



Travellers and Travelogues on Jerusalem between 1840 and 1920

Since nearly two thousand years Jerusalem has been a destination for Christian pilgrims and European travellers, not to forget that it was a target for the crusaders of the European Middle Ages. It became a topic for European medieval literature and musical drama of the Baroque period. But from about the end of the Napoleonic wars –that is about 1820- German travellers visited Palestine and Jerusalem in a greater number. Jerusalem became one important destination of the ‘grand tour’ that was a must for the German aristocracy and bourgeoisie who were able to spend the money for such a trip. This grand tour incorporated places like Rome, Athens, Istanbul, Damascus, naturally Jerusalem, and Cairo. Of course, such a trip was expensive during those times and not everybody could afford it. A second group of travellers were Christian pilgrims who concentrated on Jerusalem and the other Palestinian places, important for Christian religion from Germany. For them the voyage was less expensive. Some of them included Rome. But anyhow, there was a structure of convents and other possibilities to spend a few days without much money. The number of travellers was growing during the first half of the century so, that the famous series of travel guides of the publishing house of Baedeker published a guide on Jerusalem and Palestine in 1876, which was followed by a second edition in 1894, 1897 and a fourth in 1906. In general, travel guides and travelogues concerning Jerusalem had a long tradition in Europe. Between 1300 and 1540 the number of reports on Jerusalem written for pilgrims was nearly ten times higher than that on the other important place for Christian pilgrims, Santiago de Compostella in Spain. On Jerusalem there are 262 reports and on Santiago de Compostella 36 only.

Beside of these guides many of the travellers and pilgrims published accounts of their experiences and adventures during their voyages during the 19th century. I could not check all these travelogues. I found about twenty, but there are many more and it would be an interesting and fruitful project to collect them all and analyse them. And it would be also very important to do the same with travelogues in other European languages. There are two reasons for that. First we would get an interesting picture about what a European reading public could know about Jerusalem and Palestine, beside what was written in newspapers and I am sure that these two topics were not in the centre of European journalism during those periods except of very few occasions like the visits of important personalities to Jerusalem or the founding of churches or hospitals by these personalities. Maybe that travelogues were the only possibility of German readers to get information about ordinary day to day life of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The analysis of travel accounts would provide us with an interesting picture of social and cultural history in Jerusalem. But, there is another aspect of the analysis of travel accounts on Jerusalem and Palestine, which is also important. Quite often one comes over articles written by pro-Israeli authors who argue that the Zionist colonists and the immigrants to Israel created a paradise where there had been desert before. To prove that, they quote from travelogues on Jerusalem and Palestine which describe the region as poor and stony. A meticulous analysis would show, that there are also different descriptions of these places. The political consequences are obvious. So in the following I will give a few examples of what can be found in German travelogues about Jerusalem and Palestine.

In regard of travel accounts one has to distinguish between accounts of pilgrims and of writers who came to Jerusalem not of religious purposes or not only religious purposes only. For the writes of pilgrim reports the subject of the holy places for Christians in Jerusalem and the other places were central. In 1886 a German catholic priest, Hans Joseph Eutenbach, who had a parish in a small city at the river Mosel undertook a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. He published his experiences in several articles in a pious journal that was called ‘Stadt Gottes’ (City of God) and collected these articles in a book that was given the title ‘Palästina-reise und

