fifteen hours.”<sup>[246]</sup>

By the mid-19th century, many travellers went in groups, which was safer. Even visiting the Dead Sea in 1868 without an escort was dangerous: “it would be madness for ordinary tourists to attempt the journey.” The Consul in Jerusalem would provide advice, and “the usual and best plan is to contract with a local chief, who guarantees the safety of person and property, procures requisite guards, pays all bakh-shish under every name and form, provides competent guides and in return is paid a fixed sum.”<sup>[247]</sup> We have already read Baedeker’s warning against the horrors of group travel. As Skinner pointed out in 1837 that even most individual travellers “move through the East so well attended by

guides, servants, and escort, that I think they must lose much of the pleasure for which they go."<sup>[248]</sup> Several areas of Syria were difficult or dangerous right up to the end of the 19th century. In 1895 a Canadian cleric offered up a prayer that "we would have no difficulties or unpleasantness in travelling; native porters not being the most pleasant and agreeable of folk."<sup>[249]</sup>

### Profiteering Sheikhs

Local sheikhs were usually convinced they owned the land over which they roamed; and who except a distant government was to deny this? They provided notional protection according to the age-old demands of hospitality. There were various ways of dealing with paid contracts and presents. For whenever sheikhs demanded it, travellers were obliged to take an escort, and this could turn into an opportunity for extortion, or extended bargaining.<sup>[250]</sup> Graham's in 1858 with a Druze sheikh lasted more than a day.<sup>[251]</sup> Contracts were common, such as Capper's for an escort from Aleppo to Basra.<sup>[252]</sup> Laborde took along "as presents, a spy-glass, a remarkably fine Albanian gun, a double-barrelled English gun, a watch, and a Cashmere shawl," and suggested instruments be lacquered black so the locals would not think they were gold.<sup>[253]</sup> Negotiating could be drawn out and ultimately unsuccessful: near Jerash in 1864, the sheikh's suave diplomacy quickly degenerated "to the coarse laconism of a garotting ticket-of-leave man, and he told us simply to hand over our money."<sup>[254]</sup> Nor was this exceptional: merchants in 1678 on the way to Palmyra had to negotiate with a sheikh, who demanded \$500 or he would hang them.<sup>[255]</sup>

For his trip to Bosra, Burckhardt bargained a fee down from thirty to three piastres [about six British pence],<sup>[256]</sup> but then he spoke Arabic. He had other bargaining coups, in one case swinging the favour his way by making a present of a pen-knife, remarking that such a gift

worth two shillings overcomes the fanaticism of a peasant; increase the present and it will have equal effect upon a townsman; make it a considerable sum, and the Mufti himself will wave all religious scruples.<sup>[257]</sup>

And in the Ledja he won the day by blustering and swearing, and waving "an old passport from Soleiman Pasha."<sup>[258]</sup> Richter also spoke Arabic, but rejected an offer to visit Jerash and Amman without letting the pasha know: "je serois resté fidèle à mes principes, qui étoient d'éviter tout ce qui pouvoit me rendre suspect aux autorités du pays, et même de ne pas faire un pas sans leur agrément."<sup>[259]</sup> Maundrell had also been cautious at Baalbek in 1697, obtaining

a licence from the governor before visiting, because a decade previously English travellers had been shaken down and nearly lost their lives.<sup>[260]</sup>

Sheikhs were well aware of the going rate for protection, and had details of what it had cost previous travellers. Tristram negotiated in the Jordan Valley in 1865, and moaned that “we felt here as we did also some months later in the East, how little cause travellers have to thank the evidently well-funded M. de Saulcy for his lavish expenditure on both his visits.”<sup>[261]</sup> As Graham pointed out in 1858, the first protection bargain struck in an unvisited region would set the standard for later travellers, hence the need to be parsimonious:

No one, however, has done so much mischief in this way as M. De Saulcy, who has literally closed the road for some time to travellers east of the Dead Sea. If you wish no one to follow in your footsteps, you cannot attain your purpose more effectually than by giving a great sum to the Arabs who accompany you. They are sure to double the demand on the next traveller.<sup>[262]</sup>

Unfortunately Lady Stanhope, who we shall meet again, and who was in various ways a 19th-century version of the Getty Museum, had paid an enormous price to get to Palmyra, and this was not only remembered,<sup>57</sup> but queered the pitch for everyone else. As Richter noted in 1815–1816 of now-grasping Arabs, “tous avoient été rendus exigeans par les prodigalités de lady Stanhope.”<sup>[263]</sup> In 1818 Irby and Mangles bargained hard to get the price reduced, but still “it was deemed expedient to assume so humble an appearance, in order to hold out no temptation to either pilferers or plunderers.”<sup>[264]</sup> No doubt some sheikhs were free of white lies when setting an acceptable sum, but one group of travellers combined joyful vandalism with helping the next party along, with graffiti in a place they were bound to find it. In 1844 Measor at Petra had inscribed on an ancient wall just how much he had paid to sheikh, and his friends later quoted this to get the price down, without avail: “This appeal to the *littera scripta* availed not, for they were compelled to pay the full “bucksheesh,” and old Abou sent immediately one of his men to erase the obnoxious inscription from the rock, I hope those at the Khuznee will not share the same fate.”<sup>[265]</sup> Where there were no entrance charges, travellers could nevertheless leave

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57 Turhan 2003, 146 on Stanhope’s expedition to Palmyra: “Stanhope sent the bill for the expedition to the British ambassador. Although the funds to finance the expedition were not immediately forthcoming, the reciprocally respectful relationship established between her and the Porte kept her in good stead for the next twenty-four years.” 158–160: Stanhope as a second Zenobia.



their mark. Pride in their Princeton association generated an inscription on an ancient monument at Ummal-Quttayn.<sup>58</sup>

Difficulties could arise when the travellers wished to traverse the lands of more than one sheikh; Richardson met with this problem in 1822, and had to abandon his planned visit to Jerash.<sup>[266]</sup> In 1860 Taylor also missed Jerash, as the relevant sheikh demanded he take an escort costing \$150, so he headed for Bosra carrying a firman from the Pasha of Jerusalem.<sup>[267]</sup> Another frequent problem was the Bedouin at war amongst themselves,<sup>[268]</sup> or in revolt against the government: Richardson, again, missed Palmyra for this reason.<sup>[269]</sup> Toward the end of the century the “Honorable Mrs. Digby” was “rescued from danger in travelling to Palmyra by her escort, a fine-looking Sheikh, and chief of a tribe of Bedouins,” and solved the problem by marrying him.<sup>[270]</sup> She was lucky: Elliott in 1838 decided against making for Palmyra from Baalbek because a group had just been “attacked by the Bedouins; their horses were taken from them; one of their party was killed; and all their property plundered.”<sup>[271]</sup>

Travellers could also be imprisoned by locals in search of a handout. At Palmyra in 1817, Banks was kept in the local village (within the Temple of Bel) for over two days because the sheikh wanted more money.<sup>[272]</sup> The site’s track record was bad: English merchants were plundered in 1678 and never got there, and Burckhardt, although clothed as an Arab, was robbed at his first visit.<sup>[273]</sup> Burckhardt also kept well away from the sheikh at Shahba, “who some years ago compelled M. Seetzen to turn back from hence towards Soueida,” and therefore did not see the complete town.<sup>[274]</sup>

Even at the end of the 19th century, a local sheik was nervous about helping travellers to visit Qanawat, stipulating the need for an escort of one hundred soldiers. This was reduced to twenty when the traveller refused to pay for them; and Gertrude Bell implies that this was some kind of fiddle, for this was countryside “through which, as I know well, a woman can ride with no escort but a Druze boy, and might ride alone, even if she had her saddle-bags full of gold.”<sup>[275]</sup> Fiddling was endemic, Porter pointing out in 1868 that the dragoman often colluded with the local sheikh to screw as much as possible out of the traveller.<sup>[276]</sup>

Not all profiteering sheikhs were necessarily local, for the Holy Land attracted foreign settlement, and that often meant money. Enthusiasm for the territory attracted entrepreneurs: in 1867 one American promoted the “Church of the Messiah,” and encouraged his followers to found a colony in Palestine near Jaffa, where “that land, or town lots, purchased near there, must so increase in value that the possessors would speedily become rich. The

