Travel to the Holy Land and Photography in the Nineteenth Century
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During the nineteenth century, pilgrims, adventurers and well-to-do members of the upper middle classes seem to have been gripped by an almost irresistible urge to travel to the Near and Middle East. This fascination with the Orient, which is even evident in travel accounts dating from as early as the sixteenth century, was further stimulated by ongoing archaeological excavations and eventually gave rise to a lively Middle East tourism industry.

For Christian pilgrims, a trip to the Promised Land formed part of a long European pilgrimage tradition. It was an undertaking that evoked reminiscences of the Age of the Crusades. Following in Biblical footsteps was a means of calling to mind the story of Christ’s life and martyrdom. Mythical places and sites were visited in the hope that their aura would give rise to religious experiences of great depth and fervor.

Pilgrimages to Palestine undertaken at the beginning of the nineteenth century were fraught with hardship and inconvenience, especially because they were still poorly organized at this time. In her book, Reise nach Jerusalem oder Mitarbeit an der Heiligen Land (Journey of a Viennese Woman to the Holy Land) written in 1842, Ida Pfeiffer vividly described the dangers posed by political unrest or epidemics like the plague, which could easily have fatal consequences. A far cry from the later comforts of luxury steamers, pilgrims still had to make do with simple sailing ships that made not the slightest concessions in terms of the passengers’ well-being or hygiene. Travel by rail was still a comparative rarity until rapid technical advances led to its growing popularity from the mid-nineteenth century onwards.

Travel descriptions written by literary authors—good examples are Gustave Flaubert’s account of his journey to Egypt and Karl May’s tales of the Orient—fancifully presented the East as an archaic and strange world full of exotic marvels, thereby stimulating the reader’s appetite for adventure. These journeys undertaken by the wealthier classes and aristocracy to round off their education—the ‘Grand Tour’—was considered obligatory in such circles—may be regarded as forerunners of the efficiently organized tourism of more modern times.

Guidebooks like those published by Baedeker and Woermann in the nineteenth and early twentieth century provided detailed information about travel routes to Jerusalem, including times of departure and arrival of the various means of conveyance, as well as the exact prices of first- and second-class tickets for the journey.

There were several different routes available to persons traveling from Europe to Palestine and Syria. One could embark on a ship sailing from Marseille or from the Italian ports of Trieste, Venice, Bari, Genoa or Naples. The first port of call was Alexandria or Port Said in Egypt, from where the journey continued to Jaffa or Beirut, Tripoli, Alexandretta or Mersin.

Another route took travelers to the Holy Land via Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul) and Smyrna (now called Izmir). During a stay lasting two weeks, it was possible to gain a fleeting impression of the most important sights and places of interest: 1. Jaffa and Jerusalem with its surroundings; 2. Beirut and Damascus; 3. Nazareth and Tiberias (starting out from Haifa). Travelers had the choice of taking one of the steamships that sailed back and forth between the coastal towns of Jaffa, Beirut and Haifa, or of taking the train that linked Jaffa and Jerusalem, as well as Beirut and Damascus. The road between Haifa and Tiberias was another route well-trodden by Western visitors.

Travel Routes

We can gain a clear impression of the exact course of such an itinerary as it might have looked at that time from the following detailed description provided in the German edition of Baedeker published in 1904. The details would depend, of course, on the duration of the planned trip:

1. Jaffa (Tel Aviv-Yafo) – Jerusalem (Bethlehem, Dead Sea), 8 days.

1st day. Jaffa: arrival early in the morning, as a rule; (morning) Tour of the city (with guide). – (afternoon) approx. 3 o’clock departure by train to Jerusalem; arrival in the same at approx. 5 o’clock.