Romfahrt (Voyage to Palestine and travel to Rome) in about 1890. Five years later he published a theological dissertation on a book by the famous medieval theologian St. Thomas Aquinas. His account is a sometimes boring, sometimes very exact description of his travels to Jerusalem and other places in Palestine right from the start in the city of Koblenz with information on the number of tunnels that the train passed when crossing the Alpes or the name of the hotel where he spent the night at Verona. With a group of fellow catholic priests he came to Alexandria by ship, and from there to Jaffa, also by ship. His first view of Jaffa he describes enthusiastically: Entzückend schön liegt Jaffa da, umgeben von üppig grünenden Gärten mit seinem auf einem ziemlich hohen Bergkegel über einander liegenden Häusern und Kuppeln, den dazwischen hervorragenden Palmen, und der durch die Wolken hindurchscheinenden Sonne eben magisch beleuchtet.“ (p. 30) (Jaffa is beautiful, surrounded by opulent green gardens, with its houses and cupolas on a quite high mountain and in between all those palm trees. And the sun was gleaming through the clouds and produced a magical panorama.) Later he gives a description of Jaffe when he says: “Jaffa, called by the Arabs ‘the beautiful’, has this name with full right, first because of the beautiful perspective, that is provides from the sea ... More beautiful is it by its surroundings. For hours and hours follows garden after garden with an oriental largesse of blossoms and fruits. There are forests of orange trees, full with golden fruits and, at the same time, with delightful, well smelling rosé and white blossoms.“ (p. 35) When the author gives his first impression of Jerusalem, he is disappointed, because he sees modern buildings “erected by English and German protestants, Russians and other Europeans. Then he continues to the ancient city and is overwhelmed by the sight. He and his fellow priests fell on their knees and prayed. Now follows a description that can be found in many other travelogues about Jerusalem. “Then we continued, passing the Jaffa gate, praying the rosary, being looked at by Turks, Russians, Arabs and Jews, but without molestation or ridicule, as does happen in Christian countries not rarely.” (p. 48) This first report is followed by long descriptions of the many Christian holy places, some commentaries of the architecture of the city, on the social life and on the way of preparing coffee. There are only few remarks on Muslim life and the Masjid al-Aksa. In general the book is written from the perspective of a catholic priest who is deeply impressed by his visit to the holy city. One has to keep in mind, that he is writing for pious catholic readers in Germany, who are more interested in the description of the various churches and places where Jesus preached and died, than special facts about the social and cultural life in the city. The book is illustrated by about 190 engravings of minor interest of churches and convents in Jerusalem and pictures of street life in Palestine. In general it is a typical work of a catholic pilgrim of the 1880ies and it would be interesting to compare it with – let us say – descriptions of German protestants.

Now let us turn to an example of a famous personality that visited Jerusalem some fifty years before the priest from the Mosel river. His name is Hermann Ludwig Heinrich von Pückler-Muskau, born 1785 in the manor house of Muskau, some 100 km south of Berlin, died 1871 at the manor house of Branitz, near the city of Cottbus, also south of Berlin. He was of high aristocracy and had the title ‘Fürst’ which is prince. At the age of seven he was given to various conservative protestant institutions where he had the impression of being mistreated. This had the consequence, that he hated Protestantism and turned to a kind of Pantheism and in his old age converted to Catholicism. In 1801, at the age of 16, he enrolled at University of Leipzig to study law, but soon left university to become an officer in the garde du corps of the kingdom of Saxony in Dresden from 1802 – 1806. Then he started extensive journeying through France and Italy, often on foot. In 1811 he took over the administration of his estates, but soon handed the administration over to a friend of his and became again a soldier. He was cavalry officer in Russian and German armies in the wars against Napoleon. In 1812 for the first time he visited England and was impressed by its gardens and parks. Here he felt his

deep inclination to the architecture of gardens. After the end of the Napoleonic wars in Europa Prince Pückler-Muskau found himself and his possessions under the jurisdiction of the state of Prussia. It is estimated that he was one of the 10 to 15 largest landowners of Prussia. In 1817 he married Lucy von Hardenberg, the daughter of the chancellor of Prussia. Nine years later he divorced her with her consent, because he was near bankruptcy and intended to go to England to find a rich new wife. He spent many years there was impressed by the life style of the British aristocracy but, at the same time, criticized sharply the way, the aristocracy treated the Irish peasants. He did not find a bride, but started to write about his adventures and impressions with great success, also financially, in Germany, but also in England in the USA. So he decided to travel to North-America, but missed his ship because of a duel. Instead of that he travelled first to Algiers, then to Cairo and Khartum, continued to Lebanon, where he met Lady Hester Stanhope, then to Palestine and Jerusalem, next stop was Istanbul, where he tried in vain to become ambassador of Prussia. His last stop was Greece. Before I come to his visit to Jerusalem, I have to explain why such a rich landowner got into financial trouble.