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58 MacAdam 1986, 369 pl.15, Ornamented lintel at Ummal-Quttayn – “Princeton” has been written on a block to the left.



enterprise, as he represented it, was to possess the double character of religion and speculation – the first, to help the coming of the Messiah, the second, to help themselves.”<sup>[277]</sup>

### Haram/Forbidden: Access to Muslim Sites<sup>59</sup>

As we shall see later in this chapter, disparaging the available monuments was a parlour game played by many travellers, who compared Syria’s structures with those in Greece and Rome. But this was distinct from the longing to visit those which were out of bounds, such as the Dome of the Rock and the Umayyad Mosque. The former was compared to Córdoba, and Laorty-Hadji in 1854 could only relay to his readers what the ambassador had learned about the interior.<sup>[278]</sup> In 1835 Michaud had been convinced that Christians would never be allowed in the Umayyad Mosque,<sup>[279]</sup> but the situation changed in both Jerusalem and Damascus. Indeed, in the 1850s the visitor to Damascus “can, under the most favourable circumstances, only get a peep into their courts through a window or half-open door.”<sup>[280]</sup> By 1876 a fee gained entrance and (unnecessarily in this case) “the Consul’s janissary accompanies the party, in order to protect them from any fanaticism on the part of the Mahomedans.”<sup>[281]</sup>

Just as many Westerners were curious to experience sights such hot baths and bazaars, so the architecturally aware were interested in mosques and other Muslim religious buildings, and were able to visit many in small towns. But for centuries Christians were barred from those at Cairo, for example the Sultan Hassan, the Sultan Qalawun, and the Al Azhar, Bankes evading the prohibition by adopting Arab robes and growing a beard.<sup>60</sup> The same embargo operated at Jerusalem, including the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa Mosque, both on the platform of the Haram al-Sharif, the “Noble Sanctuary,” on which they sat, and also the Great Mosque at Damascus. It is curious that the Dome of the Rock, probably built in competition with the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, was not open to Christians for their admiration,<sup>61</sup> but perhaps it *was* open in the earlier centuries of Islam?

59 Turhan 2003, 107: “The first definition refers to that which is forbidden and unlawful and also that which is sacred, inviolable, taboo. It is used to refer to places that are considered a sanctuary (e.g., the cities of Mecca and Medina are themselves haram) and that therefore are restricted to limited access and certain kinds of behavior.”

60 Seyler 2015, 101.

61 Peri 2001, 74: “Muslims, from the outset, chose to respond to the religious challenge posed by the Christian holy sites with a competitive act rather than with violence and destruction, or expropriation and functional conversion.”

Those who knew mediaeval Arabic authors must have been sorry to miss such structures: Edrisi (c.1100) considered the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus “la plus curieuse qui existe dans l’univers, tant sous le rapport du dessin, du plan, que sous celui de l’art qui préside à l’exécution des ornements.”<sup>[282]</sup> And in the late 10th century Al-Muqaddasi wrote of the Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem that “in the ceilings of its various edifices there are 4,000 wooden beams, supported on 700 marble columns; and the roofs are overlaid with 45,000 sheets of lead.”<sup>[283]</sup> Since he provides the earliest surviving detailed description of the Dome of the Rock, we may perhaps assume that he had visited the site, in which case his quantities are surely a poetic exaggeration. Mosques elsewhere were also often rich in marble columns, also taken from earlier structures, but not as rich as those on these two sites. Buckingham in 1822 encountered one on his way to Gadara, “and within the walls, the capitals of two Doric columns, in white marble, and some scattered shafts of the same material,” plus sarcophagi in the adjacent khan, “and several large hewn stones were seen in different parts of the town, which, with the marble columns in the ruined mosque, induced us to conclude that this also had been the site of some ancient settlement.”<sup>[284]</sup>

This long-lived restriction meant that accurate accounts of these buildings (especially of their interior) did not reach the West until after the middle of the 19th century. Travelling in the early 1480s, Fabri gives a long description of the Dome of the Rock, but he makes mistakes, such as that the mosaics were “of palm-trees or olive-trees, or figures of cherubim.”<sup>[285]</sup> This was silly, because he stated honestly that he could indeed describe only a part of the Haram al-Sharif:

All these things I saw with my eyes from the outside, but what it is like within I have not seen, though I have been able to guess with some probability from the outward form of the temple, and from the other mosques which I have entered.<sup>[286]</sup>

In 1714 Cornelius Le Brun believed one could be burned for even setting foot on the Haram al-Sharif,<sup>[287]</sup> though travellers could contrive to view it from a distance. Although he does not say where he stood, Hasselquist in 1766 could get no closer than Mount Sion, and “no Christian can approach nearer to this most principal of holy places, than Sion, which is at two gunshot distance.”<sup>[288]</sup>

Christians were recognised as such by their clothing, and it was reported in the late 15th century that “the infidels will not endure that Christians should enter their cities and towns riding on beasts, unless they come in the dark: by daylight they cannot do so.”<sup>[289]</sup> It was also said that such sumptuary laws were

enforced to enter Damascus, and that even foreign consuls obeyed them.<sup>[290]</sup> Christians in disguise fared differently, as we shall see. Even close approach to such sites was forbidden, on pain of death<sup>[291]</sup> or, as Thévenot noted in 1689, of turning Turk and becoming a Muslim.<sup>[292]</sup> One fanciful explanation is given for the embargo on infidels in such sacred areas, relayed in 1624, namely that wishes made there were granted by the Almighty, so that “il accorderait tout ce qui luy seroit demandé en ce lieu: & pourtant que si les Chrestiens y entroient, ils le pourroient prier pour l’avancement du Christianisme, & pour la ruine de leur Religion, ce qu’ils obtiendroient infalliblement.”<sup>[293]</sup>

So travellers could report little about the Dome of the Rock, and we have no full description of the Haram al-Sharif until 1873,<sup>[294]</sup> although Father Doubdan (recognised as a reliable source<sup>[295]</sup>) gave an adequate account of its external appearance after his visit in 1651.<sup>[296]</sup> Arvieux in 1735 noted that “Les Turcs en ont fait leur principale Mosquée, l’ont orné autant qu’ils en sont capables,” which is not very helpful.<sup>[297]</sup> Even less helpful were sheer guesses about the interior: Beauvau asserted in 1608 that “le dedans du Temple est tout blanc; hors mis quelque peu de Mosaicque, qui reste du vieux temps,”<sup>[298]</sup> and this misinformation is repeated by Deshayes in 1624, with a baroque variation: “tout blanchy, hormis en quelques endroits, où le nom de Dieu est escrit en grands caracteres Arabiques.”<sup>[299]</sup> These are obviously garbled variations on information provided by local Muslims. There was a short interregnum in 1831–1839, when the modernising Mehmet Ali ruled Palestine and allowed Christian access to Muslim holy sites; after which, supposedly because of “the conduct of Prince Puckler Muskau,” Christians were again barred.<sup>[300]</sup> In later decades a stiff entrance fee ensured admittance.<sup>[301]</sup> Perhaps Curtis was exaggerating in 1903 when he described the approach via filthy streets, and the need to be accompanied by a guard.<sup>[302]</sup> In a sense Christians, especially American Protestants, targetted new holy(-ish) sites, such as Robinson’s Arch, which “became a Protestant answer for Christians and Jews to the restricted access imposed by Muslims to ancient Temple Mount, and a monument to American scholarly achievements.”<sup>62</sup> This area was still out-of-bounds in 1843, when Williams could recommend only “careful enquiry among the Muslim inhabitants, or by a survey from the exterior, aided by a telescope, or by employing as proxy an intelligent native dragoman.”<sup>[303]</sup>