[Diagram of travel routes in Palestine, Syria, Lebanon during the nineteenth century]
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1. **Jaffa (Tel Aviv-Yafo) to Jerusalem (Bethlehem, Dead Sea), 8 days.**
   - 1st day, Jaffa: arriving early in the morning, as a rule; (morning) Tour of the city (with guide). - (Afternoon)approx. 2 o’clock departure by train to Jerusalem; arrival in the same at approx. 6 o’clock.
   - 2nd-6th days, Jerusalem: One passes free time by frequent visits to the city through (with guide) in order to obtain an impression of the life. The first Friday evening is employed for a trip to the Tilling Wall. One also applies in good time, if need be the host of the landlord, for the issue of a permit to the Haram esh-Sherif (closed Fridays).
   - 7th day, (morning) Walk or trip to the Mount of Olives.
   - (Afternoon) Excursion by conveyance or on horseback to Bethlem.
   - (Afternoon) On foot or, preferably, on a mule or horse through the Kidron Valley; Tomb of Absalom, Mary’s Well, Pool of Siloam, and then through the Hinnom Valley to the Zion Quarter, Citadel. - (Afternoon) Excursion by conveyance or on horseback to Al-Aqsa; evening, Cotton Cave.
   - 8th day, (morning) On foot or by conveyance to the Cave of Jeremiah, the Church of St. Stephen (Dominican Abbey), the Royal Tombs. - (Afternoon) Excursion to the Tombs of the Judges and en-Nabi Samwil.
   - 9th-10th days, Excursion to the Jordan and the Dead Sea.
   - 11th day, (Early start): from Jerusalem to Jericho (4 hrs.), to the ford of the Jordan (5 hrs.), to the Dead Sea (4 hrs.), and back to Jericho.
   - 12th day, Return to Jerusalem, visit to Bethany. In the event of good weather, there will be a few hours free p.m., that may be employed for a further visit to the Mount of Olives.
   - 13th day, Return trip to Jaffa by train; arrival in Jaffa approx. 12 o’clock; steamship sail p.m. Those who wish to make the trip to Jaffa by conveyance (7 hrs.) are advised to leave Jerusalem on the day before their steamship is due to sail.

2. **Beiruit – Damascus (Baalbek), 7 days.**
   - 1st day, Beiruit, Acquisition of a permit (sijwe) via the consulates. Walks to the pine-trees, Rdo Beiruit; excursion to the Dog River or to the Dove Caves. The attractive environs of Beiruit ensure that a longer stay is also rewarding.
   - 2nd day, To Damascus. Departure, approx. 7 o’clock a.m.; arrival, approx. 4 o’clock p.m.; arrange a guide.
   - 3rd-7th days, Damascus.
   - 3rd day, Visit to the Great Mosque; stroll through the bazars, toward evening, ride by conveyance to the [illegible] es-Saleheiy, and to the (illegible) knud. 4th day, Walk through the bazars and the s. quarter, el-Meldan; then around the city, first E. then N. (Thomas Gate). Visit to the Tegule and a cafe at the Barada.
   - 5th day, Visit to a number of private houses, walk through the Christian quarter and groves in the surrounding areas. In the evening, excursion to Dummar. Further could be spent making various worthwhile excursions.
   - 6th day, Train to Beijuj; departure, approx. 8 o’clock a.m.; arrival, approx. 10 o’clock. From here, train journey to Baalbek. Arrival, approx. 2 o’clock p.m. Tour of the fortress.
   - 7th day, Return to Baalbek; travel, approx. 3 o’clock on foot.

3. **Haifa – Nazareth – Tiberias, 4 days.**
   - 1st day, Haifa; Visit to Mt. Carmel (on foot or by conveyance). possibility an excursion to Akko, too.
   - 2nd day, Journey by conveyance (4 hrs.) to Nazareth and tour of the town.
   - 3rd day, Journey by conveyance (4 hrs.) from Nazareth to Tiberias, tour of the town, boat trip to Caperannia.
   - 4th day, Journey by conveyance from Tiberias back to Haifa via Nazaret.

Trips to Petra, Sinai, East Jordan and Palmyra are only to be undertaken when the political situation is calm.

**Accommodation**

Travelers could choose between various possible types of accommodation. Hotels and inns managed by Europeans or by local Christians were only to be found along the main tourist routes. The price for overnight lodgings was between 12 and 16 francs throughout the tourist season, with visitors generally being advised to travel either between March and mid-June, or between September and October.

Hostels and monasteries were a good deal cheaper and were mainly used by pilgrims or travelers who had not managed to find accommodation at an inn. In such establishments, lodgings for the night cost just 3 francs, with breakfast and dinner costing the same.

In villages, travelers had to depend on whatever hospitality hoteliers or innmen might offer. In general, satisfac-
tory accommodation was to be expected from members of the Greek Orthodox clergy, missionaries, and consular employees, who for the price per night were comparable to that for stays in hostels and monasteries.

In remote areas lacking anything resembling an infra-
structure, travelers had to seek shelter in the huts of farmers or else in the caves, the caravanserais, in the places where horses were stabled for the night. In spite of the dearth of comfort and the complete absence of san-
itary facilities, the price for a night spent under such conditions was also about 3 francs per person.