The prince was addicted to gardens and parks and one of the most famous garden architects of his time. He constructed to very big parks near his manor houses in Muskau and Branitz. What made them so expensive, was that the ground there was very sandy and not suitable for his plans. So he transported masses of good native soil from far away to Muskau and Branitz. As he was not patient enough to wait for the growing of trees he constructed special vehicles to transport huge trees of an age of 30 years and more to their new places. This was, of course, very expensive.

By the way, the famous Ice Cream á la Fürst Pückler, was not invented by the prince, but dedicated to him by the Chef of the court kitchen of Berlin, Louis Ferdinand Jungius, in 1839.

To come back to his travelogues: Fürst Pückler published his books anonymously. So he could be more sharp and critical and had more success with his readers. His travels in North Africa and the Middle East were different from the pilgrimage of the catholic priest I mentioned before. Pückler was rich and a very experienced traveller, and soon he was well known to many important personalities like Mehmet Ali of Egypt. His description of the surroundings of Jerusalem is precise and friendly. The description of his reception in Jerusalem is very interesting. He came to the Hebron gate and then he said: "Many people had left the city standing on both sides of the street with groups of 100 persons, monks and nuns, Turkish and Albanian soldiers, Jews and Christian pilgrims, all peaceful and brotherly answering friendly my continuous greeting. At the same time my entourage had augmented by the retinue of the governor and commander and many people who had come to welcome me and I entered Jerusalem with the thunder of welcoming canons." (p. 28 f) Pückler describes the Christian holy places with sharp and critical words because of the permanent conflict between the different Christian groups who quarrel at what time the pilgrims of the groups may visit the holy places. He is also very critical about the British policy concerning Jerusalem, and this in 1840. In difference to the priest Hans Joseph Eutenbach Pückler gives descriptions not only on the Christian monuments and churches, but also on the al-Haram al-Sharif. These descriptions are very exact and go over pages. So it is an interesting document of the history of the al-Haram al-Sharif in the 1840ies. He says: The al-Haram al-Sharif is, according to an aesthetical perspective, the most remarkable building in Jerusalem, utmost magnificent, brilliant and great. Even Turks who visited Meccah, Medina and Kairouan, declare that the al-Haram al-Sharif surpasses these three mosques with beauty and richness." (p. 58 f) This description continues for about 10 more pages, including the interior of the mosque, showing the same fascination as before.

As I said before, the two travel accounts, mentioned so far, are very different. But they have two aspects in common. The first is, that they describe Jerusalem and its surroundings not as a desert, but as a region where, indeed, there are dry and rocky parts of the country to be found, but also gardens and trees and a beautiful landscape. The second is the description of the peaceful atmosphere between the many ethnic and religious groups of inhabitants of Jerusalem, although Pückler mentions the conflicts between the different Christian sects and confessions.

Let me now turn to one of the most famous travel accounts on Jerusalem, which describes the visit of the German Kaiser, Wilhelm II to Syria and Palestine in 1898. The account of more than 400 pages is a collection of memoirs of participants of the visit and quotations of official dossiers on the voyage. The book is illustrated with more than 200 photographs which are an important source for the way Jerusalem looked like in that year. Many of the photographs of Jerusalem and other places in Syria and Palestine were taken by the Photo Studio Bonfils in Beirut, whose photographers obviously accompanied the Kaiser and his entourage during their stay in the region. The political aspects of this travel are analyzed by a presentation of Professor Udo Steinbach. So I can concentrate on the cultural aspects. The book was published in a very nice way with many photographs and gilt edge. The reason for the visit of Jerusalem was the inauguration of a protestant church, the 'Redemptor Church' that was financed by the Kaiser. Of course it had also political aspects. The aim was to make obvious, that Germany stood at the side of the Ottoman Empire and was a friend of the Muslims in the world.