Wortabet got into the Dome of the Rock in 1856,<sup>[304]</sup> and in 1864 Guérin, under the auspices of the French Consul, entered not once but twice (“interdite naguère encore aux chrétiens”), and also the Al-Aqsa as well.<sup>[305]</sup> Vetromile

entered both buildings in 1871, with the French, Spanish and Italian consuls, and explained his lack of interest in what he saw with a burst of disdainful one-upmanship: "I was not very anxious to see the Mosque, but I wanted to visit the spot on which the famous Temple of Solomon stood."<sup>[306]</sup> In 1874, however, the Duc de Luynes could only get as far as the stairs to the site<sup>[307]</sup> which, given his architectural knowledge and the full descriptions of other important monuments in his books, was a pity. Under the protection of men from the consulate, Vicomte Savigny de Moncorps entered the Umayyad Mosque in 1873, aware of how recently that had been forbidden:

On retrouve la trace de ces origines dans une masse de belles colonnes grecques en pierre et en marbre, et des fragments de mosaïques épars un peu de tous les côtés. La cour est immense; elle renferme sa fontaine et un petit pavillon octogonal, supporté par de vieilles colonnes qu'on dit provenir de l'ancien temple.<sup>[308]</sup>

The platform in Jerusalem was easily protected because of its height, but the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus was in the midst of a confusion of streets, the "Street which is called Straight" being the exception. Maundrell viewed the exterior in 1697, but could not enter.<sup>[309]</sup> Yet one might spring out by a door, stick one's head inside, and get a vague impression, as did Perry in 1743.<sup>[310]</sup> Hill did likewise in 1866: "I stepped out a few paces, and arriving safely at the proper door, I put my head, at least, within, without pulling off my shoes."<sup>[311]</sup> Bare-faced (or rather, bearded) cheek could also work, as Buckingham recounts in 1825:

when we had arrived, we shook off our slippers and walked boldly through. By the aid of our beards, white turbans, and a certain conformity to Turkish or Arabic movements only to be acquired by habit, we passed undiscovered, and without even being regarded, as mere strangers generally are, though known to be of the same faith.<sup>[312]</sup>

In Thévenot's day (1689) a nearby house with a balcony gave a good view into the courtyard, which he describes: "La cour est pavée de belles pierres, la plupart de marbre luisant comme des miroirs. A l'entour de cette cour sont plusieurs colonnes de marbre, porphyre & jaspe, fort délicatement travaillées qui soutiennent une voûte qui règne tout autour, peinte de divers ouvrages à la Mosaïque."<sup>[313]</sup> This was evidently before the columns of the courtyard were encased as square pillars. In 1833 Catherwood, Arundale, and Bonomi entered supposedly to make repairs, and their sketches were the best available for forty

years.<sup>[314]</sup> Even in 1840 Damascus was described as “the most intolerant and the most fanatic,” and an exasperating place for Christians to visit;<sup>[315]</sup> but this was the reaction of one visitor, and Christians had lived there comfortably for centuries.<sup>[316]</sup> Nevertheless, in 1861 the Comte de Paris was admitted by the Pasha only at night, “pour ne pas exciter un fanatisme contre lequel il n’aurait pu nous protéger.”<sup>[317]</sup> Admission was available by 1879 when Knox gave a short description,<sup>[318]</sup> and Guérin’s only complaint in 1884 was that entrance cost 20 francs.<sup>[319]</sup>

And what of the Roman portico to the west of the Mosque, which today frames a small square before one entrance? In earlier centuries this was not visible from ground level. In 1853 De Saulcy tipped a bazar owner: “on grimpe par un escalier fort obscur, au-dessus du bazar, et l’on se trouve en face de quatre énormes colonnes corinthiennes que surmonte un fronton gigantesque, surchargé d’ornements.”<sup>[320]</sup> This structure was so cluttered by shops that the following year Van De Velde had to be led to (presumably) the same shop: “We went into a house and climbed up to the flat roof, where I had the pillars close before me. The columns are almost entirely hidden by the mason-work of the adjoining houses.”<sup>[321]</sup> From this we can speculate that little of Roman Damascus was visible in its crowded streets. Elsewhere, Bankes obtained permission in 1816 to enter the mosque at Acre and, as a bonus, was able to use the baths.<sup>[322]</sup>

Not all monuments forbidden to foreigners were religious ones, for many fortresses seem to have been out-of-bounds. Drummond complains in 1754 that the citadel at Aleppo was forbidden to Christians, but he still learned what it contained: “there are thirty cannon, of different sizes, mounted, and three hundred in their arsenal ready for use. It contains above one hundred houses, and about one thousand people.”<sup>[323]</sup> De Saulcy complained about both mosques and fortresses:

Or, nos anciennes églises ont été presque toutes converties en mosquées, et les châteaux sont encore maintenant occupés par des garnisons turques. Il résulte de là qu’il est presque impossible de pénétrer à l’intérieur. Quand donc on voudra se procurer des notions détaillées et complètes sur ces édifices, il importera qu’on se munisse préalablement à Constantinople de lettres de recommandation particulières, contenant la mention expresse des bons offices que l’on aura à réclamer des gouverneurs de Beyrouth et de Jérusalem.<sup>[324]</sup>

At Bosra Burckhardt was allowed in the fortress in 1812, when it was defended by only six soldiers. He climbed to the top, and described a peculiarity:

What distinguishes it from other Syrian castles, is that on the top of it there is a gallery of short pillars, on three sides, and on the fourth side are several niches in the wall, without any decorations; many of the pillars are still standing.<sup>[325]</sup>

In other words, he did not recognise that he was looking at an almost buried Roman theatre; this is one of several occasions when his meticulous descriptions are let down by his lack of architectural knowledge. In 1904, Bosra was more thoroughly manned, and had a commandant, on whom Butler paid a visit: “A flight of narrow and very steep steps, made of the ancient columns which once lined the streets of Bostra, took us up to a flat roof where was the door of the Commandant’s chamber.”<sup>[326]</sup>

At Shobak (in present-day Jordan) in 1864, de Luynes was prevented from entering the fortress, but apparently only because he refused to pay for the privilege.<sup>[327]</sup>

### Architectural Quality: Is Syria Worth Visiting?

Comparisons may sometimes be invidious, but formed an important part of many travel narratives, less we would hope to burnish the credentials and display the look-where-I’ve-been knowledge of the writer, than to situate unknown monuments vis-à-vis more familiar ones for the prospective reader. Because of a decided European preference for Greek architecture and sculpture, and a tendency to disparage things Roman as clumsy and inferior, the monuments of Syria often suffered, except in terms of scale and sometimes profusion, from such comparisons. Indeed, the study of Roman art and architecture struggled against prejudice for decades after the Second World War. In part it was archaeology which swung admiring attention more toward Rome, since far more Roman than Greek sites survived: they built more, and further afield throughout Europe and North Africa.<sup>63</sup> Islamic art and architecture also stood in the shadow of Western perceptions.<sup>64</sup>

63 Pentz 2002 for comparative purposes: Towns 29–75; Rural organisation: 77–101; Fortifications: 103–137; Interaction and exchange: 139–165.

64 Vernoit 1997, 1: “One of the principal reasons for this delay [viz Islamic archaeology only at end of 19thC] can be found in Hegel’s portrayal of the historical evolution of art, in which Asia was relegated – following the ideas of Winckelmann – to a significance only in pre-Greek times, with ancient Persia credited with the first historical consciousness.”