**Practical Considerations**

While staying in a foreign country, a traveler could employ a dragoman to serve as his interpreter and guide. These ‘cicerones’ could be found either with the help of a travel bureau or they might be hired directly on the spot. So long as they were able to speak German, French, and English, and were responsible for all necessary preparations and prov-
isions, as well as guiding the route to be traveled – rather like a present-day travel agent. For shorter excursions, a price was agreed verbally, while a written agree-
ment was drawn up for longer trips. During such negoti-
ations, the guide had to take into consideration costs that were likely to arise for transport, accommodation, provi-
sions and many other things, so that the traveler would not be confronted by unexpected expenses. Similarly, the guide was expected to supply horses, camels with saddles and pack animals. A driving tent with table and chairs, the so-called ‘kabinet tent’, as well as a tent for sleeping with beds, bed linen and towels, had to be provided for tourists. The guide was also responsible for the quality of the lodgings and food, as well as for the personal safety of the traveler, so that, if circumstances required, he also had to arrange an armed escort.
The Magic of the Orient

In Europe, photographs depicting Oriental subjects were in great demand. There can be no doubt that the prevailing passion for matters relating to the Orient was due not only to the many exciting travel descriptions written by researchers and literary authors but also to paintings that conjured up the enchantment of the East in the most glowing colors. These imaginary worlds offered a tempting escape, at least for a few moments, from the less exotic realities and restrictions of everyday life. In addition, there were many operas in which well-known tragedies of love were enacted within an Oriental or Biblical setting: Samson et Delilah by Camille Saint-Saëns, Marie-Magdeleine, Hérodile and Cléopâtre by Jules Massenet, Jerusalem and Nabucco by Giuseppe Verdi, Semiramide by Gioacchino Rossini and Die Konigin in Ägypten (The Crusaders in Egypt) by Gluck. These operas, to name but a few. A number of operas were so exclusively in accord with the fashions of their own times that they have long since disappeared entirely from the programs of opera houses and theaters. In such productions, the Orient was presented with great paths from an entirely European standpoint.

Excited raptures, curious excitement and the romance of adventure were often a means of momentarily escaping from one's own vacuity. Baudelaire wrote of the enzou, boredom and disgust that he saw as being characteristic of a society whose rigid conventions had become anachronisms, a society that was nothing more than an "island of horror in a desert of boredom" and which suffocated every creative impulse. In his poem, "Parian Dream," Baudelaire depicted the cold splendor of the French capital with its facades made of marble, steel and glass, symbolizing the bourgeois love of imposing appearances during the nineteenth century: "...the wretched wastes of this drunken orgy of marble, water and metal. A Babel made entirely of stairs and arches: an unconceivable palace full of pools and cascades plunging into tarnished or shining gold...". Images like these became symbols of alienation, powerfully reflecting the cultural crises of a period marked by its loss of inner meaning, certainties and faith. It is no coincidence that, in his cycle of poems, Le Mort (Death), Baudelaire dedicated one of them, "Le Voyage" (The Journey), to the photographer, Maximin Du Camp, who can be numbered among the pioneers of photography of the Orient. This poem gives expression to the desperate hopes attached to traveling into "depths of the unknown to experience something new."

Maximin Du Camp (born in Paris in 1821; died in Baden-Baden in 1866) traveled the Orient with Custave Flaubert between 1849 and 1851. In the company of his Cornish servant, Louis Sassetti, he took about 200 photographs of various subjects. Of these, 125 images were published in Paris in 1854 in the album, Egypt, Nubie, Palestine et Syria. Baudelaire's poem, "Le Voyage," records impressions in a manifestly photographic manner, and these were most probably inspired by Du Camp's pictures. Motifs like the sands of the desert, the sun, the sea, cypresses and Oriental figures serve in Baudelaire's lines as visual building blocks for melancholy allusions:"

'We've seen crashing waves and hot desert sand... The sun's splendor on Tyrian sea, the glow of cities when the sun sinks downward... Great tree, high, ever-growing like cypresses... And thrones, strewn with bejeweled hangings, palaces, fabulous splendor and pomp... garments we did see: a frenzy of colors, resplendence... And women colored their teeth and bands..."

The mood evoked here might be understood as a reflex response to the nineteenth-century enthusiasm for travel taking here the form of a desire for diversification or self-renewal, yet always accompanied by an awareness of the impossibility of the fulfillment of this wish:"

"One day, we set out, our mind full of blazing embers, our heart brimming over with grief, heavy with novel, sorrowful desire, we took an infinity to and fro within ourselves according to the rhythm of the languid tides of an ocean limited by the horizons above: some fleeing from his homeland's shame, some from the need into which he was born..."