The descriptions of Jerusalem are done by a protestant pastor and two officials of the entourage of Wilhelm II. Among the persons of the entourage of the Kaiser was the protestant pastor Schneller, who is known for foundation of a chain of schools in Palestine, and the orientalist Professor B. Moritz, who was among other subjects a specialist in early Muslim architecture. The reason for the visit of Wilhelm II and his wife to Jerusalem was inauguration of the protestant Redemptor Church (Erlöser-Kirche). The whole report starts with a description of the protestant activities in Palestine and Jerusalem. This is followed by a travelogue of the sea voyage from Venice via Istanbul, which is constantly given the old name Constantinople, until Haifa and from there to Jerusalem on horse back. The main focus of the description of Jerusalem is, of course, on the Christian monuments and churches. But there is also a long report about the visit of the Kaiser to al-Haram al-Sharif. The description of the interior of the Qubbat al-Sahrâ is typical for all, what is said about Muslim architecture in Jerusalem: "Like with all mosques the interior of the Qubbat al-Sahrâ, because it is void of chairs and benches, gives an overwhelming impression. Of a special beauty are the window glasses which are donations of Sultan Salah al-Din and Sultan Soliman the Magnificent. They are of a colourful splendor." (282) By the way: When the Kaiser said, that it was a pity that there were no archaeological excavations under the Qubbat al-Sahrâ the first Imam, whose name was not given, answered that it is more important to look up at heaven instead of down into the earth.

In general, the book gives a lively impression of the visit of the Kaiser and, of course, of Jerusalem. In some cases there is a tendency of the feeling of German superiority, which was typical for the time of Wilhelm II. But, I think, that it is an interesting source for culture and society of Jerusalem at the end of the 19th Century.

Let me finish with some more remarks on sources on Jerusalem and Palestine in the time of the First World War. As is well known the Ottoman Empire took sides of Germany and Austria during this war. German military staff was active in many parts of the Empire, so in Palestine. A group of Bavarian air force officers took many pictures from above of Palestine

with Jerusalem. The photos were taken with heavy cameras who worked with two glass plates, while the photographer had to lean out of the air craft risking his life. Among others there are 277 pictures of the region west of Jerusalem, 113 east of Jerusalem, 116 south of Jerusalem and 130 of Jerusalem itself. These hundreds of pictures did survive one whole century which was like a miracle. They were rediscovered some years ago in the Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv (Main Archives of the Bavarian State) and are now digitalized and can be downloaded via [www. Gda. Bayern.de](http://www.Gda.Bayern.de) . I think, it is an important source for Jerusalem and Palestine in the years 1917 and 1918 under different aspects. And I would ask Palestinian and Arab historians and geographers to check these pictures under historical, geographical and, last but not least, political aspects.

I would like to thank You for attending my presentation and for the patience und kindness You showed to me.

Lit.:

Anonymus: Das Deutsche Kaiserpaar im Heiligen Land. Berlin 1899

Eutenbach, Hans Joseph: Palästina-reise und Romfahrt. Steyl (1890)

Pückler-Muskau, Hermann von: Die Rückkehr, vom Verfasser der Briefe eines Verstorbenen. Theil 2, Syrien. Berlin 1847

Peter Heine, Berlin

German Travelogues and Travellers on Palestine and Jerusalem in 19th Century By Peter Heine

On 14th of December 2010 the leading German News Paper 'Süddeutsche Zeitung' published an article with the headline "Geschichte von oben" (History from the air) on aerial photographs taken by German soldiers during First World War in Palestine. They are digitalized and can be downloaded by www.gda.bayern.de. The pictures should be of great interest for Palestinian historians and geographers. The article demonstrates, that rich sources for the history of Jerusalem and Palestine can be found on places where one does not expect them. Among them are travelogues and tourist guides that were published in German language from 1810 to 1910. My presentation will concentrate on three types of reports. The first is by members of the German political and cultural elite, who made the 'grand tour' and visited among many other places Jerusalem. To cite only two: Fürst Pückler-Muskau (1785 – 1871) who was a famous writer and designer of wonderful gardens visited Jerusalem in 1839 and gave a lively description. Another is a huge description of the trip Kaiser William II and his wife made to Jerusalem in 1898 which also gives a lot of information. The second type is a big number of travelogues written by Christian pilgrims who visited the Christian holy places in Jerusalem. In the focus of their reports is, of course, all that has to do with the life and death of Jesus. But there is also interesting information on the life of the people in Jerusalem. Among others I will concentrate on the report given by a Roman Catholic priest who visited Jerusalem in 1883, which is very typical for this kind of pilgrimage literature. The third type of literature is the tourist guide. The most famous in Germany is the series of Baedeker. A second edition appeared in 1880 with a large panorama map of Jerusalem. The guide has been of a tremendous influence of the idea of Jerusalem in the German public.