The rise to prominence of Roman architecture was at least in part because of a demonstrable connection between monuments and politics, recognised for centuries.<sup>65</sup> For, as Ibn Khaldun wrote, “La grandeur des monuments laissés par une dynastie est en rapport direct avec la puissance dont cette dynastie avait disposé lors de son établissement.”<sup>[328]</sup> Other Muslim commentators were well aware of the impact architecture could make, because they admired antique monuments in Syria, such as Baalbek, Jerash and Amman.<sup>[329]</sup> They were also proud of the likely prestige of their own structures, as for example the well-known opinion relayed by Al-Muqaddasi that the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus was the best target for large expenditure (even more so than roads or fortresses!) because it would outshine Christian buildings. What is more, like the Dome of the Rock it was “unique and a wonder to the world,”<sup>[330]</sup> itself praised by one visitor for its glass windows rather than its architecture.<sup>[331]</sup> And Martin in 1876 acknowledged the beauty of the structure, but then compared it unfavourably (“flimsy”) with Solomon’s Temple, the details of which he naturally took on trust.<sup>[332]</sup>

La Roque in 1723 thought Baalbek the most beautiful remains from all antiquity, “sans en excepter même les ruines qui sont en Egypte.”<sup>[333]</sup> He thought neither the Greeks nor Romans had ever done anything more superb, or in better taste.<sup>[334]</sup> Wood, however, writing in 1757, though Baalbek merely bold.<sup>[335]</sup> In 1767 Thompson covered both bases by declaring that at Baalbek “In a Word, the fine taste of Greece and the Magnificence of Rome are united here.”<sup>[336]</sup> Hill in 1866 stated that only the Acropolis at Athens could compare,<sup>[337]</sup> and Knox in 1879 found Baalbek “grander and loftier than anything at Rome or Athens.”<sup>[338]</sup> Dubious comparisons were also made by divines such as Robinson, who apparently had no special knowledge of architecture: “They are like those of Athens in lightness, but surpass them far in vastness; they are vast and massive like those of Thebes, but far excel them in airiness and grace.”<sup>[339]</sup> This was the man who identified the church at Keniset-El-Awamyd as Greek architecture;<sup>[340]</sup> he should have read Burckhardt, who found that its decorated doorway stood comparison with Baalbek.<sup>[341]</sup> In 1885 Le Strange added Arak el Emir to the list of awe-inspiring structures.<sup>[342]</sup>

But the standard opinion was that Greece and Egypt were the measuring sticks by which Syria would be judged.<sup>[343]</sup> They were better in sculpture and architecture, whereas Baalbek had “a peculiar sameness in the decorations,”<sup>[344]</sup> and as Renan stated in 1860, shuddering at the non-Greek columns at Baalbek, “je suis loin de les placer au premier rang parmi les monuments de l’antiquité.”<sup>[345]</sup> Yet it was the decoration of Baalbek that

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65 Díaz-Andreu 2007, 29–59: 2: Antiquities and Political Prestige in the Early Modern Era.

made the site (and especially the huge colonnade) more imposing even than Karnak.<sup>[346]</sup> Grandeur, of course, was not the same as interest, and by 1900 we meet the divide between part-excavated sites (such as the Roman Forum) and untouched ones such as Baalbek,<sup>[347]</sup> where the Germans were closing in. D'Estourmel yawned at Baalbek in 1844, and recommended that “les architectes de notre temps peuvent rester dans la belle Italie et se dispenser de venir étudier en Syrie des monuments romains.”<sup>[348]</sup> Petra fared little better because it was viewed as decadent: “The architecture is florid and corrupt.”<sup>[349]</sup>

Nor did Jerash please the aesthetes, because the monuments (for a visitor in 1852) were “constructed of a dark sombre-coloured stone, which gives them an air of heaviness, and destroys the light and shades of their architectural decorations.”<sup>[350]</sup> D'Estourmel's opinion of Roman architecture in Syria was already stated by Lindsay in 1838, his eye being “perpetually offended by the want of harmony and proportion.” In other words, he had seen Rome, and how architecture was executed there; so that his final verdict (and a true one) was that Jerash was “a very fair specimen of a second-rate provincial Roman town.”<sup>[351]</sup> He was of course writing before excavation was possible or even thought of; and subsequent occupation by Circassian settlers eventually translated this virgin site into something less attractive to the spade.

Palmyra was another site that astonished visitors. Addison in 1838 discounted the opinion of a fellow traveller who thought Palmyra inferior to Baalbek in part because of the lesser height of the columns, and noted that the effects of wind had eroded the sculpture at Palmyra.<sup>[352]</sup> In 1848 Yanoski & David switched their preference to Palmyra, because Baalbek was overgrown and more confusing.<sup>[353]</sup> Palmyra, on the other hand, was comparable to other towns with colonnades, such as Jerash, Damascus and Apamea,<sup>[354]</sup> and modern scholars have identified more such colonnades.<sup>66</sup> Aleppo also had a colonnaded street, some of the columns of which are re-used in the ash-Shuabiya riwaq. But their mere extent did not compensate for the greater beauty of Baalbek, wrote Rousier in 1856.<sup>[355]</sup> In 1885 Le Ray put Palmyra above Rome, Greece and Paestum.<sup>[356]</sup>

European travellers naturally compared the monuments they found in one part of Syria with those they had seen in other parts, or sometimes with conspicuous buildings back home, inevitably with dubious results. A comparison of Baalbek with S. Paul's in London<sup>[357]</sup> was probably intended as a joke, and reference to the obelisk in the Place de la Concorde to underline just how large

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66 Milwright 2010, 30: colonnades in Syria, and Sauvaget's contribution to their understanding. Klinkott, 2008: colonnades in their urban context.



were the monoliths at Baalbek.<sup>[358]</sup> Yet Thompson could declare that the Great Temple was “very much like the Church of St. Paul, Covent Garden,” but conceded that Baalbek was bigger.<sup>[359]</sup> A much more serious comparison, evidently intended for in-the-know scholars, was between the Great Court at Baalbek and the great quadrangle of Christ Church, Oxford.<sup>[360]</sup>

However, an unattractive trait of some travellers is a told-you-so and seen-it-all boredom with what they saw. Such *tedium vitae* is yet another weapon of one-upmanship or ignorance, for example Berners at Acre in 1876 avoiding visiting the Great Mosque because he would need to don slippers and discard some of his riding gear.<sup>[361]</sup> Thus Scholz condemned Syria, commenting that there are “few countries so abounding in traces of a former great population, but few also where they are so uninteresting as in Palestine.”<sup>[362]</sup> Blondel never got to Palmyra, but ruled that the site could not compare with Baalbek, and that “C’est sa position dans le désert et la difficulté d’y parvenir, qui rehausse l’intérêt de Palmyre et qui à fait souvent exagérer le mérite de ses ruines.”<sup>[363]</sup> Damoiseau visited Merdj-el-Sultani in 1833, where “je trouvai un assez grand nombre de colonnes encore debout; d’autres, en plus grande quantité, gisaient par terre à moitié ensevelies sous le sable;” but he evidently did not bother to count them, and “un assez grand nombre” means little.<sup>[364]</sup> And if marvels were on their schedule, some monuments could be skipped, such as the Umayyad Mosque in 1915, because Smith had seen the Dome of the Rock and was en route to Haghia Sophia, so that “we did not think that this one could present any special feature of importance to us.”<sup>[365]</sup> What happened was that “we came to the door, but we did not enter, as we were not disposed to pay the entrance fee required.”<sup>[366]</sup>

Because there was nothing similar to be seen further west, it was the “dead cities” around Aleppo and in the Hauran (dealt with in detail in Chapters Five and Seven) that attracted even greater amazement than Palmyra or Baalbek, because Europeans were not used to encountering completely deserted settlements (although there were plenty to be seen throughout Europe, if not with untouched Roman stone houses). Here the inevitable comparison was with Pompeii.<sup>[367]</sup> The difference was that the buried town had been excavated and was on the tourist schedule from well before 1800, whereas the villages/towns in Syria had never been buried, were just as intact and, in some instances, still sparsely inhabited, “closed by their original doors, and sheltered by their original roofs, and the horses eating out of the same mangers as they did sixteen hundred years ago.”<sup>[368]</sup> As Flinders Petrie wrote in 1918, “south of Hebron I have walked through a town, still inhabited, where the houses were obviously Roman, and have seen a large hall with the stone roof

still perfect over it.”<sup>[369]</sup> There were plenty similar towns to be marvelled at. Pompeii won in terms of surviving frescoes and sculptures, whereas on the limestones massif

they are much more imposing, in their structure of solid stone, with their lofty colonnades and richly ornamented doorways, than any other ancient private residences that we know of, more beautiful than the houses of Pompeii, for example, with all their wall-paintings and mosaics.<sup>[370]</sup>

As La Salle wrote rather neatly in 1840 at Deir-Semaan, “Je nommerais volontier cette cité la Petra de cette Syrie pétrée.”<sup>[371]</sup> Further south, in the Hauran, the extensive deserted towns and villages with ancient standing houses also called for comparison with Herculaneum and Pompeii.<sup>[372]</sup>