The true travelers are those who undertake the journey for the sake of the journey alone..."

The eternal nomad travels onward, condemned to be uprooted forever.

The last section of "Le Voyage" is an invocation of death, the utterly unknown and novel. Those landscapes and places that one would never get to visit were also graced by a sense of novelty, yet these could now be captured photographically in a manner whose correspondence to reality was frankly astonishing. Photography created likenesses, yet at the same time gave rise to a convincing semblance of the real-world—a visualization that was so near yet so far—not dissimilar to a mirage in the desert, onto which a person lost in dreamy thought might project imagined worlds and stories.

The Beginnings of Photography in the Near East in the Nineteenth Century—Economics and Aesthetics

In the mid-nineteenth century, Du Camp was just one of many photographers who were active in the Near and Middle East. Early photography in this region was primarily concerned with recording views of monuments and landscapes, and these images are still of great aesthetic interest and documentary value. With the rapid growth of tourism in the Orient after 1850, there was an increasing demand for photographs that would serve as an optical reminder of the highlights of a trip. In addition to amateurs, there were a number of professional photographers from Europe who established highly profitable studios in these regions. For example, in 1861, the Frenchman, Felix Bonfils, arrived with his family in Beirut, where he established La Maison Bonfils in 1867. This was one of the first and largest studios in the Middle East, and its subsequent success led Bonfils to set up further studios along the well-beaten tourist track in Jerusalem, Alexandria, Cairo, and Baalbek. In 1871, his archive
The Beginnings of Photography in the Near and Middle East in the Nineteenth Century — Economies and Aesthetics

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Another genre comprised photographs of representatives of various professions and social groups: veiled Arab women, concubines from harems, dancing deviesses, musicians, female dancers, praying Muslims, and beggars. Such pictures involved the depiction not so much of individuals but rather of generic types (see pp. 156-159).

Another matter of faith or profitable business, religious orar or pure materialism, the Creation of Genesis or Darwin’s Or the Origin of the Species, the photo-technical procedures applied in the nineteenth century were not intended to serve the most contradictory purposes and beliefs. Even though it transgressed against the Second Commandment: “Thou shall not make for thee any graven image…”, photography was able to transport the viewer back to Biblical times and seemingly provide a visual assimilation of the events. Photographs of the Orient even took into account the various requirements of pilgrims of different confessions and sought to cater for these by fulfilling subtle shades of detail. As a result, their work was well-received and commercially successful throughout the world.

What had initially been a purely technical invention became to develop its artistic rules and conventions.

Photographs as Models for Engravings

From the 1840s onward, special printing techniques made it possible to reproduce photographs in books. Before this, steel engravings and woodcuts based on photographic methods had already largely replaced the classical technique of copperplate engraving. However, engravers did not use the photographs that served as the starting point for their illustrations merely to show an object the highly polished surface of the photographer’s plate, but rather in the way that it was mirrored in the soul of the artist.”

This remark — to be found in the foreword to Georg Faksen’s generously illustrated book about Egypt published in 1858 — clearly demonstrates how photography was adjudged to be inferior to the classical technique. According to this new terminology of creativity, the book illustrator was far superior to the photographer, who merely provided the raw material that could then be transformed artistically.

In a few cases, original photographs were actually published in travel books, but as these were only reproduced on cheap paper, they seemed dull and lacking in contrast compared to the sharply defined shading achieved in engravings and woodcuts.

A remarkable feature of some engravings based on photographs is how they reproduce parts of the photograpic image with great exactitude while completely rearranging or altering individual elements in order to add to the expressive atmosphere or drama of the scene. Like the more commercially minded photographers of the nineteenth century, engravers at this time essentially fell in with the taste of European tourists, who preferred to see idealized romantic landscapes enlivened by what might be Biblical figures. A photograph that did nothing more than simply provide an exact likeness of its subject was regarded as being too prosaic, and for this reason, it was altered and often idealized when being turned into an engraving. As there were no laws at the time covering the protection of the copyright of such images, any photograph could be used as the basis for graphic reproductions without the permission of photographers.

On engravings, it was usual for the name of the illustrator, i.e., the artist who made the initial drawing of the object of the photograph before it could be engraved, to appear on the left, occasionally with the abbreviation, del. or resp., while the name of the engraver was placed on the right with the abbreviation, sculp. The photographer received no credit.