However, by those who knew their history of art, many of the monuments of Syria were condemned if of the later Roman Empire. For Irby and Mangles, writing in 1823, “we passed many sites of ancient towns, castles, tanks, temples, &c. all of the lower empire, and very uninteresting.”<sup>[373]</sup> The same pair luckily avoided sites near Aleppo and S. Simeon, “all of the lower empire, and, as we have since learnt, totally uninteresting;”<sup>[374]</sup> other sites in Lebanon received the same appellation: “every thing much dilapidated and uninteresting.”<sup>[375]</sup> Why did they bother travelling? Nor did they take pleasure in ruins for, at Eleethias on the Nile, they came across “the ruins of a small temple, and other buildings much dilapidated and consequently uninteresting.”<sup>[376]</sup> But reading on, it becomes clear that they pan everything, including Palmyra:

Take any part of the ruins separately, and they excite but little interest; and altogether, we judged the visit to Palmyra hardly worthy of the time, expense, anxiety, and fatiguing journey through the wilderness, which we had undergone to visit them.<sup>[377]</sup>

Nothing they saw would have coaxed even one star from Michelin, and with their formulaic phrases they soon begin to sound like Sellar & Yeatman’s *1066 and All That*.

### One-upmanship and Verbal Wars in Travel Narratives

A gazelle captivated me so much, that my attention was so riveted by this singularly beautiful animal, that Tyre received only a transient glance.<sup>[378]</sup> [1845]

An entertaining if unedifying aspect of travel accounts, over and above the usual pieties of citing earlier accounts,<sup>67</sup> and making comparisons to display one's knowledge, is the overflowing measure of one-upmanship and back-biting they sometimes contain. These are addressed to the cognoscenti back home, rather than to ordinary readers, who were more likely to be impressed by the boredom and monuments fatigue outlined above. For serious scholarly authors, credibility and hence sales figures, money and sometimes academic respectability were involved. Australia is notorious for the Tall Poppies Syndrome (local reaction being to cut prominent people down to their own size and importance), but they got it from Britain in the first place. Thus Drummond castigated Pococke for his inaccuracies (he "travelled through part of Asia in the night"), and as for some identifications, "charity bids me suppose he was not there."<sup>[379]</sup> For Baalbek, Wood set his own work above that of La Roque, "which contains so much ignorant admiration, and so little intelligible description."<sup>[380]</sup> Some travellers were indeed ignorant, but confident with it, Breves asserting in 1628 that mosques "sont les temples, bastis tous presque d'une forme spherique, ornez de marbres de diverses couleurs, & de riches colonnes,"<sup>[381]</sup> when he could not possibly have seen more than a handful of such structures. Easiest of all to enter was the biblical arena, where there are plentiful accusations of absurdity and credulity, not to mention only very short visits to the sacred sites.<sup>[382]</sup>

Against the prevailing trend to privilege Greece against Rome (and one-upmanship always went against such trends) some travellers averred that sites further west had been visited and comprehensively described, so visits further east were in order. Already in 1819 Forbin was complaining that everything in Greece, Syria and Egypt had been seen "par de savans voyageurs, sous les aspects les plus divers et les plus remarquables. Cependant quelques-uns d'entre eux ont négligé d'ajouter des dessins à leur ouvrage."<sup>[383]</sup> Similarly, Walpole in 1851 explained he went to study the Assassins because everything else was filled in:

If I bought tape in a shop on Ludgate-hill, ten to one if the person who served me, had not taken a return-ticket by the steamer, rushed in a

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67 Bar-Yosef 2005, 67: "This interplay between texts and real-life experience is typical of all travel, but it is particularly typical of travel writing, as the readers-cum-producers enter the literary tradition which shaped their expectations in the first place. Virtually every travel account or geographical study contained the obligatory list of those celebrated travellers who had visited Palestine previously, as well as long citations from their work."

fortnight over Syria and Egypt, and knew as much, at all events, as his dragoman thought he ought to know for his money.<sup>[384]</sup>

Strong impressions were what counted, writes Durbin, so from his book “I have excluded from these pages such portions of my journals as I found, upon reading them after the lapse of a considerable time, to have escaped my recollection,”<sup>[385]</sup> evidently not considering that it would be descriptions of lesser-visited sites which would prove valuable. Quick tourism, what is more, produced inadequate results, as the Edinburgh Review noted in 1829:

It is only after considerable residence in a country where every habit is so unaccountably opposite to our own, and where no single channel of direct communication can be said to exist, that a knowledge of any thing beyond the surface can, except by singular accident, be procured.<sup>[386]</sup>

Thus Oppenheim (the excavator of Tell Halaf, and supposedly a spy for the Kaiser<sup>68</sup>) assures us in 1899 not only that he has travelled widely in the Islamic world, but has spent several months in the Arabic quarter of Cairo (i.e., not in the Europeanised section).<sup>[387]</sup> For most travellers, however, time constraints were all: in 1841 Egerton’s party “determined upon an expedition to Baalbec” not because they especially wanted to visit the site, but to fill in time until the steamer sailed a week later.<sup>[388]</sup>

Buckingham struggled against the calumnies of the Quarterly Review, “the unfounded aspersions of the late Mr. Burckhardt,” and “the unparalleled conduct of Mr. William John Bankes,”<sup>69</sup> the whole explicated in a long double-column appendix.<sup>[389]</sup> The matter revolved around stealing another scholar’s work.<sup>[390]</sup> Buckingham sued Bankes, and won. Finati had judged Buckingham (a prolific author) as a useless companion from Jerash to Nazareth in 1816, “in our company, bearing, however, no part in it either with his purse or with his pencil.”<sup>[391]</sup>

The tall poppies syndrome also applied, Napier elevating his own book by complaining that Burckhardt (“generally so observant of everything”) nodded

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68 Gossman 2013.

69 Lewis 1996 for William John Bankes. He was in the Orient 1815–1820, in Egypt, Nubia, Syria, Asia Minor and Greece. The first to do drawings of Petra and Jerash, and the first to visit Umm al-Jimal 39 years before Graham, the supposed discoverer of the site. Bankes was the unrecognised co-author of *Irby & Mangles*, published 1823, some of it dictated by Bankes to Irby, another part written by Bankes himself. Bowsler 1997: Bankes’ accounts of Qanawat, Gadara, Jerash, Amman, Baysan and Abila.

at Byzan, didn't get up what was probably the acropolis, and therefore missed "some splendid remains of a Roman amphitheatre."<sup>[392]</sup> Robinson in 1856 also attacked Burckhardt for apparently missing the ruins at Apamea.<sup>[393]</sup> Supposed mis-identification could also create storms, as De Saulcy discovered when in 1851 he read a paper on the structure he named the Tomb of the Kings at Jerusalem:

Ce fut le signal d'une guerre ardente qui me fut déclarée, et dont le but évident était, d'une part, de réduire à néant les résultats de mon voyage, de l'autre, de me faire passer aux yeux du monde savant pour un homme d'imagination, dont les érudits n'avaient pas à s'occuper, et qui, par sa légèreté et son ignorance, ne méritait pas qu'on prît au sérieux ce qu'il ne publiait qu'au prix de tant de peines de toute nature.<sup>[394]</sup>

The Jews were not happy, and petitioned Constantinople to have the excavation stopped because, like all biblical archaeology, it desecrated holy sites.<sup>70</sup>

An excellent satire on silly scholars is provided by Richard Burton, who focusses on the quarrel between Porter's *Five Years in Damascus* (London 1870) and Freshfield's *Travels in the Central Caucasus & Bashan* (London 1869), who averred that the sites in Bashan were not, as Porter believed "giant cities," but merely provincial towns of the Roman Empire. Burton set it up as a court case before the Athenaeum (the magazine):

The suit ended magno cum risu by a verdict of the jury of Reviewers, duly charged by Mr. Chief-justice Fergusson, that defendant and his party had "disproved the existence of any such giant cities whatever;" and furthermore, that "the so-called giant cities of Bashan were in fact no giant cities at all, but mere provincial towns of the Roman Empire."<sup>[395]</sup>

Another elegant put-down is Tristram's reference to "some valuable hints from Dr. Thomson, the well-known author of "The Land and the Book," and the oldest missionary in Syria" – a venerable source indeed. But he goes on to reveal that this supposed authority "longed for an excursion across Jordan, where he had never yet been."<sup>[396]</sup> This hint on page 26 of Tristram's book is then hammered home in comments throughout the text: "scarcely fulfils the conditions of the history... somewhat laughable hypothesis... has not recognised... Thomson mistook... erroneously asserts," and so on. Thomson declared in his book that he had "incorporated into it many important and

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70 Shaw 2003, 37.

interesting observations derived from the publications of eminent writers and travellers,<sup>[397]</sup> so perhaps he was as slippery as Tristram was snide. Statements such as “we shall meet in our travels”<sup>[398]</sup> surely suggest but do not explicitly state that he has covered the ground himself.

Because sites were not signposted, and only contained useful inscriptions in a minority of sites,<sup>71</sup> travellers sometimes described the wrong place.<sup>72</sup> This could be embarrassing, and reminiscent of the poignant story of the Viking Hastein, who supposedly sacked Luna/Luni, thinking it was Rome. Thus Roberts in 1750 assessed Palmyra as “a palace situated in a most delightful and spacious plain . . . has its walls of the finest free stone, and the best I ever saw;” but his 20th-century editor thinks he never got there, and really visited Taiyibe.<sup>[399]</sup>

Primacy of visitation and the publication of results also raised academic profile. Here the crown for one-upmanship goes to Victor Guérin (1821–91), a serious archaeologist, who spent several years in North Africa and the Middle East, and wrote at length and very sensibly about the sites he visited, and what they meant for the understanding of the past.<sup>[400]</sup> Much of this was done with funding from the French Government, and the necessary reports read like Little Jack Horner, who believes his paymasters should be equally enchanted with his plums. In Syria he claimed in his 1864 report to have visited 106 sites,<sup>[401]</sup> and goes on to list 81 of these, which he claims to have been the first to visit,<sup>[402]</sup> and then nine which he claims to have discovered.<sup>[403]</sup> A later report lists 280 localities in Upper Galilee, 44 of which did not appear on maps and (ahem) had escaped previous researchers.<sup>[404]</sup> Industrious though he assuredly was, he never explains the point of this kind of archaeological stamp-collecting, when it is not accompanied by large-scale maps and topographical details. (The pertinent words here are “large scale,” for he certainly did publish maps to accompany his adventures, but on a small scale.) Age evidently did not slow Guérin down, for his 1877 report states that he often travelled eight or ten hours each day without stopping, “et j’ai examiné environ 300 localités, les unes détruites et abandonnées depuis longtemps, les autres encore habitées. Un certain nombre d’entre elles n’étaient marquées sur aucune carte.”<sup>[405]</sup>

In 1875 the Rev. Selah Merrill went to Umm al-Jimal, “into the genuine desert,” listed the travellers who had viewed the area through a telescope, and noted with pride that “although two or more of these made the attempt, they

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71 Sartre 2011 includes historical introductions and visitors to some of the Hauran villages, e.g. 139–140 Jmarrin, 153 Kharaba, 221 Kerak (where he saw lots of spolia in the modern houses), 233 Deit Al-Khuleif Umm Walad, 287 Hrayyek.

72 Villeneuve 1988: the dangers of interpreting epigraphy without excavation.

did not succeed in reaching them. Mr. Cyril Graham and Mr. Waddington were the only Europeans who had visited the place previous to ourselves.”<sup>[406]</sup> This might have been what made Le Strange take an insinuating shot at him and, at the same time, at the meagre fruitfulness publications-wise of the American Palestine Exploration Society.<sup>[407]</sup>

Unfortunate results of one-upmanship and Franco-German rivalry were evident in the sad story of the Moabite Stone, discovered in 1868, and not only the oldest Semitic inscription then known, but also “cette découverte est la plus importante qui ait jamais été faite dans le champ de l'épigraphie orientale.”<sup>[408]</sup> Its discoverer, Klein, a Frenchman, kept the find secret from Clermont Ganneau (he “could have got up the stone, whole and uninjured, for a few napoleons, because the Arabs were wholly unacquainted with its value”) and instead went to the German consul. Klein's manoeuvres and various indiscretions persuaded its Arab owners of its true value, and he then returned to Berlin, and became a German citizen. Clermont Ganneau took a squeeze, but its owners,

terrified at the prospect of another raid, angry at the probable loss of a stone which possessed supernatural powers in their eyes, lit a fire under the priceless relic, threw cold water on it when it was red-hot, and so smashed it into pieces.<sup>[409]</sup>

Name-calling continued, and “the Franco-Prussian war tended not a little to embitter antiquarian rivalry in the matter of the Moabite Stone.”<sup>[410]</sup> This sad tale, recounted in detail by Sayce<sup>[411]</sup> and the PEF,<sup>[412]</sup> underlines both the thirst for treasures to showcase national prestige, but also the intricacies of dealing with alert if vandalistic locals. In 1895 Heber-Percy reasoned with some locals who persisted in believing that inscriptions held to the key to buried treasure; so why write the instructions on a stone? “They laughed and said I was right, but clearly remained convinced that I could not take all this trouble except for some prospective material gain.”<sup>[413]</sup>

The too-many-monuments disease was rife with less meticulous tourists, whose numbers increased as travel became cheaper. We might call it one-downsmanship, for it is still active today, and blends effortlessly with authors' one-upmanship by knocking off as many monuments as possible in a limited time-span. From 1900 Michelin continued the rot by classifying monuments and sites with stars (so that the discerning could aim only for *les trucs trois-étoiles*, *vaut le détour*, *vaut le voyage*, etc) just as it did from 1926 with restaurants. Towns less antiquities-rich felt the full force of travellers' disdain. “Where you have done Rome and Athens, and half the cities of Europe and Asia, you

won't linger long over the antiquities of Beyrout," wrote Knox in 1879.<sup>[414]</sup> This was because so many of her monuments had been destroyed in building the modern town, including bungling by European consuls who tried in the 1830s to lift a mosaic which stood comparison with those at Pompeii.<sup>[415]</sup>

### Modernisation Changes Travelling in the Unchanging East

If, as discussed above, modernisation could be a two-edged sword for travellers, it could also make visits safer and quicker, if sometimes less interesting because of the monuments it destroyed. For Syrian agriculture and commerce, railways controlled much organisation and development.<sup>73</sup> One noticeable advantage was speed. At Baalbek in 1840, La Salle was amazed by the daguerrotype, which could achieve in a few minutes what it would take more than four days to draw by hand.<sup>[416]</sup> At Tyre, in 1840, Layard reports that "M. Vernet was provided with a Daguerrotype – then only recently discovered, and the first I had seen – and was able with it to take views of the principal monuments and scenes which he visited."<sup>[417]</sup> Vernet had shown the device to Mehmet Ali, the great moderniser. But there were others, such as the sheikh Porter encountered at Qanawat in 1855, who "questioned us until he got a full explanation of the principles of locomotion and electricity," and then pressed him on contemporary politics.<sup>[418]</sup>

A more clinical defence weapon and evidently a normal piece of equipment for hardened travellers was a telescope, which allowed travellers to scan the horizon for lurking robbers. It was carried along with compass, maps, and surveying instruments.<sup>[419]</sup> In 1882 Robinson rode along a Roman road near Bosra, "stopping occasionally to examine with our glasses the deserted towns away to the right and left . . . and scan suspicious ruins, and peer into valleys, in the fear or hope of discovering roving Ishmaelites." They were right to be wary, since they passed Druze ploughmen sporting rifle and pistols, just as did the French colons in 19th-century Algeria, and for the same reason.<sup>[420]</sup> If the telescope could keep travellers out of danger, it also allowed travellers to examine sites