The following pages present original photographs and woodcuts based on them taken from the book ‘Abiblichen Pfaden (On Biblical Pathways)’ by Carl Nitsch (1917).

A Praying Horse

[Auf die Stufen Padeschi, 18; see below, p. 233, illustration, c. 1828]

The context of the original photographs has been used almost unchanged, although a number of elements have been reproduced back-to-front, i.e., the caravanserai, the position of the roads, the short and the long telegraph pole. There were technical reasons for this, because the photographic image was first copied more or less accurately by an illustrator, whose drawing was then traced back to front onto the smooth surface of the wood block before being cut into (+). Only the horizontal lines in the sky, the truncated hawser and the ships seen in the foreground on the left were cut by the same woodcut as in the photograph. The deeply defined ‘horizon’ of the photograph is burned by tightening of the background hatching.
Musicians in Jerusalem

(Ap richest Fould, p. 322, see below, p. 169, anonymous, c. 1875)

In this woodcut, the engraver has recorded the details of the photograph faithfully, although the whole has been turned back so that the figure is seen from a different angle. Whereas the photographer attempted to suggest a street scene in his studio by including stone slabs and steps in the background, these features have been replaced by background foliage.

Turkish Women in Asia Minor

(La Bibl. des Foulis, p. 327, see below, p. 201, anonymous, c. 1875)

In this book illustration, a woman from Damascus is posed to appear in public, as arbitrarily presented as a Turkish woman. While the photograph, which was taken in a studio, made an objective impression, the standing figure on the engraving has been subtly altered—one can now see a shoe and a leg, a nose—and transplanted into a boulevard in Hurghad.

Old Tower in Jerusalem from the Time of the Crusades

(Ap richest Fould, 1875, see below, p. 208, anonymous, c. 1875)

The portrait format of the photograph has been altered to a landscape format in the woodcut, and extra ruined walls have been added. The town front of the tower in the photograph has been reproduced exactly, as has the pale-coloured stone on the ground to the right of the tower. To give an idea of scale, a person has been placed in front of the entrance, although this is rather difficult to make out.
Turkish Women in Asia Minor

In this book illustration, a woman from Damascus dressed to appear in public is arbitrarily presented as a Turkish woman. While the photograph, which was taken in a studio, makes an objective impression, the standing figure on the original has been subtly altered—she can now see ahead, a leg, a shoe—and transplanted into a boudoir or harem.

Old Tower in Ramleh from the Time of the Crusades

The portrait format of the photograph has been altered to landscape format in the book, and extra ruined walls have been added. The tree in front of the tower in the photograph has been reproduced exactly, as has the pale-colored stone on the ground to the right of the stone truck. To give an idea of scale, a person has been placed in front of the entrance, although this is rather difficult to make out.

Remains of the Aqueduct at Ain ed-Dawq

The treatment of the albumen print is a good example of how an image might be used almost without alteration. On closer inspection, though, one sees that the handling of light is much freer in the graphic version, with the light shade relationships being much less sharply defined here than in the original photograph. Moreover, the book illustration has cropped away the right edge of the image, thereby losing the more panoramic composition of the photograph.

The Northern End of the Dead Sea

In this case, too, it is evident that a photograph served as the basis for the book illustration, as both present the same scene almost identically composed. The scoured pieces of wood have been slightly altered in the graphic version. Some of the figures posed for the photograph have been retained, while others have been added. On the far left, the standing male figure has been joined by a man wearing a hat and a black suit—incidentally, a suit utterly unsuitable for traveling in the desert. This sitting Bedouin has become a need in the print, a device used to stimulate the imagination of the viewer and his desire for adventure in his own way. As in the previous picture, decorative clouds have been added above the horizon.
Photographic Documentation and Postcards from a Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

“In our age of convenient transport, distances have shrank to nothing. What might once have been utterly impossible or most difficult of realization for many is an easy undertaking today. Those people not accustomed to traveling and of limited means would indeed still be confronted by the same difficulties as before, if magnanimous persons were not prepared to undertake incessant and hard work for several months in order to spare their fellows, who have neither the same amount of time or knowledge at their disposal, the most difficult part of the preparation for a longer journey by working out the program and the travel route. As a result, in the last decades, those members of the public who love travel have participated in great numbers and with great enthusiasm in organized study or recreational trips directed toward every point on the compass.

This modern disposition and this ease of travel have also been made use of by the Catholic people, and thus pilgrimages have been organized to the two places most dear to Catholics: Rome and Jerusalem... Along with Rome, indeed above Rome, there stand Jerusalem and the Holy Land.”*