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73 Lantz 2005: Syria and the Hijaz. 15 with the 1856 line Smyrna-Aidin, "Pour la première fois de son histoire, l'Islam se vit imposer un réseau dont il n'était pas lui-même à l'origine." Similar to the printing press, author notes. 176–186 De la Caravane aux Chemins de Fer – in Syria. The rails stay where they are, so (177) "Il était donc nécessaire de déterminer a priori les régions les plus fertiles et conduire les rails là où l'économie augurait la rentabilité de leur exploitation." 179: between Beirut and Damascus, cheaper by one quarter to transport goods by rail.



without visiting them. This then allowed authors to write about them without incurring any danger, but one must wonder how many monuments were inspected in close-up. Using a telescope, in 1844 Kelly viewed the Dome of the Rock from the Mount of Olives,<sup>[421]</sup> while Porter scanned a host of towns from the fortress at Bosra, “and their walls and houses appeared to be in even better preservation than those I had already visited.”<sup>[422]</sup> The same device allowed Porter to count “sixty walled cities, besides unwalled towns,” a great many in the southern section of Jebel Hauran.<sup>[423]</sup> Butler was still doing likewise in 1905: “the Djebel Sim’ân, with the exception of a few sites, was unexplored, although distant telescopic observations had shown it to be full of deserted cities and towns.”<sup>[424]</sup>

Telescopes also fascinated the locals. Van De Velde was viewed by them suspiciously when taking measurement in 1854, but “I likewise allowed some of the old shechs to look through the telescope, in order to familiarise them with the harmless instrument; and thus I contrived to come away with a whole skin.”<sup>[425]</sup> Porter wrote of a sheikh who had taken a telescope off a Turkish officer, replaced the brass tubes with cardboard, used it a lot, and Porter promised to try and get him one in Damascus.<sup>[426]</sup> Near the Dead Sea in 1856, “many of the peasants gathered around us, and seemed gratified to hold our telescopes,”<sup>[427]</sup> while by the Nile in 1866, the natives “all petitioned at the same moment to be allowed to look through it.”<sup>[428]</sup> A telescope (or a revolver, rifle or compass) formed a suitable gift to ensure a sheik’s co-operation,<sup>[429]</sup> and some refused to accept cash: “they are also very generous to travellers with consular recommendations, or with consular influence, but they are thereby building up a debt of obligations which they will take good care shall be cancelled by the consul.”<sup>[430]</sup>

If Ottoman modernity sometimes startled sensitive travellers (such as “un tapis européen aux couleurs criardes” in the Umayyad Mosque<sup>[431]</sup>), it also impressed them, such as the request by the Moutselim to Walpole in 1851 “to beg he would cut him out a pair of European trousers, at the same time sending the calico.”<sup>[432]</sup> Yet rather than tailoring, modernity generally meant speed of urban development, or of travel, and some signal of government getting a grip.<sup>74</sup> In 1862 Farley marvelled at the new town of Beirut, and the ships that sailed there.<sup>[433]</sup> He had already written on how to travel in Syria, taking the

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74 Hanssen 2005, 9: “Particularly under Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876–1909), many Ottoman cities and towns received ‘face-lifts’ and public health regulations. Railway, port, and telegraph networks criss-crossed the empire, while the increasingly mobile members of the new Ottoman mass bureaucracy became omnipresent bearers of state power in the provinces.”

visitor from landing at Jaffa, then dragoman, servants, mules and donkeys, luggage, locals, costs. He recommended Beirut as the most suitable HQ.<sup>[434]</sup>

In 1860 Poujade noted how Baalbek would be a magnet for artists and antiquarians, “si une bonne route conduisait au milieu de ces ruines dont un gouvernement intelligent s’empresserait d’arrêter la destruction.”<sup>[435]</sup> Farley was still reminding his readers in 1878 that “well-made roads, good canals, and inexpensive railways are desiderata for Asiatic Turkey,” and that these are “civilizing agents of the highest order, while, on the other hand, their absence restrains enterprise, diverts trade, and lessens cultivation.”<sup>[436]</sup> But things were improving: already by 1879 there was “excellent road, equal to the best turnpikes of America, and the diligence roads of Europe” between Beirut and Damascus,<sup>[437]</sup> and twenty years later Tiffany noted that “the march of modern improvement” was greater in Syria than in Kansas, with the splendid new Beirut-Damascus road:

Close beside this triumph of modern engineering runs the old trail from Damascus, torn and gullied almost out of recognition, over which are painfully laboring great caravans of heavily burdened asses and camels . . . already is a mountain railway from Beyrout to Damascus in rapid advance before the eye.<sup>[438]</sup>

To complement the efficiency of the new road, plans were also announced for the modernisation of the walls of Acre,<sup>[439]</sup> but this did not happen because trade was attracted instead to Haifa.

### Conclusion

The traveller treads at every step on the remains of perished cities, and of monuments of art and industry that testify the vast population, the wealth, energy, and grandeur of the land in days gone by . . . here was prepared, developed, and consummated, that stupendous series of events on which he rests his hopes for eternity.<sup>[440]</sup> [1844]

Here Kelly explains in a nutshell why Syria was attractive to travellers for a variety of reasons from ancient monuments to the towns and scenes of the Bible. This chapter has surveyed the panoply of attitudes and responses to what they saw, explaining why some sites were visited more than others, and demonstrating the various ways in which attitudes to the Bible dictated which sites received more than their fair share of attention, while other sites languished.

We may assume that many sets of ruins disappeared without trace, consumed in later buildings, while funding went to proving the truth of the Bible.

The accounts above have also demonstrated that travelling was a sometimes dangerous and generally imprecise pursuit, reliant on locals for safety, and no doubt on earlier books for some of the information some authors set down as their own – an occupational hazard for guidebook readers. Since travellers often visited sites with earlier books to hand (some of them mention the fact), we can never be certain that some sites really were seen by the narrator, let alone examined in detail or even (as a counsel of fear, laziness or despair) distantly through a telescope. We may suspect that several sites were written up from chunks of detail reworked and elaborated from earlier sources, the author generally omitting to mention the fact. As Allen wrote in 1855, “I have availed myself of all the information I could gather from other writers, in order to support my own views.”<sup>[441]</sup>

We have now completed an outline briefing of the state of Syria, the beliefs and attitudes of the locals, and the delights and dangers travellers were to face there. The following chapters form a gazetteer, and will examine sites area by area, relaying accounts of Syrian monuments which will allow us to assess survival and destruction, and underline how little information we would possess about changes over the centuries to the rich treasures the country still guards were not Westerners so attracted to the region and its treasures.

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|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| [1] Vogiié_1865-1877_I_4C      | [17] Richter_1824_331             | [29] PEF_Committee_1873_221C    |
| [2] Sepp_1863_IX-XXXI          | [18] Breuvery_1848_136            | [30] Finati_1830_II_131-132     |
| [3] Guylforde_1506_16          | [19] Parsons_1808_37              | [31] Hilprecht_1903_26          |
| [4] Bement_1858_9              | [20] Arvieux_II_1735_55           | [32] Richardson_1822_II_211     |
| [5] Chateaubriand_1812_II_135  | [21] Burckhardt_1822_22081812     | [33] Buckingham_1822_II_50      |
| [6] Napier_I_1843_51           | [22] Van_De_Velde_1854_II_153     | [34] Seetzen_1854_I_iii-xlii    |
| [7] Wortabet_1856_I_8          | [23] PEF_Committee_1873_7-8       | [35] Seetzen_1810_14            |
| [8] Farley_1862_209            | [24] Van_De_Velde_1854_II_150     | [36] Le_Strange_1889_304        |
| [9] Busch_1870_32              | [25] Van_De_Velde_1854_II_150-151 | [37] Le_Strange_1889_322        |
| [10] Wilson_IV_1881_2          | [26] Baedeker_1898_xii            | [38] Le_Strange_1889_164        |
| [11] Gédoyne_1909_148          | [27] DNB sv Edward Henry Palmer   | [39] Wetzstein_1860_4-5         |
| [12] Ariosto_1878_86           | [28] DNB sv Tyrwhitt Drake        | [40] Wetzstein_1860_60          |
| [13] Boullaye-Le-Gouz_1653_371 |                                   | [41] Kennard_1855_334-335       |
| [14] Prime_1855_II_399-400     |                                   | [42] Walpole_III_1851_27B       |
| [15] Guérin_1868_359           |                                   | [43] D'Estourmel_I_1844_263-264 |
| [16] Lusignan_1783_203         |                                   | [44] Rendel_Harris_1891_1       |

- [45] Chabot\_1939\_353
- [46] Merrill\_1881\_358
- [47] Noroff\_1862\_I\_53-61
- [48] Scholz\_1822\_77
- [49] PEF\_Committee\_1873\_7
- [50] Larènaudière\_1835\_106
- [51] Saint-Martin\_II\_1845\_85-86
- [52] Saint-Martin\_II\_1845\_133
- [53] Saint-Martin\_III\_1845\_202
- [54] Saint-Martin\_III\_1845\_210
- [55] Saint-Martin\_II\_1845\_96-97
- [56] PEF\_Committee\_1873\_14
- [57] Thomson\_1886\_1
- [58] Bliss\_1907\_ix
- [59] Laborde\_1836\_x-xvi
- [60] Laborde\_1836\_x
- [61] G.H.\_1852\_64
- [62] Tristram\_1865\_viii
- [63] Tristram\_1865\_613
- [64] Beke\_1862\_76
- [65] Stanley\_1856\_xviii-ix
- [66] Porter\_1882\_iv
- [67] Bouchier\_1916\_137
- [68] Gallois\_1907\_6
- [69] Osborn\_1877\_5-6
- [70] Buckingham\_1855\_I\_50
- [71] Allen\_1855\_II\_5
- [72] G.H.\_1852\_28-29
- [73] Turner\_1820\_II\_129
- [74] Potter\_1877\_248
- [75] Potter\_1877\_251
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- [77] Harman\_1873\_213
- [78] Jahn\_1823\_iv
- [79] Jahn\_1823\_2
- [80] Conder\_1891\_252-262
- [81] D'Estourmel\_I\_1844\_339
- [82] Macbrair\_1839\_94B
- [83] Herschell\_1845\_1
- [84] Kelly\_1844\_161
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- [86] Graham\_1858\_262
- [87] Laborde\_1836\_331
- [88] AMS\_III\_1867\_368-369
- [89] Conder\_1887\_280
- [90] Williams\_1849\_4
- [91] Thomas\_1900\_329
- [92] Rogers\_2011\_146
- [93] Baedeker\_1898\_xiiB
- [94] Guérin\_1868\_vi
- [95] Thomson\_1886\_239
- [96] Warburton\_1848\_xi
- [97] Hausmann\_de\_Wandelburg\_1883\_1-2
- [98] Addison\_1838\_ix-x
- [99] Graham\_1858\_242
- [100] Conder\_1889\_273
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- [103] Pigeory\_1854\_327
- [104] Hoole\_1975\_637-638
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- [106] Nugent\_1846\_II\_189
- [107] Spencer\_1857\_258
- [108] G.H.\_1852\_vi
- [109] Saulcy\_1853\_I\_53
- [110] Butler\_1930\_23
- [111] Porter\_1868\_I\_205
- [112] Beke\_1862\_80-81
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- [114] G.H.\_1852\_vii
- [115] Hahn-Hahn\_II\_1845\_127-128
- [116] Guérin\_1872\_382
- [117] Andrews\_1872\_4
- [118] Spencer\_1857\_v-vi
- [119] Fuller\_1829\_279
- [120] Sayce\_1865\_3
- [121] Guérin\_1872\_384
- [122] John\_of\_Würzburg\_1890\_63
- [123] Fabri\_1896\_II.2\_1893\_435
- [124] Goujon\_1670\_296
- [125] Thevenot\_1689\_569
- [126] Conder\_1889\_255-256
- [127] Conder\_1889\_265
- [128] Aramon\_1887\_113
- [129] Aramon\_1887\_113
- [130] Varthema\_1863\_7
- [131] Egmont\_&\_Heyman\_1759\_II\_252
- [132] Egmont\_&\_Heyman\_1759\_II\_265
- [133] Lithgow\_1632\_223
- [134] Lusignan\_1783\_199-200
- [135] Saulcy\_1853\_I\_73
- [136] Veryard\_1701\_323
- [137] Maundrell\_1836\_81-82
- [138] Buckingham\_1822\_II\_147-148
- [139] Munk\_1845\_1
- [140] Martin\_1883\_113
- [141] Porter\_1882\_54B
- [142] Shaw\_1808\_I\_XXX
- [143] Van\_De\_Velde\_1854\_I\_196
- [144] Porter\_1868\_II\_290
- [145] Wortabet\_1856B\_6
- [146] Van\_De\_Velde\_1854\_II\_465
- [147] Porter\_1868\_I\_52
- [148] PEF\_Committee\_1873\_221
- [149] PEF\_Committee\_1873\_8
- [150] EB\_XXV\_1911\_272
- [151] Valiani\_1828\_6
- [152] Lindsay\_1838\_II\_69
- [153] Guillot\_2007\_101
- [154] Baedeker\_1876\_14
- [155] Baedeker\_1876\_15-23
- [156] Baedeker\_1898\_xii
- [157] Cook\_1876\_iii
- [158] Murray\_1919\_49
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- [167] Layard\_I\_1903\_306-307
- [168] Canning\_1888\_II\_138
- [169] Ibn\_Haukal\_1800\_70
- [170] Ibn\_Haukal\_1800\_69
- [171] Plaisted\_1929\_103
- [172] Mariti\_I\_1791\_iii
- [173] Porter\_1868\_II\_liii
- [174] Russell\_1832\_291
- [175] Buckingham\_1822\_II\_259
- [176] Russell\_1832\_291-292
- [177] Garnier\_1843\_207-208
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- [179] Jessup\_1910\_134
- [180] Irby\_&\_Mangles\_1823\_235
- [181] Carne\_III\_1838\_21
- [182] Joanne\_1861\_608
- [183] Plaisted\_1929\_119
- [184] Robinson\_1856\_31
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- [188] Le\_Ray\_1885\_1
- [189] Joanne\_1861\_611
- [190] Merrill\_1881\_208-209
- [191] Wortabet\_1856\_135
- [192] Kinnear\_1841\_132-133
- [193] Lindsay\_II\_1838\_180
- [194] Beaujour\_1829\_309
- [195] Laorty-Hadji\_1854\_173
- [196] Laorty-Hadji\_1854\_176-177
- [197] Belgiojoso\_1858\_345
- [198] Porter\_1868\_II\_xliv
- [199] Perry\_1743\_135
- [200] Capper\_1796\_274
- [201] Beke\_1862\_86
- [202] Tristram\_1865\_108
- [203] Butler\_1930\_36
- [204] Madden\_1829\_I\_ix-x
- [205] Lindsay\_II\_1838\_165
- [206] Marquise\_de\_L\_1866\_49-50
- [207] Skene\_1864\_203
- [208] Fuller\_1829\_237
- [209] Montague\_1849\_121-122
- [210] Drummond\_1754\_180
- [211] Drummond\_1754\_181
- [212] Berners\_1876\_5
- [213] Browne\_1799\_399
- [214] Griffiths\_1805\_343-344
- [215] Kinneir\_1818\_174
- [216] Buckingham\_1825\_179
- [217] Conder\_III.II\_1830\_81
- [218] Wright\_1895\_337-338
- [219] Addison\_II\_1838\_158-159
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- [221] Laorty-Hadji\_1854\_108-109
- [222] Lortet\_1881\_30
- [223] Conder\_1891\_141-142
- [224] Vogüé\_1865-1877\_I\_4B
- [225] Dussaud\_1903\_435
- [226] Walpole\_I\_1851\_132
- [227] Beaujour\_1829\_319
- [228] Porter\_1855\_II\_149
- [229] Porter\_1882\_65
- [230] Hahn-Hahn\_II\_1845\_93
- [231] Fuller\_1829\_265
- [232] Arvieux\_II\_1735\_85-86
- [233] Green\_1736\_33
- [234] Porter\_1855\_I\_191
- [235] Robinson\_1838\_211-212
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- [237] Wittman\_1803\_165
- [238] AMS\_I\_1850\_105
- [239] Hamilton\_1875\_105
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